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## M E D I A R E L E A S E

### *ECCENTRICITY GETS AN ADDRESS IN GREY GARDENS: THE MUSICAL*

*Portland Center Stage presents the musical inspired by the 1973 documentary about the “Big” and “Little” Edie Bouvier Beale, Jackie O’s most eccentric relatives, through June 21<sup>st</sup> on the Main Stage.*

**May 8, 2009 – PORTLAND, OR.** Portland Center Stage presents [\*Grey Gardens: The Musical\*](#), the Broadway smash hit inspired by the cult documentary classic that redefined our notions of eccentricity, American royalty and glamour in decline. [\*Grey Gardens: The Musical\*](#) previews on Tuesday May 26th, opens on **Friday, May 29th and runs through June 21st, 2009**. Tickets range from **\$33.50 to \$68.50**, with student and under 30 discounts available. **Rush tickets for *Grey Gardens* are \$15** and available starting 10 minutes prior to curtain. Show times are 7:30 pm Tuesday through Saturday, with a 2:00 pm Sunday matinee and alternating Saturday 2:00 pm and Sunday 7:30 pm performances. See the show calendar <http://tickets.pcs.org/buytickets/calendar.asp> for the complete performance schedule.



This Tony-nominated musical was inspired by the 1973 Maylse Brothers documentary about “Big Edie” Edith Bouvier Beale and her daughter “Little Edie” Bouvier Beale, the aunt and cousin of Jackie Kennedy née Bouvier. Once two of the brightest stars in the New York social register, the Bouvier Beales came to notoriety after the East Hampton health department tried to condemn their beach house. The two women had been virtually abandoned in the decaying 28 room mansion after Big Edie’s husband divorced her, the Bouviers had disowned her and Little Edie’s New York cabaret dreams had fallen flat. The house was filthy and in astonishing disrepair – over 160 cats

and raccoons had been allowed to treat the house as their personal litter box.

Embarrassed by the subsequent tabloid exposure, Jackie stepped in and invested nearly \$30,000 to fix up the house. Jackie’s sister, Lee Radziwell, later commissioned a movie about the Bouvier family and sent Alfred and David Maylises out to visit. Fascinated, the Maylises decided to stay for six weeks to document these two staunch eccentrics.

Big Edie by that time was bed ridden, and Little Edie had invented her own, entirely original sense of fashion, centered on a variety of head coverings (from sweaters and blouses to scarves and duvets) used to disguise her hair loss from alopecia. Both were desperately entangled in a co-dependant dream world, singing and dancing their way through an existence littered with cat food tins, raccoon droppings and the tattered remnants of a formerly glamorous lifestyle. When released, *Grey Gardens* became a cult classic, called the “quintessential riches to rags story” and little Edie became a cult icon- inspiring fashion designers and legions of gay men everywhere who identified with her flamboyance, her originality, her isolation and her “otherness.”



Composer **Scott Frankel** approached playwright **Doug Wright** (Pulitzer Prize winning author of *I Am My Own Wife*) with the idea to turn the documentary into a musical (Edie, after all, was nothing if not a singer and a dancer). They expanded the outlines of the story to include flashbacks to the time when Big Edie was still the crème of the New York social register and Little Edie was called “body beautiful Beale.” Act one takes place in 1943, during their heyday, and Act Two takes place in 1973, when the documentary was filmed.

The book for *Grey Gardens: The Musical* was written by **Doug Wright**, who won the Pulitzer Prize for *I Am My Own Wife* (performed to sold out houses by Wade McCollum in 2006 at PCS), with music composed by **Scott Frankel** and lyrics by **Michael Korie**.

[Grey Gardens: The Musical](#) will be directed by Artistic Director **Chris Coleman** and will feature a bevy of actresses with glittering Broadway credits: **Dale Soules** (Act II Big Edie) was in the original cast of *Hair* and understudied Big Edie on Broadway, **Rebecca Eichenberger** (Act I Big Edie, Act II Little Edie) played Carlotta in *Phantom of the Opera*, Mother in *Ragtime* and Nettie in *Carousel*, all on the Great White Way, and **Janine DaVita** (Act I Little Edie) just finished playing Rizzo in the 2007 Broadway revival of *Grease*. Not to be outdone by the ladies, our own Music Director **Rick Lewis** will play Big Edie’s pianist/confidante George Gould Strong, **Victor Morris** (Brooks Heir Sr.) recently debuted at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, and **Evan Thompson** (Major Bouvier) had Broadway stints in *Ivanov*, *City of Angels* and *1776*. Rounding out the cast are youngsters **Madison Wray** (Jackie Bouvier) last seen on PCS stages as Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*, **Allison** (not a typo) **O’Neil** (Lee Bouvier) and **Ryan Jesse** (Joe Kennedy/Jerry).

Bringing the iconic decayed beach house to the stage will be scenic designer **G.W. Mercier**, Little Edie’s unique take on fashion will be created by costume designer **Jeff Cone**, sound design will be by **Casi Pacilio** and associate designer **Sam Kusnetz** and lighting will be designed by **Daniel Ordower**.

Additional support for this production has been provided by the **James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation**, Elynn Bye, Judy Carson Kelly and Suzanne and Bud Roberts. Media support has been provided by **Kink.fm**.

Portland Center Stage's 2008/09 season is funded in part by the Regional Arts & Culture Council and Work for Art, the Oregon Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

[PORTLAND CENTER STAGE](#) inspires our community by bringing stories to life in unexpected ways. Established in 1988 as an off shoot of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, PCS became an independent theater in 1994 and has been under the leadership of Artistic Director Chris Coleman since May 2000. The company presents a blend of classic, contemporary and original productions in a conscious effort to appeal to the eclectic palate of theatergoers in Portland. PCS also offers a variety of education and outreach programs for curious minds from six to 106, including the PCS GreenHouse, a school of theater.

**THE GERDING THEATER AT THE ARMORY** houses a 599-seat Main Stage and a 200-seat black box Studio. It was the first building on the National Register of Historic Places, and the first performing arts venue, to achieve a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification. The Gerding Theater at the Armory opened to the public on Oct. 1, 2006. The capital campaign to fund the renovation of this hub for community artistic activity continues.

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