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Disney's Beauty and the Beast: a million-dollar spectacle this summer at ASF! Broadway Quality, produced in Alabama! Extended due to Overwhelming Demand!

Montgomery, AL (June 27, 2016) The Alabama Shakespeare Festival presents *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, **July 6th through July 31st** on the Festival Stage. Tickets range from \$40 to \$79 and may be purchased at the ASF box office by calling **800.841.4273** or online at www.asf.net. Group prices are available by calling **334.271.5330**. ASF is located at 1 Festival Drive in Montgomery's Blount Cultural Park.

The production, initially slated for July 6th through July 17th, has already been extended by two full weeks due to overwhelming demand. "Every year the pace of sales on our summer musicals increases, and the performances quickly sell out," said Katie Perkowski, Director of Marketing. "We are far ahead of where we were with *Disney's The Little Mermaid* last summer, which fully sold out after two extensions. I think our audiences know the high quality of our productions and are very eager to get tickets while they can."

A magical experience for the whole family to enjoy, this spectacular feast for the senses features the lovely Belle, spellbound Prince, wicked Gaston and delightful Lumiere and Cogsworth in a production filled with marvelous costumes, lavish sets and dazzling production numbers including, "Be Our Guest", "Gaston" and "Beauty and the Beast".

Stephanie Rothenberg, who appears as Belle, was recently seen on Broadway in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, and has outstanding regional theatrical credits including the Stratford Festival, Denver Center Theater and Guthrie Theater. The Beast, **Alexander Mendoza**, has appeared in national tours of *Mamma Mia* and *Sister Act* as well as regionally. **Bryant Martin**, who appears as Gaston, has an impressive array of regional theater as well as television credits, including ABC's fantasy crime drama, *Forever*. **Henry Hodges**, last seen at ASF as Flounder in *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, returns as Gaston's sidekick Le Fou. Hodges is a long-time veteran of Broadway, having appeared in the Broadway productions of *Disney's Mary Poppins*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Disney's The Little Mermaid*.

Barbara Broughton, most recently seen on the ASF stage as the Bird Lady in *Disney's Mary Poppins*, returns as Mrs. Potts, while **Fredena Williams**, last seen in ASF's *Ain't Misbehavin'*, appears as Madame de la Grande Bouche. **Erin Chupinsky**, who last appeared at ASF in *Disney's The Little Mermaid*, plays the saucy French maid, Babette.

Veteran ASF actors **Rodney Clark**, **Billy Sharpe**, **James Bowen** and **Paul Hebron** appear as Cogsworth, Lumiere, Belle's father Maurice and Monsieur D'Arque, the asylum keeper.

The delightful tea cup Chip is played by three local child actors, **Gavin Campbell** (Bear Exploration Center),

Stirling Hamilton (Fort Dale Academy) and **Charlie Hill** (Montgomery Academy). Both **Charlie Hill** and **Gavin Campbell** have appeared in ASF's *A Christmas Carol*, Gavin also appeared in ASF's recent production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The Ensemble will include **Aaron Lloyd Pomeroy, Emma Martin, Ian Laskowski, Jason Garcia Ignacio, Kyle Vaughn, Elizabeth Troxler, Kristi Smith, Caleb Dicke, Sari Alexander, Lisa Jantzie, Tanya Haglund, Meghan Glowgower, Brian C. Veith, Jennifer Molly Bell, Terrance Martin, Edward Cuellar, Michael Quattrone, John Henry Carter V, Kayla Eisenberg** and **Imani Jo Straker**.

ASF Producing Artistic Director, **Geoffrey Sherman** will direct the elaborate \$1 million production. **Alex Sanchez**, who choreographed *Disney's The Little Mermaid* last season at ASF, will serve as choreographer.

The Artistic Team also includes Costume Designer, **Susan Branch**, Scenic Designer **Paul Wonsek**, Lighting Designer **Stuart Duke**, and Sound Designer **William Burns**.

Dr. Joel Jones of the Alabama State University is the Music Director for the production, which will feature a live orchestra. Most recently, Dr. Jones served as Music Director for ASF's productions of *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Disney's The Little Mermaid*.

Disney's Beauty and the Beast ran on Broadway for 5,461 performances and is the ninth-longest running production in the history of Broadway, and also has the distinction of being the first Disney animated feature film to be turned into a Broadway musical. *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* features music by **Alan Menken**, lyrics by **Howard Ashman** and **Tim Rice**, and a book by **Linda Woolverton** originally produced by **Disney Theatrical Productions**. In the story, a prince who is transformed into a hideous beast as punishment for his cruel and selfish ways must earn the love of an adventurous young woman named Belle, in order to become human again.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare theatres in the world. Designated as The State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton M. Blount's gift of a performing arts complex set in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park. This program/project has been made possible by grants from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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