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**Leapin' Lizards! The Beloved Family Musical - ANNIE
for the first time at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival!
July 4 – August 5**

MONTGOMERY, Ala., (June 6, 2018) —For the first time in its forty-six year history, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival presents one of world's best-loved musicals, **ANNIE, July 4 through August 5** on the Festival Stage. This delightful Tony Award-winning musical by Thomas Meehan, Charles Strouse, and Martin Charnin includes memorable song-and-dance numbers, such as "It's the Hard Knock Life," "Easy Street," and "Tomorrow."

In the musical, Annie is a Depression-era orphan determined to find the parents who abandoned her years ago on the doorstep of a New York City orphanage (run by the cruel Miss Hannigan, the funniest villain this side of a Disney cartoon). In adventure after fun-filled adventure, Annie foils Miss Hannigan's devious schemes, befriends President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and finds a new family and home with billionaire Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks, his personal secretary Grace Farrell, and a lovable mutt named Sandy.

Tickets are available at asf.net or through the ASF box office at 1-800-841-4273. For the first three performances July 4-6, tickets for any seat in the house cost \$41 for adults and \$36 for youth ages 4 to 16. Starting on July 7, weekday prices will range from \$36 to \$65 and weekend prices will range from \$36 to \$75, depending on chosen seating zone and date.

Vivian Poe will charm audiences as the irresistibly optimistic Annie. She previously has appeared in *Annie* (Olney Theatre Center), *Disney's Beauty and the Beast* (Imagination Stage), and *La Boheme* (Wolf Trap Opera). **Charles E. Wallace** stars as Daddy Warbucks. He has appeared in major musical roles in Broadway productions, such as *Amazing Grace*, *Miss Saigon*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*. Warbucks' loyal assistant Grace Farrell is played by **Rebecca Covington**, who appeared on Broadway in *Beautiful* and *Motown: The Musical*, and on national tour in *Mamma Mia!* and *Ain't Misbehavin'*. The nefarious yet comical Miss Hannigan is played by **Alicia Irving**, who has appeared on Broadway and on national tour in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, *Les Misérables*, and *Sunset Blvd.* **Joey Calveri** and **Cat Brindisi** play Rooster Hannigan and Lily St. Regis, Miss Hannigan's conniving partners in crime. Calveri was in the original Broadway cast of *Wonderland* and *Rock of Ages*, and on national tour with *Saturday Night Fever*. Brindisi is reprising the role of Lily St. Regis that she recently played at the Ordway Theatre and has appeared in *South Pacific*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *My Fair Lady* at the Guthrie Theatre.

Our canine star **Marti** (Sandy) was discovered by guardian and trainer William Berloni at Adopt A Dog Shelter in New York in May 2013 to play Sandy in the 2014 Sony movie release of *Annie* starring Quevenjanhe Wallis and Jamie Foxx. Marti's television credits include *Billions* and the 2016–2017 Nutrish dog food campaign.

Other members of the ensemble include **Richard Costa** (Drake), **Nick Locilento** (President Franklin D. Roosevelt), **Isabella de Souza Moore** (Star to Be), **Gabe Friedman** (Judge Brandeis), **Katherine McLaughlin** (Mrs. Greer), **Kara Mikula** (Mrs. Pugh), **Meadow Nguy** (Boylan Sister), **Brian Michael Hoffman** (Bert Healy),

Paul Thienmann (Morgantheau), and **Tyler Tate** (Howe). Tyler Tate is a recent graduate of Alabama State University's Department of Theatre Arts and is making his debut on the ASF stage.

Hundreds of local children auditioned for roles in **ANNIE**. The cast of orphans includes **Ella Taylor** (Saint James – Montgomery, AL), **Elise Rivas** (Home School – Wetumpka, AL), **Ramsey Whitney** (Munford Middle School – Anniston, AL), **Alliyssa Earle** (Alabama Virtual Academy – Pike Road, AL), **Laura Lee Putnam** (Conecuh Springs Christian School – Union Springs, AL), **Chloe Capri Ciolino** (Pensacola Beach Elementary – Pensacola Beach, FL), **Emma Rives** (Alabama Christian Academy – Montgomery, AL), **Rebecca Schannep** (Prattville Jr. High School – Prattville, AL), **Ann Welch Hilyer** (Alabama Christian Academy – Montgomery, AL), **Eden Gay** (Forest Avenue Academic Elementary Magnet – Montgomery, AL), **Gerrisyn Shipman** (Creekview Elementary – Maylene, AL), and **Angelina Dong** (Dean Road Elementary – Auburn, AL).

The original production of **ANNIE** opened April 21, 1977 at the Alvin Theatre and went on to win the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical, seven Drama Desk Awards including Best musical, the Grammy for Best Cast Show Album and seven Tony Awards®, including Best Musical, Best Book (Thomas Meehan) and Best Score (Charles Strouse, Martin Charnin). The show remains one of the biggest Broadway musical hits ever. It ran for 2,377 performances after it first opened, has been performed in 28 languages and has been running somewhere around the world for the past 39 years.

ANNIE will be directed and choreographed by **Christopher Windom**, who most recently choreographed *Frozen – Live at the Hyperion* for Disney. Windom has worked on Broadway (*Pippin*), on national tour (*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*), and at numerous off-Broadway and regional theatres around the country. He has received the Dean Goodman Choice Award for Best Choreography and Excellence Award for Choreography (NYMF).

Musical Director **Dr. Joel Jones** is a Montgomery native and retired professor from Alabama State University. Dr. Jones most recently musically directed *Disney's Mary Poppins*, *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, and *Disney's The Little Mermaid* at ASF.

William Berloni (Animal Director) is a 2011 Tony Honoree for Excellence in Theatre. Starting with *Annie* in 1977, he has trained animals for twenty-five Broadway shows, as well as for hundreds of roles for off-Broadway theatres, regional theatre, tours, television, and movies. William and his wife Dorothy are the originators of the musical *Because of Winn-Dixie*. He is the author of *Broadway Tails* and has appeared on television in *High Maintenance* and *From Wags to Riches with Bill Berloni*.

The creative team for the production also includes **Leigh Scheffler** (Assistant Director and Choreographer), **Caite Hevner** (Scenic Designer), **Brenda Van der Wiel** (Costume Designer), **Travis McHale** (Lighting Designer), **Kenneth Goodwin** (Sound Designer), and **Brian Michael Hoffman** (Animal Trainer).

The production of **ANNIE** at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival is made possible through the generous support of Hyundai Motor Manufacturing Alabama, Aronov and Wind Creek Hospitality.

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 because 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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