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The Year on Stage

Theater companies countywide roll out big seasons.

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By Ryan Masters



Monster Encore: Belle (Kay Akervik, left), Beast (Josh McChesney, right) and Gaston (J.T. Holmstrom, on chair far right) return with *Beauty and the Beast* this summer. *Lawrence Wallace*

Monterey County's theater companies hit the boards in 2006 with a varied slate of fresh new productions and old favorites. From Annie and Buddy! to Urinetown and A Clockwork Orange, this year's fare has something for

everyone.

Pacific Repertory Theater opens with *The Full Monty* (March 9-April 15), the hit Broadway musical about six men who striptease in a desperate last-ditch effort to get their lives back. Running in conjunction is *Fully Committed* (March 21-April 23), a riotous one-man show about an out-of-work actor working the red-hot reservation line at Manhattan's most prestigious restaurant.

In late April, Walt deFaria and Stephen Tosh present their original children's musical *Ghosties!* (April 27-May 7). Then Tennessee Williams' hot-blooded classic *A Streetcar Named Desire* (June 9-July 2) heats up the summer months followed by Robin Soan's gripping examination of the terrorist mind in *Talking to Terrorists* (June 21-July 16).

No PacRep season would be complete with out Shakespeare and big musicals and 2006 is no different. Kenneth Kelleher directs *Timon of Athens* (Aug. 11-Oct. 8), Shakespeare's rarely performed examination of the pitfalls of wealth. Then, inspired by last year's success, PacRep will restage their blockbuster hit Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Aug. 17-Sept. 24) followed by a creepy little piece called *Woman in Black* (Sept. 7-Oct. 1) about a lawyer who's obsessed with the belief that he and his family have been cursed by the specter of a woman in black. Then it's back to Shakespeare with *Measure for Measure* (Sept. 29-Oct. 15), the funny and thought-provoking tale of a Duke, a Regent, a pimp and a nun as they wander the twisty walks of a morally decaying Vienna. Finally, *Buddy: The Buddy Holly Story* makes a revival for the holiday season (Nov. 22-Dec. 31).

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Meanwhile, The Western Stage (TWS) launches into its fourth decade with *The Time of Your Life* (June 9-July 2), William Saroyan's Pulitzer Prize-winning comedy about Nick's waterfront saloon in San Francisco. Then in July, TWS follows with the charming musical comedy *Meet Me in St. Louis* (July 15-Aug. 5), the stage version of the classic MGM film.

Unwilling to give PacRep a monopoly on the Bard, TWS presents Shakespeare in Hollywood (Aug. 4-27) a comedy which follows the Midsummer fairies Oberon and Puck through the glamorous Hollywood set of Max Reinhardt's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Then it's the season's crown jewel, *Big River, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Oct. 7-28), a sumptuous musical

production of Mark Twain's beloved classic. Tom Stoppard's verbal and theatrical acrobatics make *The Real Thing* (Sept. 15-Oct. 8) the must-see studio theater production of the season. While in late October, TWS tackles *Inherit the Wind* (Oct. 27-Nov. 9), the courtroom drama inspired by the legendary 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial. Finally TWS wraps 2006 up with *Oliver!* (Dec. 1-17), the hit musical inspired by Dickens' groundbreaking novel of orphan and social change.

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The Monterey Peninsula College Theater Company opens in March with Jerry Debono's *The American Musical* followed in May by the most anticipated musical of the season, *Urinetown*, directed by Gary Bolen. Then in August, MPC tackles Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and finishes with Thornton Wilder's classic *Our Town* in October. Meanwhile, in the Studio Theater, Ramie Wikdahl's *Storybook Theater* creates more magic with *Treasure Island* in February and *The Reluctant Dragon* in April.

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The Paperwing Theater Company continues to light up the Fox Theater in 2006 with easily the trippiest and most daring of seasons: *The Odd Couple*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and, wait for it...*A Clockwork Orange*. Bring the droogs.

Ariel Theatrical presents more tremendous children's theater in 2006 beginning in February with *Little Red Hen*, followed by Aesop's *Fabulous Fable Factory* (March), *Twelve Dancing Princesses* (April), *Miss Nelson Has A Field Day* (May), *Wizard of Oz* (August), *Schoolhouse Rock* (October), and *Winnie the Pooh Christmas* (December).

In Carmel, the Hovick's continue to stage the most intellectually challenging fare with the *Poet Series* (Jan. 13–Feb. 12), a series of one-person shows featuring "some of the riveting poets who penned many of their greatest works right here in Monterey County." Then comes Jean Giraudoux's dark family comedy *Electra* in February and finally the Staff Players conclude with the mysterious drama *La Parisienne*.

Finally, down on the wharf, the Bruce Arliss Wharf Theater Company presents *Annie* (March-May) and *The Sound of Music* (July-September).

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