

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Box Office Manager:	Henry Guevara	HGuevara@mpc.edu	831-915-0581
Theatre Arts Chairman:	Gary Bolen	GBolen@mpc.edu	831-646-4085
Director:	Gary Bolen	GBolen@mpc.edu	831-646-4085
Box Office:	www.mpctheatre.com	mpcboxoffice@mpc.edu	831-646-4213
MPCTCC Trust	Sky Rappoport	mpctheatretrust@gmail.com	831-915-7635

18 June 2015**MONTEREY, CA – Monterey Peninsula College Theatre Department opens 2015-2016 Season with**

SWEET CHARITY
Music by Cy Coleman – Lyrics by Dorothy Fields
Book by Neil Simon

Directed by Gary Bolen

July 2 – July 19, 2015

Tickets available from the MPC Theatre Box Office (831-646-4213) or online at www.mpctheatre.com

About the Musical

Based on the screenplay for Federico Fellini's 1957 Academy Award winning film *Nights of Cabiria*, the musical **SWEET CHARITY** is the story of Charity Hope Valentine, a taxi dancer working in New York City at the Fandango Ballroom. Directed and choreographed by the legendary Bob Fosse, **SWEET CHARITY** featured Fosse's equally famous wife, Gwen Verdon in the lead role. **SWEET CHARITY** premiered on Broadway in 1966, and the musical was nominated for 9 Tony Awards. In 1969 Fosse directed and choreographed a film version starring Shirley MacLaine.

About the MPC production of SWEET CHARITY

After 60+ years of productions, the MPC Theatre Company has seen and done it all – or so it would seem. With musical theatre in particular, if a show has been a hit on Broadway (and is available for amateur groups) it's a virtual certainty that it has been in MPC Theatre's season, often multiple times over the years. Shows such as *West Side Story* (the first show ever produced on the main stage), *Guys and Dolls*, *Cabaret*, *Grease* and even the edgy and satirical *Urinetown* have received multiple stagings. So one can only imagine director and Theatre Arts Department chair Gary Bolen's surprise when he settled on **SWEET CHARITY** for the summer 2015 production only to discover that it had never been produced by MPC.

“You could have knocked me over with a feather!” exclaimed Bolen. “I was positive that a show of this caliber with such great and memorable songs by Cy Coleman and Dorothy Fields and hysterical book by Neil Simon had been done multiple times before I ever arrived at MPC. So I went to our archives and searched and... nothing. It had never been on our stage!”

That it was a first of sorts for the long time theatre company was just a bonus for the director. “**SWEET CHARITY** is really a star driven piece. The title character is on stage virtually the entire show so you need someone who can carry a show – a true ‘triple threat.’ Without that you simply don’t have a show” the director noted. Gwen Verdon memorably played the part on Broadway and Shirley McLain in the film version so the bar is set high for expectations for the role of Charity Hope Valentine, the prototypical “girl with a heart of gold.” Bolen said, “Before I committed to doing the show, I contacted Jill Miller who had performed the role of Sally Bowles in **Cabaret** for me a few years back. She’s a fantastic dancer and singer and is just naturally funny. If I couldn’t have someone of that caliber for Charity, I wasn’t going to do it. Fortunately, she was available.” Miller has worked as an actress, singer, dancer and choreographer throughout the Peninsula and in San Jose. “She is just amazing in the role!” Bolen enthused. “Once you get into rehearsals, you realize just what a physically demanding role Charity is. She literally doesn’t leave the stage for the entirety of act one and only briefly in act two. I’m in awe of how she’s able to knock out a huge song and dance number like ‘**If They Could See Me Now**’ and then come right back in the next scene with yet ANOTHER huge song and dance number like ‘**There’s Gotta Be Something Better Than This**’ and just keep going. I get exhausted just watching her!” While **SWEET CHARITY** is a star vehicle, Miller is not alone. She is more than ably supported by a supremely talented cast. Bolen noted, “The girls of the Fan-Dango Ballroom are just terrific. Nicole West as Nickie and Corrine Walker as Helene in particular are phenomenal dancers. And Jared Hussey returns to us after a far too long absence and brings an incredible warmth and humor to Oscar, Charity’s love interest for most of the show.” Add an ensemble that plays upwards of 50 parts and you have a winning combination of talent in one show.

SWEET CHARITY is also a bittersweet show for Bolen as it marks the final show designed and built by longtime MPC Theatre Technical Director Dan Beck who is retiring at the end of July. Beck studied under theatre founder Morgan Stock and worked with him and longtime MPC Theatre chairman Peter DeBono for nearly 30 years before Bolen came on board in 1999. “I haven’t worked with another tech director for my entire tenure at MPC. In the world of academic theatre, you have no idea how rare that is” Bolen said. “It is not possible to overestimate how much he will be missed. Not only by us, but by all of the theatre companies on the Peninsula that he has supported and worked with over the years. There isn’t a company in Monterey County that hasn’t had a Dan Beck trained technician working for them at some point.”

Along with Beck, the creative team for **SWEET CHARITY** features Susan Cable as choreographer, Stephen Tosh providing musical direction and Gloria Mattos Hughes designing costumes. “With the exception of Tosh, we’ve all worked together for many years and many great productions. It’s really a blessing to have people of that level of dedication and talent as your support system for a show this big,” Bolen said.

ABOUT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT AT MPC

Gary Bolen, Chairman of the Theatre Arts Department at MPC, holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Theatre from Cal State University Fullerton and an M.F.A. in Acting from UCLA. Most recently, Mr. Bolen appeared in the September 11th themed Studio Theatre production of THE GUYS (2013). Previous appearances have been as George in CHAPTER TWO (2009) and as Max Bailystock in THE PRODUCERS (2009). Recent directorial efforts include 2013’s highly acclaimed MPC production of the hit musical LES MISERABLES (2013), as well as THE TAMING OF THE SHREW (2014), THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS (THE MUSICAL! - 2012), ONCE UPON A MATTRESS (2011), RENT (2009), DRACULA (2014) and OKLAHOMA! (2014).

ABOUT THE DESIGN TEAM

The creative team includes **Gary Bolen** (*Director*), **Susan Cable** (Choreographer), **Stephen Tosh** (Musical Director), **Michael Lojokovick** (Stage Manager), **D. Thomas Beck** (Technical Director & Lighting Design), **Carey Crockett** (Scenic Design) **Eric Maximoff** (Master Carpenter), **David Rigmaiden** (Sound Design), **Gloria C. Mattos Hughes** (*Costume Design*), and **Ana Maximoff** (Props Design).

ABOUT THE MPC THEATRE CHARITABLE TRUST

The Monterey Peninsula Community Theatre Company Charitable Trust is an independent 501(c)(3) that was created to support the MPC theatre program by funding expenses not covered by the State educational budget. With the massive budget cuts and staff reductions the department was hit with in 2014, the role of the MPC Theatre Company Charitable Trust has become more vital than ever to the continued existence and survival of the MPC Theatre Arts Department and its programs.

SWEET CHARITY previews Thursday July 2nd and opens Friday July 3rd at 7:30 PM. *There is NO performance on Saturday July 4th.* Performances then run through Sunday July 19th Show dates are Thursdays at 7:30 PM (July 2, 9, 16) Fridays & Saturdays at 7:30 PM (July 3, 10, 11, 17, 18) and Sundays at 2:00 PM (July 5, 12, 19). Tickets are \$25 Adults, \$22 Seniors; \$15 Young Adults (16-21) & Military, and \$10 Children 15 & under. Adults & Seniors can also purchase discount tickets 24-hours in advance for \$20.00 each. Group discounts are also available for parties of 15 or more.

Please Note: Campus Parking is required for Thursday evening performances and is \$2.00



Tickets are available from the MPC Box Office, located on the Monterey Peninsula College Campus at 980 Fremont Street, downtown Monterey. The MPC Box Office (831-646-4213) is open Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays from 3:00 PM – 7:00 PM, and 2 hours prior to performances. Tickets are also available online at www.mpctheatre.com

The SWEET CHARITY performance schedule is:

Thursday	July 02	7:30 PM - Preview
Friday	July 03	7:30 PM - Opening
Saturday	July 04	7:30 PM - NO PERFORMANCE
Sunday	July 05	2:00 PM - Matinee
Thursday	July 09	7:30 PM
Friday	July 10	7:30 PM
Saturday	July 11	7:30 PM
Sunday	July 12	2:00 PM – Matinee
Thursday	July 16	7:30 PM
Friday	July 17	7:30 PM
Saturday	July 18	7:30 PM
Sunday	July 19	2:00 PM – Matinee & Final performance

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