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Broadway comes to Sacramento

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Broadway Sacramento, a branch of California Musical Theatre, has announced its 2008-09 season of national touring shows with four regional premieres.

The six shows in the season are: "The Drowsy Chaperone" (Oct. 1-12), "The Color Purple" (Nov. 5-16), "Stomp" (Dec. 26-Jan. 4, 2009), "Avenue Q" (March 11-22, 2009), "Frost/Nixon" (April 15-26, 2009) and "The Lion King" (May 27-June 28, 2009). All but "Stomp" and "Lion King" will be Sacramento premieres.

CMT artistic director Scott Eckern cited the originality of the season's productions, noting that both "The Drowsy Chaperone," which won five 2006 Tony Awards, and "Avenue Q," which won 2004 Tony Awards for best musical, best book and best score, came from the minds of their creators.

"They're truly original musicals," Eckern said, "not adapted from a movie or a book."

Not that adaptations are a problem. CMT executive director Richard Lewis, a Tony Awards voter, said he voted for "The Color Purple," adapted from the Steven Spielberg film, to receive the best musical award in the year "Jersey Boys" won.

"'The Color Purple' has the full range of emotion for me," Lewis said. "The storytelling in it was truly stunning."

The season includes the non-musical "Frost/Nixon," starring Stacey Keach as Richard Nixon, and concludes with a five-week run of "The Lion King" in spring 2009.

Together with last week's Cosmopolitan Cabaret announcement, the folks at California Musical Theatre have an active fall planned.

On Sept. 26, CMT will put on the Sacramento professional premiere of "Forever Plaid" at its Cosmopolitan Cabaret, the city's newest performing venue. This will be an original production for the 208-seat venue at 10th and K streets in the freshly renovated 1956 Woolworth Building.

"It's an intimate cabaret-style theater which does not exist here in our region, which is why this project was so interesting to us," Lewis said.

CMT is working with the Randy Paragary Restaurant Group, which will operate the Cosmo restaurant and bar next door and the upstairs Social nightclub. Social will feature a rooftop

patio. The building is owned by David Taylor Interests Inc. in partnership with the CIM Group, an urban real estate investment company.

Marika Rose, a spokeswoman for David Taylor, said the building renovation cost about \$12 million, with about \$5 million going to the theater itself, including the installation of state-of-the-art acoustics.

CMT will build its production of "Forever Plaid" from the ground up with Guy Stroman, one of the original Plaids from the musical's workshop development phase, directing and choreographing.

"We'll be drawing from across the region and around the country for talent in all phases of production, just as we do for Music Circus," Eckern said.

"Forever Plaid" will have an open-ended run with shows Tuesday through Sunday nights and matinees on Saturday and Sunday. CMT subscribers (Broadway Sacramento and Music Circus) will have first opportunities to buy "Forever Plaid" tickets. Single tickets will go on sale this summer.

Broadway Sacramento subscription packages go on sale April 21. For more information, contact the Wells Fargo Pavilion Box Office, 1419 H St., at (916) 557-1999 or go to www.broadwaysacramento.com.

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