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SMALL TOWN THEATERS WITH BIG TALENT THRIVE IN SANTA BARBARA WINE COUNTRY

Milestone Seasons as PCPA Theaterfest Celebrates 45 years, Santa Maria Civic Theatre Commemorates 50 years

Santa Maria, California—Big talent continues to abound in the small communities of the Santa Maria Valley on California's Central Coast, where two longtime local theater companies are now celebrating milestone seasons.

The Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts (PCPA)—whose alumni include Kathy Bates, Robin Williams and *High School Musical* star Zac Efron—is celebrating its 45th year with the 2008-2009 season, while the Santa Maria Civic Theatre is commemorating its 50th year.

"Visitors are typically blown away by the quality of our local theater productions," said Gina Keough, manager of the Santa Maria Valley Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitor Bureau. "It's like enjoying big city performances with the intimacy and affordability of a small town, and it's a great way to spend an evening after a day of wine tasting in Santa Barbara County."

Following is a summary of the remarkable theater experiences that await visitors to the Santa Maria Valley in late 2008 and 2009:

PCPA Theaterfest / www.pcpa.org

The nationally acclaimed PCPA Theaterfest remains the only professional resident company on the Central Coast and stages the finest classic and contemporary live theater plays. PCPA Theaterfest's new season includes *White Christmas* (November 6 through December 21), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (February 12 through March 1), *Les Miserables* (April 9 through May 10), *Music Man* (July 17 through August 23) and *Spitfire Grill* (August 7 through September 13). PCPA Theaterfest will also present a Tony Award-winning musical from June 19 through August 2. However, the company is not allowed to publish the title until December.

PCPA Theaterfest's plays are presented in three theaters: the 440-seat thrust stage Marian Theatre and the 180-seat Severson Theater, both in Santa Maria, and the 700-seat outdoor Solvang Festival Theater in Solvang.

Santa Maria Civic Theatre / www.smct.org

Known as "the little theatre off Broadway," the Santa Maria Civic Theatre is the longest running continuous performance group of any community theater in the area between Ventura and Monterey.

The Santa Maria Civic Theatre's new season includes *Christmas Cactus* (November 21 through December 13), *God's Favorite* (February 6 through February 28) and *Death Trap* (April 24 through May 16). The Santa Maria Civic Theatre's plays are presented at its 100-seat stage in downtown Santa Maria.

Great American Melodrama & Vaudeville / www.americanmelodrama.com

Another local theater institution is the Great American Melodrama & Vaudeville in nearby Oceano, where theatergoers are welcomed into a comfortable atmosphere of cabaret tables with

sawdust on the floor and honky-tonk piano music in the air. Here, professional performers from all over the United States gather to present top-notch productions of great classic comedies, musicals and melodramas. Attendees are encouraged to cheer the hero and boo the villain, creating a dynamic interactive experience.

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