

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOUTH PACIFIC TO BE TO BE THE NEXT, FREE, PLAY IN THE PARK

Paso Robles - The REC Foundation in Paso Robles will be presenting one of the most enchanting musicals of all time, Rodgers & Hammerstein's ***South Pacific***, on stage September 20 and 21 at Centennial Park Amphitheater. The popular musical is presented Free of Charge, as a gift to the community and as a way to strengthen appreciation of local parks and outdoor venues. Set on a tropical island during World War II, the musical tells the sweeping romantic story of two couples and how their happiness is threatened by the realities of war and by their own prejudices. Beloved songs include "Some Enchanted Evening," "I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair," "Bali Ha'i" and "There is Nothin' Like a Dame". ***South Pacific*** includes music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and book by Oscar Hammerstein II and Joshua Logan. Based on James A. Michener's Pulitzer Prize-winning 1947 book Tales of the South Pacific, the musical draws from multiple story elements in the text. The original Broadway production opened in April of 1947, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1950 and gathering ten Tony Awards. The 2008 Broadway revival at Lincoln Center followed in these footsteps, winning seven Tony Awards, including Best Musical Revival.

Following the REC Foundation's highly acclaimed production of *Man of La Mancha* last year, REC has once again hired director Cynthia Anthony to direct this year's Play in the Park show. Anthony's considerable resume includes multiple directing credits, drama teaching positions, and arts administration positions--including serving as the Executive Director of Pioneer Players and San Luis Obispo Little Theatre. Musical Director Cactus Sam Harris is a Paso native, now earning his Master's Degree in Music. This production features outstanding local talent such as Veronica Surber, who plays the perky Nellie Forbush, and Jacob Shearer who will headline as Emile deBecque. Sean

McCallon plays the sly rascal, Luther Billis and Daniel Lewis plays the romantic Marine lieutenant, Joe Cable, opposite Laura Schaeffer as his beloved Liat. Janine Ellich plays the incomparable Bloody Mary and Brett Boyle will be seen as Commander Brackett. Twenty additional performers round out the cast.

Local businesses and organizations have contributed creatively to the production as well. Paso Bamboo is supplying over 30 live bamboo plants to decorate the set, and the Estrella Warbird Museum is allowing the production company to borrow many authentic military items, including a Navy Jeep. J Lohr Winery is donating wine, which is sold as a fundraiser for the REC Foundation, at the performances. Although the production is presented absolutely free, donations will be collected following the performance to support the non-profit REC Foundation, which is currently raising funds to rebuild the Downtown Park Playground.

According to Director Cynthia Anthony, the show is still relevant today, "Even after 50 plus years, this musical is still compelling," she states. "People far from home, in a new, strange place, still long for love and connection and we still struggle with preconceived notions and deeply embedded prejudices that keep us from fully embracing other cultures and races. When the show opened in 1949 it was extremely controversial, yet the brilliance of Rodgers and Hammerstein was that they could confront those racial divides in a way that exposed the truth through their lilting music and wonderful characters. Of course, the timeless tales of love and of men and women attempting to cope with an impending war, told in a brilliantly comical way, is still meaningful and entertaining to audiences today."

Challenged by the prospect of fully producing a musical in a so-called amphitheatre, with a cement slab full of rocks, set in a gully in a city park, the creative team has been working hard. Producer Laurie Zenobio confesses that, "We began this project not knowing how to build our sets, especially given the fact this show calls for exotic settings such as a beach, a mysterious island, a naval base and a rich plantation home. Like most art, we simply began, and the vision became clear. We have built revolving set pieces and placed a large painted backdrop to represent the sea. Instead of ignoring

the giant boulders that are imbedded in our cement stage, we have incorporated them into the action on stage. Bamboo plants, camouflage netting, wicker furniture and tons of props help create a sense of place and the historical time period."

Professional lights and sound will be brought in for the show, allowing for an amazing theatrical experience. Curtain time is 7PM. Wine and soda will be sold at the event.

Please bring low-backed beach chairs and blankets and to sit on the lawn. The public is welcome to bring a picnic, if desired. Admission is free, and the public is encouraged to make a donation to support the REC Foundation