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For immediate release

## **There'll be a Whole Lotta "Hairspray" Going on at SCERA Center for the Arts**

(Orem, Utah) -- It's the early 1960's and "times they are a changin'." Yet in Baltimore it's still a time when dancing on a popular local TV dance program is the height of success. And it's the ideal backdrop for the musical, "Hairspray," which received an armload of Tony Awards and will have its Utah County premiere when it opens the 2010-2011 Encore Season at the SCERA Center for the Arts.

"Hairspray" opens Sept. 17 at 7:30 p.m. and continues Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 4. Reserved-seat tickets are \$12 for adults and \$10 for children (age 3-11), seniors (age 65+) and students (w/ID). They are available in advance from 10am-6pm weekdays and Saturdays from 12Noon-6pm at the main office of the SCERA Center, 745 South State, Orem), by calling (801) 225-ATS, online at [www.scera.org](http://www.scera.org) or at the door 30 minutes to each performance based on availability.

"I love this show," says director Shawn M. Mortensen, a popular actor and director who directed SCERA's productions of "Disco Inferno" and "Smokey Joe's Café." "I think the recent movie 'Hairspray' does not do the script justice at all. Amid all the fun, there are many cool vignettes of change, acceptance and growth."

The story opens with lovable plus-sized teen, Tracy Turnblad, dreaming of dancing on *The Corny Collins Show*, which is based on a real local show that was popular in Baltimore. When Tracy wins a role on the show, overnight she goes from being an outsider to a teen celebrity. She then campaigns to integrate the show as she realizes the injustices of American society in the 1960s. Less seriously, can she vanquish the dance program's snobby reigning princess and find true love—dancing and singing all the while – without mussing her bouffant hair?

With arguably one of the most catchy and upbeat musical scores of all time by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman, "Hairspray" is a tour de force for some of the valley's best singers and dancers, with songs including *Good Morning Baltimore*, *You Can't Stop The Beat*, *Mama I'm A Big Girl Now*, *It Takes Two*, *Welcome to the 60's*, *I Can Hear The Bells* and more. "This particular cast," Mortensen says, "is perfect for the show, and we have found a good mix of ethnicities to underscore the musical's message."

Heather Burgess plays Tracy, and, says the director, "She is bubbly and fun, and people will fall in love with her and root for her character every step of the way. And she's that triple threat you need for the part of Tracy – she can sing, dance and act, and she does all three very well!" Heather has some impressive history with the show. When producers and casting directors were looking for the lead for the movie version of "Hairspray" in 2006, Heather went to open call auditions in Las Vegas with thousands of other hopefuls, made it through two rounds, and was the only girl they called back for the coveted role of Tracy. She had the opportunity to do a scene on camera for the producers, and TV newsmagazine *Entertainment Tonight* did a short spot about her on their program. Although she didn't end up with the part, SCERA audiences are sure to appreciate the abundant talent the film producers saw in her.

In keeping with the show's tradition of a man playing Tracy's mother, Edna, Eric Harper has taken on the part. "He is 6'4" and drives a Harley, but he's ideal for this part," Mortensen says. "He has given Edna

some sass and attitude. We're letting him have a lot of fun with his role, and we'll have some surprises people are not going to expect." Tracy's love interest, Link Larkin, is played by Andrew Joy, and Lt. Mark Buffington is Corny Collins. "He has a giant smile and perfect hair," Mortensen says of Buffington. The moment he came to auditions I knew he was perfect for the part."

Mortensen cast 55 in the show because he says he was looking for a "pow factor." "I wanted a lot of dancers on stage. I wanted performers in the balconies, actually coming from everywhere. In my mind I see Tracy as living out a fairy tale, and her imagination is as big as my own. Wait until you see some of the production numbers. Like a said, 'pow!'"

Other major roles are played by Whitney Norman as Penny Pingleton; Elijah Thomas as Seaweed; Tierra Jean as Motormouth Maybelle; Tracy Whitlock as Prudy Pingleton; Mark McDonall as Wilbur Turnblad; Julia Richardson as Amber Von Tussle; Gayle Hansen as Velma Von Tussle; and Tanika Little, Sarah Burroughs and Rebecca Burroughs as The 3 Dynamites.

Set designer Teri Griffin, who has researched the debut of pop art in New York in 1962, has created a larger-than-life pop art collage for the back wall as well as giant Baltimore postcards to pay homage to the landmark city. "It's really stunning to see all the different pieces from the early '60s in the show," Mortensen adds.

Also assisting Mortensen are Sunny Watts as choreographer; Kathryn Little as music director; James Larsen as lightning designer; Teri Griffin as set designer; Kelsey Seaver and Deborah Bowman as costume designers; and Lindsy Neilson as stage manager.

SCERA will also present an added element to go along with the production, tied in to one of the show's big songs, *The Nicest Kids In Town*. They are asking for nominations of "nice kids" in grades 7-12 who have made a significant difference, given extraordinary service or gone above and beyond to do a kind deed for family, friends, neighborhood, school, church or community.

Says SCERA President & CEO Adam J. Robertson, "Each night before 'Hairspray' begins, we will bring one of our nominees to the stage to be recognized, and they and their family will be our special guests at the show."

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