

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Saddle up, pardner, because *Destry Rides Again* Young performers revive a rootin', tootin' gem of a musical Feb. 11-26, 2012**

DECEMBER 5, 2011 – Welcome, stranger, to Bottleneck, one of the roughest, toughest, rowdiest backwaters in the American West. Sheriffs come and go here – mostly go – and crime is just a way of life. Until, that is, the arrival of Tom Destry, a deputy sheriff who refuses to wear a gun.

Can his non-violent approach really tame the Wild West?

The answer is a resounding yes, especially since that non-violent approach also comes with a heaping helping of singing and dancing.

The San Francisco Arts Education Project proudly presents *Destry Rides Again* performed by the SFArtsED Players, a troupe of musical theater performers ages 9 to 14. The show runs Feb. 11 through Feb. 26 at the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco.

Destry marks the first Western musical in the 12-year history of the SFArtsED Players, a group that has performed everything from musical theater classics (*The Music Man*, *Fiorello!*) to original revues (last year's *Everything Goes! The Music of Cole Porter*) and original musicals (*Between Dirt and Sky*).

*Destry Rides Again* was part of a stellar 1959 Broadway season, which also included *The Sound of Music* and *Gypsy*. Harold Rome, of *Pins and Needles* and *I Can Get It for You Wholesale* fame, wrote the charming score, and Leonard Gershe wrote the book based on the 1930 novel by Max Brand and the 1939 movie starring James Stewart as Deputy Sheriff Tom Destry and Marlene Dietrich as dance hall girl Frenchy.

“*Destry Rides Again* is a wonderful idea for a musical” says Danny Duncan, the show’s director and a veteran of Players shows. “When the cast album came out in 1959, I was a young boy in San Francisco, but when I listened to that album, I could see the entire show. I loved the Jimmy Stewart-Marlene Dietrich film and loved the Old West story, and it turned out to be perfect for director-choreographer Michael Kidd, who turned the show into an extraordinary star vehicle and ensemble dance show.”

The legendary Kidd directed and choreographed *Destry* on Broadway and won a Tony Award for the dynamic dances he created for the show. The show was a hit, racking up 472 performances during the year and a half it was open at the Imperial Theatre.

“It turns out this show is perfect for us,” says SFArtsED Artistic Director Emily Keeler. “There is so much strong ensemble work, especially in the dancing. The ensemble is on stage most of the time because this is a show about community and about how bringing law and order to town is changing the community. For the kids it’s an opportunity of a lifetime because they’re all on stage so much of the time. Michael Kidd created a show in which every transformative moment in the story is also a dance moment. For us and what we want to teach our students – to sing, dance and act – this is a fantastic show. And it’s fun.”



*Johnny Kelly is Deputy Sheriff Tom Destry and Schuyler Poh is Frenchy in the SFArtsED Players production of Destry Rides Again. Photo by Karen Steffens*

The theme of non-violence is strong in *Destry* as the unarmed Deputy Sheriff deals with bullies whose only power comes from carrying a gun.

“*Destry* says that guns are no good,” Duncan says. “The song says, ‘Those who live by the gun, die by the gun, ending with a swift kiss of lead.’ The first time I heard that in 1959 it gave me goose bumps, and that’s a hell of a message to bring into this troubled century. This show remains quite relevant.”

Keeler says the anti-violence message is the essence of *Destry*. “It’s about brains over brawn, smarts over violence,” she says. “That’s how *Destry* approaches his job of fixing this town. He does it with love and with his interest in fairness, which is part of what makes *Destry* great: great theme, great music, great dance, great humor. Part of the joy this year is bringing a show to the stage that is not seen a lot but should be. We’re reviving something for our company, and we’re proud of that.”

*Destry Rides Again* is directed by Danny Duncan, with musical direction by Sean Forte, choreography by Natalie Greene, Erin Hewitt and Emily Keeler, costumes by Barbara Beccio, set by Paul Kwapy and lighting by Elizabeth Hersh. Stage Managers are Sydney Gaugreau and Adriana Martinez, both part of SFArtsED’s apprentice program with the technical theater program at the Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts. SOTA students also apprentice with the costume and set designer and run the light and sound boards for each of the shows at the Eureka Theatre.

**Multimedia:** Check out the Players in rehearsal for *Destry Rides Again* at <http://www.sfartsed.org/sfartsed-players/>. Also on that page you’ll find a clip from the original 1959 production of *Destry*.

**Photos:** <http://sfartsed.squarespace.com/sfartsed-players-galleries/>

### **About SFArtsED**

Founded in 1965 (as the Alvarado Arts Workshop) by renowned artist Ruth Asawa, SFArtsED has transformed the lives of children, their families, teachers, artists and volunteers. Programs include SFArtsED Summer, In-School Artists-in-Residence, After-School programs, The SFArtsED Players Musical Theater Company, apprentice programs for college and high school students and public visual art exhibits such as the upcoming *INTERNATIONAL ORANGE: The Bridge Re-imagined*, an official tribute of the Golden Gate Bridge 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

### **About The SFArtsED Players**

The SFArtsED Players is a musical theater company that reflects San Francisco in all its diversity. Hailing from the neighborhoods of the City and from around the bay, the SFArtsED Players is made up of 47 theater performers who come from SFArtsED’s performing arts residencies as well as from the organization’s summer arts intensive, called SFArtsED Summer, held each year at School District sites. The young performers are selected for their talent, enthusiasm and commitment for the musical theater form. They work with directors of the company 10 hours each week, training as “triple threats” – actors, singers, dancers – and rehearsing for their performances. The company performs original musicals and revues as well as Broadway classics. This year’s troupe represents 32 different Bay Area schools, including 18 public schools.

**For more information or to set up interviews, photos or a rehearsal visit,** please call 415.551.7990, e-mail [chad.j@sfartsed.org](mailto:chad.j@sfartsed.org) or visit [www.sfartsed.org](http://www.sfartsed.org).



***Destry Rides Again***  
FACT SHEET

- WHO:** The San Francisco Arts Education Players
- WHAT:** *Destry Rides Again*  
Nearly 50 young people, ages 9 to 14, sing and dance through the Wild West in a gem of a musical from the 1959 Broadway season.
- WHERE:** Eureka Theatre, 215 Jackson St.,  
San Francisco, CA 94111
- WHEN:** Feb. 11-26, 2011
- Saturday 2/11 & Sunday 2/12 @ 3:00 PM
  - Friday 2/17 @ 7:00 PM
  - Saturday 2/18 & Sunday 2/19 @ 3:00 PM
  - Friday 2/24 @ 7:00 PM
  - Saturday 2/25 @ 3:00 PM
  - Sunday 2/26 @ 1:00 PM\*
- HOW MUCH:** **\$15 for students and seniors**  
**\$22 general admission**  
\* Tickets for the 1:00 PM show on 2/26 are \$40 general, \$20 student/senior and include drinks, hors d'oeuvres and dessert as part of the Players' Family Reception and Closing Day Party
- TIX & INFO:** City Box Office, [www.cityboxoffice.com](http://www.cityboxoffice.com), 415.392.4400  
SFArtsED, [www.sfartsed.org](http://www.sfartsed.org), 415.551.7990

Photos are available for download at  
[www.sfartsed.org/](http://www.sfartsed.org/)

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