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**Arts & Learning Conservatory's production of Annie brings new dimension to an old story with multi-cultural cast**

*Timeless message of hope and perseverance inspires us to come together and make our world a better place*

Costa Mesa, California – The Arts & Learning Conservatory (ALC) will kick off its summer season with four upcoming performances of America's beloved musical, *Annie*, at The Rock Church in Anaheim on June 28, 2018.

The story centers around the young Annie, a gutsy orphan who is desperate to find her long-lost parents. When billionaire Oliver "Daddy" Warbucks temporarily rescues her from the wicked Miss

Hannigan to improve his image, they all embark on an unexpected journey that proves to be as heartwarming as it is restorative.

Director Jenny Moon Shaw, who studied theater arts in England and works as a teaching artist at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, believes the show's uplifting message of hope resonates with audiences of all ages and cultures. "*Annie* shows us that no matter what the circumstances life may present to you, helping others and having an optimistic outlook can change the course of life for the better."

Vanessa Evans, who co-produced the show, agrees. "Annie's story has been told through so many different mediums of entertainment and yet is still relevant from generation to generation – which is why it is consistently such a crowd pleaser."

The iconic story – taken from an 1885 poem called "Little Orphan Annie" which morphed into a popular comic strip before becoming a musical – premiered off-Broadway in 1976. A year later, it ran for nearly six years on Broadway at the Alvin Theater (now the Neil Simon Theater), boasting two Broadway revivals since then.

The ALC cast consists of 68 actors who will be performing alongside a live orchestra including a brass quintet, string ensemble, wind musicians, two pianists, a drummer, and a bassist. We are very proud of the diversity represented in our cast," says Evans. "We have broken the stereotypical mold by casting an African American actor to play the part of Daddy Warbucks."

Despite age and cultural differences, the performers have cultivated remarkably strong bonds, thematic of the camaraderie Annie forms with her fellow orphans, and ultimately with Daddy Warbucks.

"My favorite part of this performance is being able to be surrounded by people I can proudly call my second family," says Serena Thompson who plays Grace.

Veteran ALC actor Jewell Holloway who plays Daddy Warbucks, echoes this sentiment. "It's not only important to know all of your lines and blocking, but it's also important to really enjoy what you are doing and to share that enjoyment with others."

Having a strong leader at the helm to help bring this family to life on stage doesn't hurt either.

"Miss Jenny has taken an already beloved, classical musical and turned it into something even better," says Ava Howe, who plays Miss Hannigan.

Performances dates and times are June 28 & 29 at 7:00 pm, and June 30 at 1:00 pm and at 6:00 pm. Tickets can be purchased online at [artsandlearning.org](http://artsandlearning.org) or call 714-728-7100.

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