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March 13, 2019

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Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance Announces Regional *Mamma Mia!* Project

Public Performances at Midland Center for the Arts, High School Performances at Pit & Balcony, & Theatre Workshops at Bay City Players

(Freeland, Michigan) – The Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance announced today that it will present a regional community theatre production of the hit Broadway musical *Mamma Mia!* in September 2019. The production will be an opportunity for unprecedented cooperation among Midland Center for the Arts' Center Stage Theatre, Pit & Balcony Theatre, and Bay City Players.

“The goal of a regional *Mamma Mia!* production is to bring together and showcase the outstanding theatre talent from Bay, Isabella, Midland, and Saginaw Counties into one production,” said Matthew Felan, President & CEO of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance. “The Great Lakes Bay Region has long been home to outstanding community theatre and this will be an opportunity to highlight the immense talent from our four counties in one production.”

There will be multiple components to the *Mamma Mia!* project presented across the region. Midland Center for the Arts will host six performances of *Mamma Mia!* in their 1,500-seat auditorium September 20th–22nd and 27th-29th. Pit & Balcony will host free performances for school students from October 2nd – 4th. Bay City Players will host special sneak peek Cabaret Nights on Thursday and Friday, September 5th and 6th. Bay City Players will also host workshops throughout the month of September to spark interest in *Mamma Mia!* as well as to help foster further development of regional community theatre talent. Isabella County will be well represented by both on-stage and off-stage talent in the production.

“Theatre roots run deep throughout our region and that shows in the talent we see on stage in our local productions,” said Terri Trotter, President & CEO of Midland Center for the Arts and Co-Chair of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance Quality of Life Subcommittee. “Attracting business to our region is the ultimate goal of the Alliance and to do that, we have to ramp up our promotion of the amazing cultural offerings we have in our region and do a better job telling the story of why this is such a great place to live. Taking an immensely popular musical like *Mamma Mia!* and presenting something that showcases the very best talent we have in the entire region gives us a great platform to tell our regional story.”

Tommy Wedge, Assistant Professor of Theatre at Saginaw Valley State University, has been selected as the stage director for *Mamma Mia!*. Tommy has a long directing resume on all three stages, including *Hands on a Hard Body* at Pit & Balcony, *Beauty and the Beast* at Midland Center for the Arts, assisting with *Nice Work If You Can Get It* at Bay City Players, alongside directing numerous productions at SVSU.

“Actors have been waiting 18 years for the performance rights for *Mamma Mia!* to become available,” said, Tommy Wedge. “It’s a show audiences want to see, designers want to design, and actors want

to perform in. This collaboration breaks down the false narrative that these nonprofit theatres in the Great Lakes Bay region have to compete with each other. Here's a situation where all these groups, and the audiences that support them, can come together to both support their local theatres and the Great Lakes Bay Region as a whole."

"A project of this magnitude has never been done before in the Great Lakes Bay Region, and to our knowledge, a production of this size among three community theatres anywhere has never been done before," adds Amy Spadafore, Managing Director of Pit and Balcony Theatre. "We have so much talent in this area—and not just in people who are trying to get out and 'make it big'—but in mothers, fathers, teachers, lawyers, students—so many people with such talent and passion and this is the perfect way to showcase that."

"It's unusual for three different community theatres to work together on one show. Sharing it with students is a bonus," adds Kathy Pawloski, Operations Manager of Bay City Players. "So many kids have no exposure to live theatre and this could spark a lifelong interest for them. Community theatre only exists because of strong community support in all aspects of the theatre. From those that attend the shows to those who work on the sets, play in the pit, or perform on stage—just to name a few areas within the theatre. So much of this production will rely on volunteers from the three theatres."

Auditions will be held on July 9 at Pit & Balcony, July 11 at Midland Center for the Arts and July 12 at Bay City Players.

Tickets for *Mamma Mia!* will go on sale to the general public on June 27 and will be available from the box offices and websites of all three theatres. (www.midlandcenter.org, www.pitandbalconytheatre.com, and www.baycityplayers.org)

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Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance

The mission of the Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance is to encourage, support and celebrate regional collaboration and initiatives that will improve the economic vitality and quality of life in the Great Lakes Bay Region. The Great Lakes Bay Regional Alliance is comprised of 48 Board Members who represent Bay, Isabella, Midland and Saginaw counties. (www.greatlakesbay.com)

Midland Center for the Arts

Midland Center for the Arts, Inc. is a cultural center for Mid-Michigan and the state, bringing arts, sciences, history and the humanities together under one roof. Featuring a 1500 seat theater that hosts touring Broadway musicals and talent from around the globe, the Midland Symphony Orchestra and more, a 400 seat theater that is the home to locally produced theater and music including CenterStage Theatre and Choirs, a hands-on interactive museum of science and art, the Midland County Historical Society, and art studios, the Center is a home to artists and audiences alike. For the latest Center news, visit our web site at www.midlandcenter.org.

Pit & Balcony Theatre

Pit & Balcony Theatre is a non-profit organization in Saginaw, Mich. In its 87th year of operation, Pit & Balcony is one of the oldest community theatres in the country and has played a strong role in the realization and fulfillment of arts and culture in the Great Lakes Bay Region. The theater offers opportunities to adults and youths to participate in all facets of the theater, from acting to working behind the scenes as part of the production team. (www.pitandbalconytheatre.com)

Bay City Players

Bay City Players is a volunteer-based community theatre dedicated to providing high quality theatrical experiences for the entertainment, education, and enrichment of the community. (www.baycityplayers.org)