

## **PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT For Immediate Release**

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### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Flower Drum Song JCCCNC Special Package Includes Exclusive Reception with David Henry Hwang, Nancy Kwan and Cast**

*SAN FRANCISCO (October 8, 2008)* – On Sunday, November 9, 2008, the Japanese Cultural and Community Center of Northern California (JCCCNC), Contemporary Asian Theatre Scene and Asian American for Community Involvement along with the American Music Theater of San Jose and the Center of Performing Arts presents the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of FLOWER DRUM SONG.

The original *Flower Drum Song* opened on Broadway in 1958, with the legendary song & dance man Gene Kelly — whose bio in the signature "Who's Who in the Cast" mentions his theatrical ambitions — making his Broadway directorial debut with Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Flower Drum Song*. The cast of the show featured an all-Asian ensemble and headliners including Miyoshi Umeki, Ed Kenney, Keye Luke, newcomer Arabella Hong and Pat Suzuki.

The special 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Package includes Premium Orchestra tickets to the 1:00 p.m. matinee show at the Center for the Performing Arts at 255 Almaden Boulevard in San Jose and entry to the exclusive VIP Reception from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, across the street from the theater. The VIP Reception includes a buffet dinner and program which will include a discussion with David Henry Hwang and Nancy Kwan with the opportunity to take photos with the cast. The JCCCNC is offering reception only tickets for those who have already purchased tickets to the show. The special reception only price is \$50 for JCCCNC members and \$75 for general. If you cannot attend the reception, but would like to see *Flower Drum Song* Sunday, November 9 at 1:00 p.m. the JCCCNC has a limited number of Premium Orchestra tickets available for \$65. Please call the JCCCNC at (415) 567-5505 to reserve your tickets today. The musical will run from October 28 through November 9. Other tickets are available for this show and others online at [www.amtsj.org](http://www.amtsj.org).

Bus transportation is available from San Francisco Japantown to San Jose for only \$19 per person (round-trip, matinee and reception only) for the November 9 JCCCNC special package, but you must call the JCCCNC at (415) 567-5505 to reserve your seat.

David Henry Hwang's updated Broadway version of *Flower Drum Song* tells the story of Mei-li, a young woman who flees to America in the late 1950s when her father, a Chinese opera master, falls under persecution from the Communist government. Arriving in San Francisco, she finds work in a run-down Chinese opera house where the patriarch, Master Wang, struggles to keep old traditions alive, while his American-born son, Ta, dreams of converting the space into a Western-style nightclub. Together with a showgirl and her fast-talking agent, Ta realizes his dream when the old theatre becomes a popular new nightspot, Club Chop Suey. In the whirlwind that follows, Mei-li finds herself falling in love, while the characters grapple with the joys and the challenges of life in the new world. This funny and moving story explores what it means to be an American."

The "revisal" about Chinese immigrants assimilating into American life circa 1960 — sweetened by such Rodgers & Hammerstein tunes as "Love, Look Away," "Sunday", Fan Tan Fanny and "I Enjoy Being a Girl" — opened Oct. 17, 2002, at the Virginia Theatre and starred Tony award winning Lea Salonga.

David Henry Hwang the only Asian American Tony award-winning playwright has succeeded in revitalizing *Flower Drum Song* for a whole new generation. In 1996, after seeing a new version of the *King and I* on Broadway, Hwang decided to write the book that Oscar Hammerstein would have written, had he been Asian American.

Bestowed the rights by the Rodgers and Hammerstein powers-that-be, and with the blessings of C.Y. Lee, author of the novel *The Flower Drum Song*, Hwang collaborated with director/choreographer Robert Longbottom and musical director David Chase to bring the revised musical to Broadway.

"*Flower Drum Song*, I would argue is the first Chinese American novel to be published by an established publishing house, [and] certainly the first Chinese American novel to be on the best-seller list," says Hwang. "*Flower Drum Song* has been a landmark for Asian

Americans in each of its incarnations - the novel, the Broadway musical was the first to feature and star Asian Americans, and the movie was the first Hollywood movie to do so."

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**About the JCCCNC**

Envisioned by the Japanese American community, the JCCCNC will be an everlasting foundation of our Japanese American ancestry, cultural heritage, histories and traditions. The JCCCNC strives to meet the evolving needs of the Japanese American community through programs, affordable services and administrative support and facilities for other local service organizations. The JCCCNC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit community center based in San Francisco.