



For Immediate Release
July 3, 2003

Grease and Miss Saigon a rip-off

Local actors urge boycott of non-union bus and truck shows in Toronto and Vancouver

TORONTO — Canadian Actors' Equity Association today announced the boycott of two U.S. touring productions visiting Canada's major theatres. Traveling productions of *Grease* and *Miss Saigon* touch down in Toronto and Vancouver in the next two weeks and are expected to rake in significant ticket dollars for shows that pay actors half the going rate than what is provided for under Equity's scale agreements.

Announcing that informational pickets will be set up in front of the theatres for their opening nights, Equity's executive director Susan Wallace explained: "These shows, *Grease* and *Miss Saigon*, are selling themselves to the ticket buying public as if they arrived in Canada straight from Broadway when nothing could be further from the truth.

"By using young, eager performers who are not working under a contract negotiated with Equity, the producers get away with paying half the usual rates but sell full priced tickets to the public. Legitimate producers, both in Canada and in the United States, are undercut in their production costs and undermined in their ability to provide audiences with high quality shows. Our audiences deserve better, and the performers should be properly paid for their work."

On Tuesday, July 8, 2003 *Miss Saigon* opens at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver for a one week run before heading out to several Canadian stops over the summer. With a top ticket price of \$80, audiences will pay only \$5 less than a full price ticket for the fabulous, fully Canadian production of *Mamma Mia* opening in Vancouver immediately after *Miss Saigon* hits the road. But with actor salaries in *Miss Saigon* ranging around \$450 US per week for a chorus performer, versus the roughly \$1,000 Cdn required for actors in *Mamma Mia*, it's clear how the non-union shows make their money.

In Toronto, the non-union touring production of *Grease* opens at the Hummingbird Centre on Tuesday, July 15, 2003 for a one week run, before sliding back across the border with its box office rake. With the announced closing of Toronto's home-grown production of the *Lion King* and the summer hiatus of *Mamma Mia*, local producers have to compete with foreign companies undercutting the fees they pay to actors. With top ticket prices for *Grease* at the \$85 mark, consumers are urged to save their money.

"We are calling for an all out boycott of these two productions at every stop across Canada," said Wallace. "The public is urged to spend their ticket dollars on any of the wonderful productions being offered in our professional theatres across the country this summer – offered by producers who value the contribution made by their performers. Catch *Lion King* in Toronto before it closes. See *Mamma Mia* in Vancouver before all the tickets are gone. But don't waste your summer nights - slide on by *Grease* and give *Saigon* a MISS!"

Informational pickets will be at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Vancouver on Tuesday, July 8 and at the Hummingbird Centre in Toronto on Tuesday, July 15.

Media Contact: Kevin Patrick Robbins
416-867-9165 or kprobbins@caea.com