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DANCE

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DANCING IN MEMPHIS

The Tony-winning musical Memphis, coming to the Hult, tackles the Civil Rights era

PHOTO BY KIRSTINE CHRISTIANSEN

The musical *Memphis* follows stardust hopeful Felicia Farrell and disc jockey Huey Calhoun on their ascent from underground juke joints to rock 'n' roll fame.

A Broadway smash from 2009 to 2012, *Memphis* won Tony Awards in 2010 for Best Musical, Best Book (by Joe DiPietro) and Best Original Score (by David Bryan and DiPietro). Now on its second national tour with new direction and choreography by Amy McCleary, the 22-person touring version of *Memphis* performs at the Hult Center Feb. 23 and 24.

"The show pays attention to what was happening in Memphis at that time," Director McCleary says. "It's when they took rhythm and blues and figured out if they sped it up, it became rock 'n' roll. Kids would drive for miles to hear this music."

Set against the backdrop of the segregated '50s, *Memphis* uses song and dance to explore the highs and the lows of a pivotal moment in history.

As a choreographer, McCleary says the musical score excites her "because it has a lot of wonderful rhythm and accents." Building on a lexicon of '50s dance styles, McCleary says the show features "tons of singing and dancing, from swing and partner dance to Motown."

And as a director, McCleary says she admires the show's narrative. "The script writer plays a fine line between drama and comedy," she says. "You're enjoying yourself, and then you'll see something that reminds you, 'this is 1952,' and there are real problems and issues."

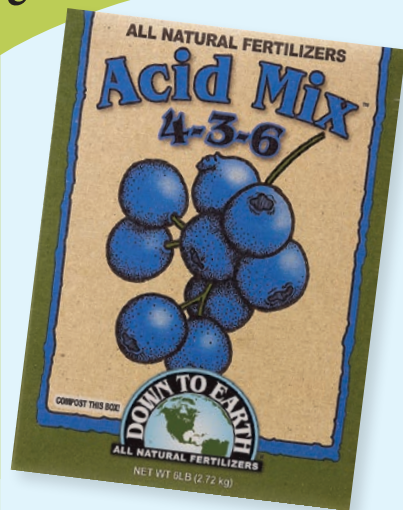
McCleary advises bringing "older, educated children" to the performance. "I'd rate it PG-13," she says.

The show's catchy tunes and exciting dance numbers, McCleary notes, can serve as an entrée to learning more about the civil rights movement.

"It's a great platform to start discussions about a great period of history," McCleary says. "And to notice how art can bring about change." ■

Memphis runs at the Hult Center 7:30 pm Feb. 23 and 24. For tickets, please visit hultcenter.org; \$33-\$78.

Your Organic Garden Store

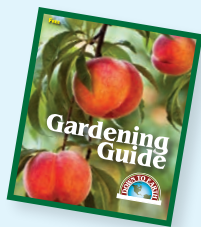


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