

A Special Message to Charleston Stage Patrons Regarding the Current Economic Crisis and Its Effects on the Arts In Charleston

As I'm sure you've been reading, Charleston Stage, like all of the performing arts organizations in Charleston, indeed, all the arts groups in the nation, are facing severe shortfalls in fundraising this season. Our fundraising, which comprises 53% of our budget (the other 47% comes from ticket sales) is down by over \$200,000 this season. In addition, Charleston Stage has had the extra burden of escalating operating costs brought about by our temporary relocation from the Dock Street Theatre to Memminger Auditorium and the College of Charleston's Sottile Theatre while the Dock Street undergoes renovations. Overall these additional costs are over \$500,000.

Like everyone, we are facing an unprecedented economic downturn. Charleston Stage has been pro-active in addressing this challenge. Even before this crisis was in full swing Charleston Stage cut productions from 11 last season to 8 this year and reduced production expenses by over \$200,000. By continuing to tighten our belts and with the generous support of people like you, we should be able to weather this crisis. Our budgets may be smaller but that just means we'll be putting even more imagination into our shows.

Charleston Stage is also working closely together with the Charleston Symphony, Charleston Ballet Theatre, the Coastal Community Foundation, The City of Charleston and The League of Charleston Theatres to find ways to work together during these challenging economic times.

Yes, more than ever, we desperately need your financial support both in donations and in ticket sales. We can't get through this without you. But with your help, not only will our productions go on, but Charleston Stage's extensive arts education programs, which reach over 20,000 Lowcountry youth each season, will be able to continue uninterrupted.

Though we have replaced *Crazy for You*, our final show of the season with the less expensive but just as spectacular Broadway Blockbuster, *The Producers*, we have no plans for any additional changes to our schedule.

Still, please be generous with your Annual Campaign gifts to Charleston Stage. Those gifts this year mean more than ever before.

With your help, the shows WILL go on!

Thank you for your support and generosity.

Julian Wiles
Founder and Producing Artistic Director