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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2008

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PLAYHOUSE PRESENTS LAUGH-A-SECOND COMEDY IN DECEMBER
KEN LUDWIG'S LEADING LADIES OPENS DECEMBER 5th

LAKE WORTH, Florida (November 18, 2008) – The Lake Worth Playhouse continues its 56th season with Ken Ludwig's comedy, *LEADING LADIES*. Opening December 5th and running through December 21st, *LEADING LADIES* is helmed by local director Helen Buttery and features seasoned South Florida actors, Michael DeGrotta and Todd Caster.

A comedy of mistaken identity centered around two down-on-their-luck Shakespearean actors, *LEADING LADIES* was written by internationally acclaimed playwright, Ken Ludwig, author of Broadway hits *LEND ME A TENOR*, *CRAZY FOR YOU* and *MOON OVER BUFFALO*. Director Helen Buttery returns to the Playhouse after directing *SOMETHING'S AFOOT* in 2005. Buttery has worked locally in South Florida theatre as a director, stage manager, actor and stagehand.

DeGrotta and Caster play actors, Jack and Leo, who have sunk so low they find themselves performing *SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE* on the Moose Lodge circuit in Amish Country of Pennsylvania. A newspaper ad announcing that a local rich widow is about to die and leave her fortune to her long-lost English nephews prompts the desperate duo to scam her of the fortune by passing themselves off as her beloved relatives. Their scheme hits a snag when they discover the relatives aren't nephews, but nieces. Chaotic calamity ensues when the actors transform themselves from Max and Steve into "Maxine" and "Stephanie," leading to unexpected hitches, glitches and plenty of surprising romantic entanglements.

The Houston Press calls *LEADING LADIES* "so funny, it will make sophisticated and reasonable men and women of the 21st century cackle till their faces hurt."

The San Diego Union-Tribune says "Ludwig's laugh-a second (yes, they do come that fast) farce, will surely join Charley's Aunt in the repertoires of regional and community theatres for decades to come."

About the Playwright

Ken Ludwig has had a number of hits on Broadway, in the West End of London and throughout the world. He has received the coveted Laurence Olivier Award from the London Society of West End Theatres, as well as two Tony Award nominations, two Helen Hayes Awards, and the Edwin

Forrest Award for Contributions to Drama. He is an Associate Artist of the Alley Theatre, where his last two plays, LEADING LADIES and BE MY BABY, had their world premieres.

His Broadway productions include CRAZY FOR YOU, which won the Tony Award for Best Musical and was broadcast nationwide on PBS Great Performances; LEND ME A TENOR, which was produced by Andrew Lloyd Webber; MOON OVER BUFFALO, which marked Carol Burnett's return to Broadway after 30 years and then played at the legendary Old Vic in London starring Joan Collins and Frank Langella; a musical of THE ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER; and TWENTIETH CENTURY starring Alec Baldwin and Anne Heche. His other plays include SHAKESPEARE IN HOLLYWOOD, which was commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company and won the Helen Hayes Best New Play of the Year Award; SULLIVAN & GILBERT, which was produced by the National Arts Centre of Canada; a mystery entitled POSTMORTEM; an adaptation of THE THREE MUSKETEERS, which was commissioned by the Bristol Old Vic in England; and an adaptation of the Restoration comedy THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM, which was begun by Thornton Wilder and completed by Mr. Ludwig at the request of the Wilder Estate.

Most recently, Ludwig wrote a stage version of AN AMERICAN IN PARIS with the words and music by George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin in the tradition of their collaboration on CRAZY FOR YOU. It premiered in May 2008 at the Alley Theatre in Houston as THE GERSHWINS' AN AMERICAN IN PARIS.

Ludwig studied music at Harvard with Leonard Bernstein and theatre history at Cambridge University in England, and he has served on the New Play Committee of the National Endowment for the Arts. He recently established the Ken Ludwig Playwriting Scholarship, to be awarded each year under the auspices of the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival.

About the Cast

Veteran actor **Michael DeGrotta** ("Jack") has been entertaining South Florida audiences for more than 30 years. He was last seen at Lake Worth Playhouse in the role of Sheriff Ed Earl Dodd in THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS and as Bob Baker in WONDERFUL TOWN. Michael was a featured player in the Atlantis Playhouse production of THE LIFE and has won 11 Best Actor Awards at the Delray Beach Playhouse.

Todd Caster ("Leo") has performed locally and nationally in numerous stage productions, including THE FALSE WITNESS, MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, DON JUAN IN HELL and RUMORS. He is also the co-founder of Theatre Arts Group, and he is a published playwright who has had his plays, DOG OF WAR and STRANDED ON THE ISLE OF FEW, produced in South Florida.

Freda Kratka ("Florence") plays the unsuspecting rich widow in LEADING LADIES. Her numerous Lake Worth Playhouse credits include FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, GYPSY, MY FAIR LADY, ME AND MY GIRL, FOLLIES, SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, LOOK HOMEWARD ANGEL, ANNIE, THE UNSINKABLE MOLLY BROWN, LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS, STEEL MAGNOLIAS and OLIVER. She has also performed with the Delray Playhouse, Spotlight Players, The Royal Palm Dinner Theatre and with touring productions in England and Wales.

Other cast members include Megan Pollak ("Meg"), James Beecham ("Duncan"), Samantha Leah Marulli ("Audrey"), Bill Manikas ("Doc") and Patrick Pilch ("Butch").

About Lake Worth Playhouse

Lake Worth Playhouse is a not-for-profit, non-equity community theatre with a diverse array of offerings, including award-winning dramas, comedies, musicals, area premieres, reinterpretations of classics, children's shows, ballets and operas on film, concert series and alternative programming. In addition to its main stage theatrical fare, the Playhouse presents year-round

independent and foreign films in the Stonzek Theatre, an intimate black-box style theatre equipped with a large viewing screen and high-definition projection. The Playhouse is proud to offer a variety of educational programs for adults and children, as well as community outreach initiatives that bring cultural programs into the neighborhoods of underserved youth and also make theatre available free of charge for disadvantaged citizens in the community.

The 56th season of the Lake Worth Playhouse opened with BIG RIVER (October 24 – November 9, 2008) and continues with Ken Ludwig's LEADING LADIES in December, followed in January 2009 by Dan Groggin's NUNSENSE (January 16 – February 1), Arthur Miller's THE CRUCIBLE (February 27 – March 15) and Ted Swindley's ALWAYS, PATSY CLINE (April 17 – May 3).

Schedule

Opening Night for LEADING LADIES is Friday, December 5, 2008 at 8:00 PM. Performances run Thursdays through Saturdays at 8:00 PM and Sunday, December 7 at 7:00 PM. Saturday and Sunday matinees are scheduled on December 7, 13, 14, 20 and 21 at 2:00 PM. LEADING LADIES closes Sunday, December 21.

Tickets

Single ticket prices are \$25 and \$29. Subscriptions range from \$66 (Snowbird Special) to \$240 (VIP Dinner & Dress). Complimentary valet parking is available to subscribers. Tickets can be purchased through the Lake Worth Playhouse Box Office at **561-586-6410** or online at **www.lakeworthplayhouse.org**.

Location

Lake Worth Playhouse is located at 713 Lake Avenue in Downtown Lake Worth. It is situated on the south side of Lake Avenue two blocks east of Dixie Highway. Free, well-lit parking is available on Lake Avenue and surrounding side streets, with free parking lots located behind the Playhouse.

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