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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Old-school comedy from Averitt favorites Whitaker, Frazier

Legendary local actors Mical Whitaker and Eddie Frazier head a hilarious cast in the Averitt STARS production of *The Sunshine Boys* on February 11-14.

Co-directed by Ressie Fuller and Carol Thompson, the Neil Simon comedy will be performed on the Jan Brown Anderson stage of the Emma Kelly Theater on February 11-13 at 7:30 p.m. in a 3 p.m. matinee performance on the 14th. The Sunday performance is particularly special because the day is Whitaker's 80th birthday.

Al Lewis (Whitaker) and Willie Clark (Frazier) were once a successful vaudevillian comedy duo known as the Sunshine Boys. During the later years of their 43-year run, animosity between the partners grew to the point where they ceased to speak with each other. Al retired from show business, leaving Willie struggling to keep his career afloat and the two men have not spoken to each other in 12 years.

Willie, now an old man struggling with memory loss, reluctantly accepts an offer from his talent-agent nephew Ben (played by Robert Cottle) to reunite with Al for a CBS special on the history of comedy. Willie and Al meet in Willie's apartment to rehearse their classic doctor and tax collector sketches. The reunion gets off to a bad start with the two getting into heated arguments over various aspects of the performance.

Willie and Al's dress rehearsal of the doctor skit, involving patient (John Parcels) and sexy nurse (Nichole Deal) at CBS' studio along with CBS assistant (SHS junior Dearing James) is derailed by Lewis's aggressive habit of poking Clark's chest with his index finger. As Al walks off the stage in regret, Willie has a heart attack as a result of his agitated state.

Two weeks later, Willie is recovering under the care of a registered nurse (Eileen Bayens). Upon Ben's recommendation, he decides to move into an actors' retirement home in New Jersey. Al, concerned about Willie's well-being, makes a visit. When the two talk, it is revealed that Al will be moving into the same home as Willie.

Whitaker, a professional actor for the majority of his life, was honored in 2013 by being named as a member of the Georgia Theatre Hall of Fame. He is a Georgia Southern professor emeritus in theater. A Metter native, his career has taken him to theaters and radio in New York, around the country, and back to south Georgia. At the time of his retirement, Whitaker had directed and/or acted in over 100 productions throughout his 23-year Georgia Southern tenure. Since retirement, he has been heavily involved in the Averitt Center for the Arts. He founded the Statesboro Youth Theater and is the driving force behind *Behold: Here Cometh The Dreamer* and the *ONE series*. The Whitaker Black Box Theater at 41 West Main Street is named in his honor.

Frazier has been teaching drama at Statesboro High School since 2001, and has been the theater director there since 2004.

He's directed dramatic pieces such as Wit, Suddenly, Last Summer, 'night, Mother and The Whales of August as well as numerous large musical theater productions such as The Jungle Book, 101 Dalmatians, Cinderella, and Mulan. He also directed 9 to 5: The Musical, 'night, Mother and Guys and Dolls for the Averitt STARS, was the voice of Audrey II in the STARS production of Little Shop of Horrors, and co-directed the Averitt Youth Theater's production of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.

On stage at the Averitt, he has starred as Uncle Fester in The Addams Family, Dr. Frank-n-Furter in The Rocky Horror Show and in a one-man show ONE: Eddie Frazier.

The Sunshine Boys is exclusively sponsored by Southern Manor. Tickets are \$25 for adults, \$23 for Averitt Center members, members of the military, first responders and city of Statesboro employees and \$15 for students with ID. Due to the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, seating is very limited. There are also no on-line sales. To purchase tickets, simply visit the Box Office at the Averitt Center Main Gallery (open 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday through Friday) or call 912-212-2787.

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