

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Friday, February 15, 2008**

Valley Youth Theatre “Going Green” with  
*Little Shop of Horrors*  
April 4 thru 20, 2008

A nerdy love-sick florist gets more than he bargained for when he is adopted by a giant, man-eating plant from outer space. This campy musical spoof on a 1960’s sci-fi thriller will delight kids of all ages. *Little Shop of Horrors* is open for business at Valley Youth Theatre April 4 thru 20. Valley Youth Theatre, a world-class theatre located in the heart of Phoenix’s vibrant and flourishing downtown arts district, is known for its outstanding programming and world-famous alumni including Jordin Sparks and Max Crumm.

Twelve teens from across the Valley are featured:

**Carrie Braver (Tempe)**, Age 16, (Audrey) is a 10<sup>th</sup> Grader at McClintock High School. This is Carrie’s second production with Valley Youth Theatre, having appeared as Beth March in last year’s acclaimed *Little Women*, for which she received a Best Supporting Actress award. She has also appeared in shows at McClintock High School and Mesa Community College.

**Victor Cervantes, Jr. (Phoenix)**, Age 16, (Skip Snip) an 11<sup>th</sup> Grader at Brophy College Preparatory is appearing in his fourth Valley Youth Theatre show. He has previously appeared in CATS, NARNIA and *Bye Bye Birdie*. “I believe I am a nice guy at heart, but I enjoy playing those slimey characters that the audience loves to hate!” he says. He aspires to be a lawyer, but is also thinking about trying acting for a living. “I like that you can step onto a stage and pour your heart out without the audience knowing that this is all you. In other words, it’s free therapy – that’s why stage actors are usually always happy.”

**Leana Courtney (Phoenix)**, Age 17, (Doo Wop Girl) a 10<sup>th</sup> Grader at Arizona Academy of Arts and Academics is making her debut with Valley Youth Theatre, but has played a Doo Wop Girl in her school’s production of *Little Shop*, as well as *Urinetown*, *Into the Woods* and *Leader of the Pack*. Hoping to study musical theatre and pursue a career in that field, Leana is active in Vocal Jazz, piano, guitar and song writing. She is excited to be a part of a VYT production. “Everyone is friendly and supportive.” She says. “I think it will be a great experience. “ She looks forward to bettering her dancing skills with choreographer Sloan Bayer. Her advice for others looking to audition at VYT? “Do it! I love auditioning! It doesn’t hurt to try. You’ll never know, you might find out something new about yourself.”

**Danny Epstein (Tempe)**, Age 17 (Bernstein), is a Senior at Corona del Sol High School. This is also Danny’s second appearance with VYT, having appeared in the 2005 production of *James and the Giant Peach*. Danny has also appeared in numerous shows around the Valley, including performances with Childsplay, South Mountain Community College and Phoenix Theatre.

**Brennan Hillard (Scottsdale)**, Age 17, (Seymour) is an 11<sup>th</sup> Grader at Desert Mountain High School. He is pleased to be doing his first show with Valley Youth Theatre. “I have seen previous productions at VYT and I believe that the quality of the productions and professionalism really stands out.”he says. “. This has always been a role that I wanted to play. Now I have the chance to bring out the Seymour in me.” Brennan has always wanted to be an actor. “Performing has always been a part of my life and I have never had any doubt what I would do for the rest of my life. I am an actor, singer, dancer and acting has always been a priority for me. My very first play was at the age of 7 and I have continued to study with experienced

coaches for both my acting and singing. I have studied dance with a local choreographer, Hodgie Jo for several years as well. I am looking forward to the future and what it will bring.”

**Sarah Hollands (Gilbert)**, Age 15, (Doo Wop Girl) is a 10<sup>th</sup> Grader at Mesquite High School. This is Sarah’s sixth show with Valley Youth Theatre. Other roles have included the title role in *Annie*, *Bye Bye Birdie* (Nancy), *Narnia* (Reindeer), *Charlotte’s Web* (Narrator), *High School Musical* (Cheerleader), *The Prince and the Pauper* (Karyn). She admires the many people at VYT with whom she has worked over the years. “Everyone has perseverance, respect for each other, they’re all caring.” She says. “They all have incredible talent.”

**Max Nussbaum (Scottsdale)**, Age 18 (Mr. Mushnik), a Senior at Saguaro High School is also making his debut with Valley Youth Theatre. A member of choir, DECA and National Honor Society, he also wants to make a career of theatre, hoping someday to be on Broadway.

**Derek Rushing (Gilbert)**, Age 18, (The Plant) a sophomore at Mesa Community College is making his fourth appearance with Valley Youth Theatre. Other roles include Gus in CATS, Basketball player in *High School Musical* and Naphthali in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. Derek’s career goal is to be an actor, singer and writer.

**Jacqueline M. Rushing (Gilbert)**, Age 19, (Doo Wop Girl) a Sophomore is making her fifth onstage appearance with Valley Youth Theatre. Other roles include Sillabub in CATS, Taylor McKessie in *High School Musical*, and ensemble roles in *The Wiz* (twice) and *A Winnie the Pooh Christmas Tail*. “I’m excited for this show because the music is just so much fun to sing!” Says Jacqui “ We “doo wop girls” are quick studies and we work well together. I know that the audiences are going to love this show.”

**Malcolm Temple (Gilbert)**, Age 15, (Wino) a tenth grader who is homeschooled is excited to be making his debut appearance with Valley Youth Theatre. Other roles include *The Wiz* and *A Christmas Story*. Besides theatre, Malcolm’s interests include playing basketball and racquetball and playing the piano.

**Ashley Waggoner (Avondale)**, Age 15, (Mrs. Luce) is a 10<sup>th</sup> Grader at Agua Fria High School. This is Ashley’s 9<sup>th</sup> show with Valley Youth Theatre.

Performance times are:

Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 pm ; Saturdays at 2:00 and 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$18 per person, adults and children two and up, and can be ordered through the Valley Youth Theatre box office at 602-253-8188 x 2. Discounts are available for groups of 20+. For more information about Valley Youth Theatre visit [www.VYT.com](http://www.VYT.com).

### **About Valley Youth Theatre**

Named by the Arizona Republic as The Best Place to Become a Future Star, Valley Youth Theatre is a nationally recognized non-profit organization that targets young people age 7 – 19 for participation in and attendance at quality live theatre productions. VYT’s mission is to inspire young people to be the best that they can be by providing them with lifelong lessons through a wide range of performing arts opportunities. VYT is an award-winning theatre company whose Alum include American Idol, Jordin Sparks and Broadway Star, Max Crumm. Valley Youth Theatre is supported in part by the Arizona Commission on the Arts with funding from the State of Arizona and the National Endowment for the Arts. Partial funding also is provided by the Phoenix Arts Commission through appropriations from the Phoenix City Council. For more information, visit [www.VYT.com](http://www.VYT.com).

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