

Celebrate Pioneer Women at the Blazin' M Ranch

Back by popular demand and in celebration of the Blazin' M Ranch enjoying its 20th anniversary, the ranch is again offering up *A WOMAN'S HAND*, a special live theatrical production filled with music, laughter, tears, and a whole lot of pioneer women's soul. Written by Dev Ross, the show enjoyed a successful sold out run earlier this year. Audiences will again get to experience this show starting October 5th when it will play every Sunday through November 9th. Along with the Blazin' M's signature chuck wagon dinner, pre-dinner activities and attractions, guests can engage with colorful Old West living history characters that will showcase the hard work, challenges, triumphs and everyday hardships of women in the 1800's.

The result of tireless research by Dev Ross and historian Kate Ruland-Thorne, the show features women who helped weave the fabric of Sedona and the Verde Valley. Their stories are heartwarming, often heartbreaking, and rich with spirit. Audiences will enjoy hearing directly from these historical women who come alive on stage. Meet the first African-American woman to own a business in Jerome, a saloon hall *Soiled Dove* from Flagstaff, a Chinese *singsong girl*, Latina Apolonia Chavez and Sedona Schnebly.

Lori Mabery, Managing Partner at the ranch beamed with excitement when describing the show. "We are so proud and excited to be featuring this great musical production, "A Woman's Hand" again at the Blazin' M Ranch. It's truly a local history lesson coming to life right before your eyes, with the added bonus of dinner and all the regular western activities and attractions we've always offered here at the ranch! Back in March the cast & crew spent weeks modifying the stage by adding lighting and recreating historical scenes where *living history* characters who perform in the show can interact with guests prior to dinner." Mabery continued, "We've got a powerful and talented cast, the show is amazing and it's a great compliment and addition to our regular cowboy dinner show. We feel this production strongly appeals to locals who love our community as well as tourists who are so often interested in the history of our area while keeping the memory alive of some of our great pioneering Arizona women!"

Along with Dev Ross, one of Sedona's favorites, Shondra Jepperson, a singer, songwriter, actor and half of the entertainment duo *Tom & Shondra*, is also a producer as well as an actor in the show. Jepperson commented, "It's been a thrill to see this show go up at the Blazin' M Ranch and to be an actor in it with my creative partner Dev Ross and such a great cast. The actors that we share the stage with are extremely talented and it's a pleasure to work alongside them. Our audiences have really expressed their appreciation for

sharing a lot of unknown history of the women who held their own during a very tough time in history in the Verde Valley. I'm thrilled to be running this show again!"

Both Jepperson and Ross tout a long list of leading role credits in plays and productions throughout southern California as well as in Sedona and the Verde Valley. In the past several years, both have also successfully co-produced and acted in murder mysteries penned by Ross with sold out performances at the Blazin' M Ranch.

Dev Ross commented, "My producing partner, Shondra Jepperson, and I had discussed putting the play up for years but had no venue for it until the Blazin' M Ranch. Having my show play there is a dream come true. Lori Mabery and her team at the ranch shared our vision, added to it, and are helping to bring more theater back into our community. We had a terrific run last March with sold out shows so we know this run is bound to sell out quickly."

The other three cast members joining Ross and Jepperson are well known to Sedona audiences and have also enjoyed success in theatre and film. Tricia Greer, has been cast in leading roles in *Shifting Gears*, *Lion in Winter*, *Glass Menagerie*, *Proof* and *37 Postcards* here in Sedona and has extensive theatre resume of lead roles in theatres throughout California. Movie fans are familiar with stage and film actress Michele Lamar Richards, known for her role as Whitney Houston's sister in Kevin Costner's, *The Bodyguard*. Richards is currently working as a writer, producer, director and professional acting coach for studios. Talented James Ball is thrilled to be accompanying this talented group of women. James is well known in the Verde Valley for teaching Choir, Music Theory, the Director of the Musical Theatre Dept. at Mingus Union High School and has performed across the nation.

John Reynolds is the director of the show who, besides his directing resume, has an extensive background as a special effects lighting director for major motion pictures including E.T., Twilight Zone, Towering Inferno just to name a few. Reynolds replied, "Directing *A Woman's Hand* at the Blazin' M Ranch is the perfect venue. After having this experience, I am excited about the potential to do other programs there. It's a perfect environment for a director. Great support, great team, warm environment, and it feels like home."

Sponsored by National Processing Solutions, Inc., the series of six Sunday performances of this historical production open on Sunday, October 5th. For dinner and show reservations call (928) 634-0334 or book on-line at blazinm.com. Gates open at 5:00PM for pre-show activities and

actor/audience interactions. Dinner is served at 6:30PM. The hour-long show starts at 7:30PM. Adults: \$35.95+tax, Seniors: \$32.95+tax, Children (3-12). \$19.95+tax.