

Adrienne Arsht Center

FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE ADRIENNE ARSHT CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
PROUDLY PRESENTS
ROCK ODYSSEY**

**A magical theatrical spectacle transforming Homer's *Odyssey*
into a rock musical for young people!**

**CENTER WILL HOST 26,000 LOCAL FIFTH-GRADERS
FOR A FREE LIVE PERFORMANCE**

**Every Miami-Dade County Public School fifth grade class – more than 1,000
classes total -- to attend and receive complimentary transportation
and a curriculum component at no cost to students or schools**

April 27 – May 8, 2010

Free Admission

John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall

MIAMI, FL April 12, 2010 – The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County proudly announces the premiere of **ROCK ODYSSEY**, a spectacular theatrical production that will be seen by every fifth-grader in the Miami-Dade County Public School System. In total, more than 26,000 fifth graders will participate in the pilot program, which was created by the Adrienne Arsht Center in conjunction with Miami-Dade County Public Schools. The show will afford young people the opportunity to experience live theater in Miami's premier performing arts center, at no cost to them or their schools. **ROCK ODYSSEY** will run from April 27 – May 8, 2010 in the John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall. This arts education program is made possible with the generous support of Miami-Dade County and additional funding from Funding Arts Network.

As the first installment of the Center's "Learning Through the Arts" education initiative, **ROCK ODYSSEY** marks the launch of a groundbreaking collaboration

between the Adrienne Arsht Center, the Miami-Dade County Public School System, World Book, and Emmy and Parent's Choice Award-winning entertainment pioneer **Douglas Love**, who serves as director and choreographer for this production.

The Center has mounted this new fully staged Broadway style show especially for fifth graders and will provide bus transportation for all students. In addition, the experience extends beyond the theater and into the classroom through an in-class curriculum package, created by **Love** in partnership with World Book. The pre- and post-show curriculum is in line with Florida's Sunshine State Standards for learning. This is the first partnership of this type between a performing arts center and a school system to provide strategic grade level access to live theater with an accompanying Standards-based curriculum.

"As we embark on our fifth year serving South Florida, **ROCK ODYSSEY** symbolizes the very essence of our mission and vision coming to life," said M. John Richard, President and CEO of the Adrienne Arsht Center. "Welcoming 26,000 fifth-graders to experience live theater in our state-of-the art facility speaks to our commitment to present world-class performing arts and community-driven programming. We are thrilled to launch this historic program in partnership with Miami-Dade County whose generous support has made it possible to continue our quest to educate, engage, and entertain the next generation of Miami audiences."

ROCK ODYSSEY combines the drama of ancient Greece with the flair of Broadway to create a spell-binding adventure for young people! Charged with interpreting the classic tale of Odysseus' epic journey from a modern, rock 'n roll perspective, the artistic team is comprised of a cast of all local actors from South Florida and award-winning theater and music innovators. The all-local cast includes **Jim Ballard** as the hero, Odysseus; **Thomas Caska** as the all-powerful Zeus; **Robert Johnston** as the angst-filled Telemachus; and **Meghan Moroney** as the equally enchanting and intelligent Penelope; and **Billy Sharpe** as Hermes, the narrator and comic foil. Rounding out the cast of mythical characters and Greek gods are **Philip de la Cal**, **Joshua Dobarganes**, **Christopher Kent**, **Lisa Manuli**, **Angela Peel**, **Shain Stroff**, and **Edwinn Sutton**. The locally based creatives also include Carbonell Award winners **Eric Alsford** (musical director) and **Ellis Tillman** (costume designer).

In addition to direction/choreography by **Douglas Love**, **ROCK ODYSSEY** also features an original rock-inspired score created by Emmy Award-winning musician **Billy Straus**; book by Kleban Award winner **Stephen Cole**; puppet design by **Heather Asch**; and set design by **Laura Brock**.

Director **Douglas Love's** career has been devoted to developing unique and effective content within theatrical productions in order to ignite the fire of imagination in young minds. **Love's** career was launched in 1974, when his

stage adaptation of *Free to Be You and Me* was accepted by Marlo Thomas and published by Rodgers and Hammerstein Theatre Library. Since then, he has penned more than 20 books for children, and his best-selling *Imagination Station* became the inspiration for his Emmy-nominated and Parent's Choice Award-winning television series, "Out of the Box" for Disney Channel and "Jammin' Animals" for HBO Family. In conjunction with Walden Media, **Love** has commissioned seven original musicals and a new adaptation of their hit movie and Newbery Award-winning book, *Holes*. His ongoing partnership with World Book Kids has revolutionized the way children throughout the world use the encyclopedia by adding new ideas in content and creativity to the website.

Straus received a Grammy nod for his work on the original Broadway cast recording of "The Full Monty," and platinum status for his production work on Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* His songs have appeared in films including Steve Martin's "Leap of Faith," Disney's "Little Einsteins," and the PBS series "Where in the World in Carmen San Diego?"

An internationally produced, published, and recorded writer, **Cole** was the recipient of the prestigious Edward Kleban Award for Most Promising Librettist of 2000 for his work on *The Night Hunter*, for which he also received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. **Cole's** musicals have been produced Off-Broadway, regionally, and in London. His major production credits include *After the Fair* at the York Theater, *Casper*, starring Chita Rivera, and *Continental Divide*, starring Hal Linden and Dee Hoty.

A master puppet designer and builder, **Asch** lends the **ROCK ODYSSEY** production more than 17 years of experience working in children's television for companies including Disney, Nickelodeon, The Jim Henson Company, and Sesame Workshop.

Emmy Award-winning set designer **Brock** boasts a career of ground-breaking design work for television and film. Among her credits: PBS programs *Elmo's Musical Adventure*, *Bert and Ernie's Play on Words*, and *Where in the World is Carmen Sandiego?* as well as HBO's *Sex and the City*.

In addition to 17 school performances, there will be one free, public performance on May 8 at 2 p.m. as part of the Adrienne Arsht Center's ongoing Family Fest series. Admission is free; reservations are necessary and may be made through the Adrienne Arsht Center box office by calling (305) 949-6722, or online at www.arshtcenter.org.

The Adrienne Arsht Center's *Learning Through The Arts* initiative provides live music, theater, and dance experiences to the Miami-Dade Public School system's Passport to Culture program. The Adrienne Arsht Center hopes to expand *Learning Through The Arts* over the next five years, with the goal of ultimately reaching 100% of the County's fifth, seventh, and ninth graders –

providing students countywide with live performance experiences three times over the course of their education. This expansion would eventually provide arts adventures for over 75,000 young people each year. The goal of this ambitious program is to provide a hands-on, accessible and inviting experience in the performing arts for the youth of Miami-Dade County, enriching their studies, enhancing their exposure to the arts, and cultivating their creativity.

Editor's Note:

Related high-resolution photos are available at www.arshtcenter.org/press and www.mediafire.com/arshtcenterphotos.

Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County is made possible by the public support of the Miami-Dade County Mayor and the Board of County Commissioners, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council and the City of Miami Omni Community Redevelopment Agency. The Adrienne Arsht Center also receives generous support from private contributions to the Adrienne Arsht Center Foundation through its Visionary Society membership program and Encore Circle major gifts program; American Express Company; Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Arison Arts Foundation; Association of Performing Arts Presenters; Bank of America Charitable Foundation; Dade Community Foundation; Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; Ford Foundation; Funding Arts Network; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Community Connections Fund of MetLife Foundation; New England Foundation for the Arts; Southern Arts Federation; The Cowles Charitable Trust; The Wachovia Wells Fargo Foundation; the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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About the Adrienne Arsht Center for Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County:

The Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County is one of the world's leading performing arts organizations and venues. Made possible by Miami-Dade County's largest ever public/private-sector partnership, the Center plays host to three resident companies (Florida Grand Opera, Miami City Ballet and New World Symphony, America's Orchestral Academy) in addition to numerous South Florida arts organizations that perform in its theaters regularly. Since opening in 2006, the Center has emerged as a leader in offering and presenting world-class programming that mirrors South Florida's diversity, as a catalyst for development in Miami, and as a host of impactful community and educational programs.

Designed by world-renowned architect Cesar Pelli of Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, the venue is comprised of the 2,400-seat Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House, the 2,200-seat John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall, the black box Carnival Studio Theater, a restored Carnival Art Deco Tower, the Peacock Foundation, Inc. Studio, the Peacock Foundation, Inc. Education Center, and the outdoor Parker and Vann Thomson Plaza for the Arts. Events impresario and restaurateur Barton G. Weiss brought his signature style to the Center in 2009 with PRELUDE BY BARTON G, a full-service upscale restaurant open five days a week.

Visit www.arshtcenter.org for more information.