



MEDIA ALERT

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PHANTOM PROJECTS EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PRESENTS BRUCE GEVIRTZMAN'S *'THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE,'* AN ORIGINAL DRAMA FOR TEENS ABOUT PREJUDICE, VIOLENCE, AND TOLERANCE; MAY 21, 2009 AT LA MIRADA THEATRE

PERFORMANCE TO MARK 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF COLUMBINE SHOOTINGS WITH ALL-YOUTH POST-SHOW DISCUSSION ABOUT ON-CAMPUS VIOLENCE, BULLYING

AUTHOR/PLAYWRIGHT TO AUTOGRAPH COPIES OF HIS BOOK *AN INTIMATE UNDERSTANDING OF AMERICAS TEENAGERS* AT LA MIRADA THEATRE AFTER PERFORMANCE AND AT LA HABRA BORDERS MAY 23

LA MIRADA, CA. — On May 21, Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group will continue its crusade of offering perspective and support through original theatre productions when it brings back *The Center of the Universe* to the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts at 10:00am as a field trip performance for local schools, and at 7:00pm with a public performance.

Phantom Projects has been bringing educational productions to Southern California schools since 1997, but it was the tragic events at Columbine High School in 1999 that brought *The Center of the Universe* to national acclaim when it debuted in 2000 as an attempt to not only provide solutions but to create an avenue of discussion for California teenagers through its post-show discussion.

Tickets for the drama written Bruce Gevirtzman and directed by Steve Cisneros are now available by calling the La Mirada Theatre Box Office 714 994 6310 or 562-944-9801 or going online to lamiradatheatre.com or phantomprojects.com.

That the production coincides with the 10th Anniversary of the school shootings in Littleton, Colorado is no accident, “*One of the lines in the play mentions that the Columbine shootings is the worst school shooting ever to happen on an American campus,*” said Cisneros, the Phantom Projects Producing Artistic Director who founded the company in 1996 at the age of 17, “*then the Virginia Tech shootings claimed even more lives...this is not the proper*

direction. Besides this event, we touch on the September 11th attacks, the Holocaust, and many more events. It's drama based on real life."

Gevirtzman, a local high school English teacher, seasoned playwright, and author, has put years of observations and empathy into the hour-long script as well as into his new book *Shaking Hands with Aliens: An Intimate Understanding of America's Teenagers* (Praeger Publishing, ISBN: 0313345082). The book, which has been incorporated as curriculum in colleges throughout the U.S. since its release last fall, touches on many of the same topics.

"After 37 years of teaching high school English, coaching baseball, producing theatre for young people, and directing the speech team, I feel I am able to objectively analyze teenagers as well as any other adult in America," said Gevirtzman who will be signing copies of his book after the performance as well as at Borders Bookstore in La Habra on May 23, 2009.

Cisneros' cast from Los Angeles and Orange County, are: Paul Cabrera (Whittier), Cruz-William Castillo (Whittier), Victoria Hogan (Trabuco Canyon), Danielle Keaton (Hacienda Heights), Amber Suzanne Noonan (La Mirada), Zakk Otto (Lakewood), Erich Schroeder (Whittier), and Amanda Zukle (La Mirada).

Each year, Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group mounts a season of plays at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts through a partnership with the City of La Mirada, in addition to touring productions to middle and high schools in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. The fully staged productions in La Mirada include interpretations of classic work currently on school curricula as well as one original script, by Gevirtzman, that addresses issues of immediate concern to teenagers.

Following *The Center of the Universe* on May 21, the 2008-09 Season concludes with the third annual Young Artist Project on August 8. The Young Artist Project offers an evening of one-acts written, directed and starring some of Southern California's brightest young talent. Earlier productions of this season were *The Grapes of Wrath*, based on the classic John Steinbeck novel in October, and *The Outsiders* which sold out 3 performances in the 1,251 seat theatre in February.

Tickets to *The Center of the Universe* are available by calling 714-994-6310 or 562-944-9801 or going online to lamiradatheatre.com or phantomprojects.com. Tickets prices for the 10 a.m. performance are \$6, and for the 7 p.m. performance, \$6 for middle school students, \$12 for high school students, and \$20 for adults. For additional information call 714-690-2900, go online to www.PantomProjects.com, or visit MySpace.com/PhantomProjects.

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CALENDAR ITEM May 21, 2009 / 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

The Center of the Universe by Bruce Gevirtzman, directed by Steve Cisneros

La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts, 14900 La Mirada Blvd., La Mirada, CA 90638

The Center of the Universe is a powerful play aimed at teens and their parents about prejudice, tolerance, and violence. Features an all-youth cast and post-show discussion with the audience.

Tickets: 10 a.m. all seats \$6; 7 p.m. - middle school students \$6; high school students \$12; adults \$20. Group discounts available. Call 562-944-9801 714-994-6310 or going online to lamiradatheatre.com or phantomprojects.com

CALENDAR ITEM May 23, 2009 / 1:00pm-3:00pm

Book Signing: Acclaimed playwright and author Bruce Gevirtzman will sign copies of his new book *Shaking Hands with Aliens: An Intimate Understanding of America's Teenagers* (Praeger Publishing) on May 23, 2009 from 1:00pm-3:00pm at Borders Bookstore in La Habra (1310 S Beach Blvd, La Habra, CA 90631).