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**PHANTOM PROJECTS EDUCATIONAL THEATRE PREMIERE'S 'THROUGH THESE EYES,'
AN ORIGINAL DRAMA FOR TEENS ABOUT SELF-IMAGE AND EATING DISORDERS**

LA MIRADA, CA. — The oppressive demands to be physically perfect and the obsessive way young people often pursue it are leading millions of teenagers towards dangerous eating disorders.

On May 23, Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group will continue its decade crusade of offering perspective and support through original theatre productions when it introduces *Through These Eyes* at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

The new drama by Bruce Gevirtzman, directed by Steve Cisneros, will be performed on May 23 at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets from \$5 to \$15 are now available by calling 714 994 6310 or 562-944-9801 or going online to phantomprojects.com.

“Secondary school students today often graduate with a negative image of themselves that began with a feeling of inadequacy because of how they look,” said Cisneros, the Phantom Projects Producing Artistic Director who founded the company in 1996 at the age of 17.

“*Through These Eyes* is designed to help teen audiences have a healthier view of *who* they are and *who* they can become. It’s drama based on real life. And because the teen cast is the same age as much of the audience, the post-show discussion is always candid.”

Gevirtzman, a local high school English teacher and seasoned playwright, has put years of observations and empathy into the hour-long script. Much of the dialogue reflects the kinds of comments young people routinely make to each other in conversation or online in chat rooms. They indicate an overwhelming importance placed on how their looks are the key to success in relationships, careers and happiness in general.

“After 37 years of teaching high school English, coaching baseball, producing theater 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. “How kids perceive their self-image is

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central to their behavior. If you think you're fat and ugly—and that's how everybody else sees you—you'll do anything to change your image. This can lead to some very bad choices.”

The National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) defines the main eating disorders as Anorexia Nervosa, the practice of starving oneself; Bulimia, a cycle of binge eating followed by purging the food through induced vomiting; and Compulsive Eating, which includes periods of binge eating without purging. The NEDA Web site states, “In spite of the unprecedented growth of eating disorders in the past two decades, eating disorders research continues to be under-funded, insurance coverage for treatment is inadequate, and societal pressures to be thin remain rampant.” Compared to Schizophrenia, which affects 2.2 million people and receives research funds of \$350 million. Eating disorders affect 10 million but research funds are around \$12 million.

Another striking difference, of course, is that while the subliminal message that happiness is tied to appearance is spread by all visual media and on every schoolyard, only a third of those with Anorexia and six percent of those with Bulimia receive proper treatment, according to NEDA.

Cisneros' cast of teenagers and three adults from Los Angeles and Orange County, are: Alison Axelrad (Fullerton), Paul Cabrera (Whittier), Chad Caluza (20, Brea), Tyler Campbell (La Mirada), Carol Michelle Grisham (25, Anaheim), Mia De Guzman (Whittier), Allyson Hope Hernandez (La Mirada), Caitlin Joyce (Anaheim Hills), Paris Langle (Whittier), Tracy McDaniel (La Mirada), Cassi Morgan (Burbank), Brianna Leigh Moffitt, Sienna Moffitt (Yorba Linda), Jacquelyn Najera (La Habra Heights), Danica Ross (La Mirada), Stephanie Roy (La Habra), Melody Stolpp (Santa Ana) and Amanda Turner (21, La Mirada).

Each year, Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group mounts a season of plays at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts and 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 La Mirada High School teacher Bruce Gevirtzman, that addresses issues of immediate concern to teenagers. The touring productions are remountings of issue-oriented plays by Gevirtzman that were introduced in previous seasons. Among these are *No Way to Treat A Lady*, about teen pregnancy, and *The Center of the Universe*, about prejudice and tolerance.

Following *Through These Eyes* on May 23, the 2006-07 Season will be the debut of Phantom Projects' Young Artists Workshop on July 21. The Young Artists Workshop will offer

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an evening of one-acts written, directed and starring some of Southern California's brightest young talent. Earlier productions of this season were *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a play about the children of the Holocaust in November 2006, and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* in February.

Tickets to *Through These Eyes* are available by calling 714-994-6310 or 562-944-9801 or going online to phantomprojects.com. Tickets prices for the 10 a.m. performance are \$5, and for the 7 p.m. performance, \$5 for middle school students, \$12 for high school students, and \$15 for adults. For additional information call 714-690-2900, go online to www.PantomProjects.com, or visit MySpace.com/PhantomProjects.

For more information on the National Eating Disorders Association, its Awareness Week each February, or the national convention in San Diego this Fall, visit the NEDA Web site at www.nationaleatingdisorders.org.

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CALENDAR ITEM May 23, 2007 / 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Through These Eyes by Bruce Gevirtzman, directed by Steve Cisneros

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

Through These Eyes follows the lives of a group of teens struggling to live up to the standards of society, the media, their friends and the vision they see of themselves everyday in the mirror.

Features an all-teen cast and post-show discussion with the audience. Tickets: 10 a.m. all seats \$5; 7 p.m. - middle school students \$5; high school students \$12; adults \$15. Group discounts available. Call 562-944-9801 714-994-6310 or going online to phantomprojects.com