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LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE ANNOUNCES COLLABORATION WITH SAN DIEGO YOUTH SYMPHONY ON *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

***PARTNERSHIP GIVES YOUTH SYMPHONY MUSICIANS AND ALUMNI
AN INTERNSHIP AND PERFORMANCE OPPORTUNITY***

PRODUCTION FEATURES SCORE BY MARK BENNETT

LA JOLLA CA — La Jolla Playhouse announced today that it has formed a partnership with the **San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (SDYS)** to offer current students and recent alumni an internship opportunity as part of the Playhouse's spectacular production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. This internship will immerse participating student musicians in the creation and performance of a new staging alongside professional American Federation of Musicians (AFM) members and professional actors. The production will feature original music woven throughout the production by Broadway composer **Mark Bennett** inspired by **Felix Mendelssohn's** 1842 music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with musicians onstage as part of the action. **Eric Stern** is music director, **Wayne Barker** is orchestrator and La Jolla Playhouse's Tony Award-nominated Artistic Director **Christopher Ashley** is director for the production.

"La Jolla Playhouse is committed to collaborating with other San Diego-area cultural organizations, and we are particularly pleased to partner with the San Diego Youth Symphony on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," said Christopher Ashley, La Jolla Playhouse Artistic Director and *Midsummer* director. "We are so honored and delighted to add their superb musicianship into this exciting production."

SDYS students and recent alumni will form two chamber orchestras of string, woodwind, brass, and percussion players that divide the performance weeks. The orchestra will be led by the music director and a small set of professional AFM musicians that participate in the production throughout the entire run of the show. Participating SDYS students and alumni will commit to a professional rehearsal and performance schedule.

"Our students are thrilled about this unique internship opportunity being offered to them by the La Jolla Playhouse," said **Jeff Edmons**, San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory Artistic Director. "This special collaboration will provide the student musicians with a wonderful learning experience together with esteemed and renowned professionals of the highest caliber."

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"I am very excited to be collaborating with the San Diego Youth Symphony on this summer's La Jolla Playhouse production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," said **Mark Bennett**, composer for the production. "Music is an important element in our *Midsummer*, and I'm composing a score that theatrically weaves my own work with motifs and selections from the well-known Mendelssohn score for the play. I think it's going to be a really wild and exciting melding of styles. It will also provide an opportunity for the students (and the audience) to experience music that has both 19th century musical underpinnings and 21st century dynamism and drive. The great energy and talent of the San Diego Youth Symphony are perfectly suited to the fun, spectacle, and surprises Chris Ashley, myself, Music Director Eric Stern, Orchestrator Wayne Barker and our extraordinary design team are creating for this production."

A Midsummer Night's Dream runs **July 20 – August 22, 2010** in the Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre. Performance times (unless otherwise noted) are Tuesday and Wednesday at 7:30 pm; Thursday and Friday at 8:00 pm; Saturday at 2:00pm and 8:00 pm; Sunday at 2:00pm and 7:00 pm. Single tickets are on sale now. Subscriptions to La Jolla Playhouse's 2010/11 season are available by calling **(858) 550-1010** or by visiting **lajollaplayhouse.org**. Subscriptions are available in six-play, four-play and three-play packages, ranging from \$135 - \$380.

Christopher Ashley has served as La Jolla Playhouse's Artistic Director since October 2007. During his tenure, he helmed the acclaimed productions of *Restoration*, *Xanadu* and *Memphis*, which opened on Broadway in October 2009 and received four Tony Awards, including Best Musical. He spearheaded the Playhouse's Resident Theatre program and was instrumental in developing THE EDGE series. His credits include the Broadway productions of *Xanadu* (Drama Desk nomination), *All Shook Up* and *The Rocky Horror Show* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), as well as The Kennedy Center productions of *The Lisbon Traviata*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*. Other New York credits include *Blown Sideways Through Life*, *Jeffrey* (Lucille Lortel and Obie Awards), *The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told*, *Valhalla*, *Regrets Only*, *Wonder of the World*, *Communicating Doors*, *The Night Hank Williams Died*, *Fires in the Mirror* (Lucille Lortel Award), among others. He also directed the feature film *Jeffrey* and the American Playhouse production of *Blown Sideways Through Life* for PBS. Ashley is the recipient of the Princess Grace Award, the Drama League Director Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts/Theatre Communications Group Director Fellowship.

Mark Bennett has composed scores and designed sound for the American premieres of new plays by Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee, Arthur Miller, Athol Fugard, Tony Kushner and Caryl Churchill, among many others. Recent Broadway projects include *A Steady Rain*, *The Coast of Utopia* (Drama Desk Award, Outstanding Music for a Play), *Henry IV*, *Golda's Balcony*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *The Goat* and *Tartuffe*. For the past two years he has been the composer for director Sam Mendes' *Bridge Project*, scoring *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*, among other works. With *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mark continues a career-long collaboration with director Christopher Ashley, which has included *Valhalla*, *Without Walls* (Mark Taper Forum) and *The Naked Eye*. At the La Jolla Playhouse he has composed and sound designed many productions, including *Dogeaters*, *Wonderland* and *The Country*. Bennett's new musical *Most Wanted* was commissioned by La Jolla Playhouse and was part of their EDGE series in 2008.



Jeff Edmons is now in his 14th year as Artistic Director of the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory (SDYS). Under his direction, SDYS has experienced tremendous growth, both in enrollment and in its level of musical achievement, performing the most difficult works in classical repertoire at the highest standard attainable by a youth orchestra. The orchestra's exemplary standards of skill and musicianship have afforded them the opportunity to participate in the most prestigious international festivals and perform with eminent artists from around the world. Edmons has led youth, collegiate and professional orchestras in critically acclaimed performances throughout the United States, as well as Mexico, Spain, France, Germany, Austria, Finland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Switzerland. He has received numerous local and national awards for his achievements in music education. He has also been featured in numerous articles and journals honoring his work and has been the subject of documentaries on CNN, Fox Television, National Public Radio and many others.

Eric Stern is a veteran Broadway conductor and arranger with over 15 Broadway musicals and 30 albums to his credit. He earned an Emmy Award for "Broadway Sings the Music of Jule Styne" for PBS. Outside the theatre, Stern has built a reputation as a concert and broadcast conductor. He conducted the NBC Symphony during the live NBC 75th Anniversary three-hour broadcast. He has led many of the country's major orchestras including The Boston Pops, The Chicago Symphony and The Cleveland Orchestra. He conducted a long list of ground-breaking recording for the Nonesuch label including a string of albums with Dawn Upshaw, Mandy Patinkin and Audra MacDonal. His albums include the highly successful "Leonard Bernstein's New York," and three complete Gershwin musicals: "Lady Be Good," "Pardon My English," and "Oh, Kay!" Eric has concertized and recorded with such varied artists as Thomas Hampson, Betty Buckley, Jessye Norman, Debra Voigt, Fred Hersh, Dianne Reeves, and Richard Stoltzman.

The San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory is the 6th oldest continuously operating youth symphony in the United States and boasts over 500 students annually in seven different training ensembles. Ensemble skill levels range from pre-professional to beginner with students between 7 and 25 participating. Other instructional programs include chamber music ensembles, woodwind ensembles, percussion ensembles, and viola instruction. Annual auditions are held each June for student placement in the ensemble appropriate to their skill level. Visit sdys.org for more information about tickets, concerts, and annual student auditions.

The nationally acclaimed, Tony Award-winning **La Jolla Playhouse** is known for its tradition of creating the most exciting and adventurous new work in regional theatre. The Playhouse was founded in 1947 by Gregory Peck, Dorothy McGuire and Mel Ferrer, and is considered one of the most well-respected not-for-profit theatres in the country. Numerous Playhouse productions have moved to Broadway, including *Big River*, *The Who's Tommy*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *A Walk in the Woods*, *Dracula*, Billy Crystal's *700 Sundays*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *I Am My Own Wife*, *Jersey Boys*, *The Farnsworth Invention*, *33 Variations* and *Memphis*. Located on the UC San Diego campus, La Jolla Playhouse is made up of three primary performance spaces: the Mandell Weiss Theatre, the Mandell Weiss Forum Theatre, and the Joan and Irwin Jacobs Center for La Jolla Playhouse, a state-of-the-art theatre complex which features the Sheila and Hughes Potiker Theatre. La Jolla Playhouse is led by Artistic Director Christopher Ashley and Michael S. Rosenberg Managing Director.

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