

RELEASE: February 12, 2008

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**'THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK' COMING TO THE LA MIRADA THEATRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS,
FEBRUARY 28, IN A PRODUCTION AIMED AT TEEN AUDIENCES BY PHANTOM PROJECTS**

LA MIRADA, CA – As part of its mission to reach young people with the power of theatre, La Mirada-based Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group will stage a new production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* on February 28 at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts.

Performances are at 10am, 1pm and 7pm, with \$6 middle school student tickets, \$12 high school student tickets and \$15 for the general public now available by calling the La Mirada Theatre Box Office at (562) 944 9801 or (714) 994 6310, or going online to LaMiradaTheatre.com/tickets.htm

Phantom Projects' Artistic Director Steve Cisneros directs this adaptation by Wendy Kesselman based upon the play by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. Kathy Gillespie designed the costumes. The cast is Jacqueline Axton, Terrence Gehr, Cleta Cohen, Fortunato Frattasio, Carol Michelle Grisham, Mishavonna Henson, Tom Mac Donald, Sienna Moffitt, Cid Sanchez, and Steve De Forest.

The Play

It's been 61 years since the diary was first published. Anne Frank's *Diary* is not a novel or a tale of the imagination. It is the diary kept by a young Jewish girl for the two years she was forced to remain in hiding by the Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe. Between June 1942 and August 1944, from Anne's thirteenth birthday until shortly after her fifteenth birthday, Anne Frank (Sienna Moffitt) recorded her feelings, her emotions, and her thoughts, as well as the events that happened to her, in the diary which her father had given her as a birthday present. Together with her parents (Steve De Forest, and Jacqueline Axton) and her sister, Margot (Mishavonna Henson), the Van Daan family (consisting of a husband (Fortunato Frattasio), a wife (Cleta Cohen), and a son (Cid Sanchez), and later on, an elderly dentist named Mr. Düssel (Terrence Gehr), Anne lived in a set of rooms at the top of an old warehouse in Amsterdam, Holland, concealed behind a hidden door and a bookcase. During the day, when people worked in the office and in the warehouse below, Anne and the others had to keep very quiet, but at night they could move around more freely, though of course they could not turn on any lights nor show in any way that the house was inhabited.

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The Producer

The Diary of Anne Frank is the third production in Phantom Projects' season. The season of three plays, a Christmas Event, and a Young Artist Project, is directed at teenagers and their families. By providing a combination of classic texts from High School curricula and original message-based plays about issues of immediate relevance to young people, Phantom Projects uses the theatre experience to inspire the community's teens.

"We want to be a positive force," said Cisneros, who founded the company as a teenager 10 years ago, "and give teens ways to connect with their world through art. During our shows, and in the question and answer sessions after the performance, they discover this incredible relevance in the same literature they might have dismissed in the classroom. It helps open their eyes to a whole world of urgency, intelligence and beauty they may have completely tuned out. And in the issue-oriented shows, which feature teen casts, they see peers who are working hard to make a difference. That's another powerful form of inspiration for them. They always have lots of questions for cast members."

Eleven years ago, then 17-year-old Cisneros was inspired after his High School English teacher, Bruce Gevirtzman, staged a play he had written for his students. The young drama student had suggestions about how the story about teen pregnancy and abstinence might have more impact. When Gevirtzman agreed to let him tinker with the script and then direct a second production, Phantom Projects was born.

A decade later, the non-profit Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group operates on an annual budget of \$200,000, presenting its plays at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts and on a tour of schools and community centers across five Counties in Southern California. Gevirtzman's latest script, *Out, Out, Brief Candle*, is new play about teen drug and alcohol use. It will receive its premiere on April 3, 2008.

For more information on Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group visit phantomprojects.com or call 714-690-2900.

The Diary of Anne Frank will be performed at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts on February 28 at 10am, 1pm and 7pm. Tickets are \$6 for middle school students, \$12 for high school students, and \$15 for the general public. They are available by calling the La Mirada Box Office at (562) 944 9801 or (714) 994 6310, or by going online to lamiradatheatre.com.

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Artist Bios

Jacqueline Axton (Edith Frank) is excited to be making her debut at The La Mirada Performing Arts Center and to be a part of The Phantom Projects Theater Group. Her work includes films such as “August Moon”, “Primal Decline” and “The Fortune”, TV credits such as “83 Hours Till Dawn”, and Theater, including most recently Chekhov’s “The Boar” at The Attic Theater and “Come Back to the 5 & Dime, Jimmy Dean” at The Redondo Beach Playhouse for which she received a “Stand-Out Performance” from The LA Times. She has studied in Stella Adler’s Master Class, and was a member of The Groundlings. After visiting The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam in 1992, she said that the story she read as a child in school now had an even more profound, new reality. She is very proud to be one of the members of this cast to tell Anne’s story!

Cleta Cohen (Mrs. Van Daan) Recently appeared at the Brea Curtis Theatre as Penny Sycamore in *You Can’t Take It With You*. Her favorite roles include Reba in *The Last Night of Ballyhoo* (for which she received a Best Supporting Actress Award), M’Lynn in *Steel Magnolias*, Bananas in *The House of Blue Leaves* and Flo in *Picnic*.

Fortunato Frattasio (Mr. Van Daan) Makes his Phantom Projects Educational Theatre Group debut in *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Fortunato was born and raised in Montréal, Québec, Canada. Throughout high school and college, Fortunato was involved in drama. He then embarked on a career in visual effects and moved to Los Angeles in 1996 where he has been acting and creating special effects ever since. He recently appeared as Yvan in The Raven Theater's production of *Art* and as Marvin in COLSAC's production of *California Suite*. Fortunato lives in Pasadena with his wife and three children.

Carol Michelle Grisham (Miep) Pleased to be doing another show for Phantom Projects. Carol was last seen as Caroline in *The Legalities of Love*, an original work, at the Huntington Beach Playhouse. Prior to that Carol was Emma in Phantom Project's premiere of *Through These Eyes*, an original play that explores the issues of self image faced by teens. She earned her BA in Theatre Arts from CSUF.

Mishavonna Henson (Margot Frank) is 17 years old and has been acting professionally since she was 6 years old in Film, Television and Theatre. Currently, Mishavonna can be seen on “American Idol” as one of the 168 contestants to receive a “Golden Ticket” to Hollywood from Randy, Paula, and Simon. She has been cast in numerous films, and has worked side by side with Kelsey Grammer on “Frasier”, with Nathan Lane on the TV show “Charlie Lawrence”, and in the Nickelodeon show “Unfabulous.” She played Rhoda in the *Bad Seed* and Maria in *West Side Story* in Los Angeles. She is also pursuing a career as a Country Music Artist and has her 1st EP “Edge of The World” out on iTunes and is working on her debut album to be released this summer.

Tom Mac Donald (Mr. Kraler) Tom is very pleased to be making his debut with Phantom Projects. He has studied at the Atlantic Theater Company in both Los Angeles and New York, and has recently been seen in The Neighborhood Playhouses’ production of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Ethos Theater Company productions of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, *No Drama* at the Coronet Theatre, *Oops We Did it Again* at the Promenade Playhouse, and can be seen in the Twentieth Century Fox film “Behind Enemy Lines: Axis of Evil.”

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Sienna Moffitt (Anne Frank) 13-year old Sienna has performed in over 25 stage productions, her favorite roles being Scout in last season's Phantom Projects production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Arthur in the Southern California Shakespeare Festival's production of *King John*, Zero in *Holes* at Cypress College, and as the lead characters Annie and Peter Pan at various venues. Sienna was an original cast member of the "American Girl Revue" at the American Girl Theatre at the Grove of Los Angeles. Her television credits include costarring roles in "Untold Stories of the ER" and Disney's "What's the Word?"

Cid Sanchez (Peter Van Daan) *The Diary of Anne Frank* is 19-year old Cid's first theatre production after having discovered his love of acting just 3 months ago. He wishes to pursue acting as a career.

Steve De Forest (Otto Frank) Steve is pleased to return to the Phantom Projects fold and to again be part of such a truly amazing cast and wonderful production team. Steve made his Phantom Projects debut as Atticus Finch in last year's production of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. No stranger to Southern California audiences, Steve has been privileged to have also played such roles as: Dr. Craven in *The Secret Garden* (US & New Zealand tour), Emile de Becque in *South Pacific* (BP Civic/TTC), King Arthur in *Camelot* (TTC), Benjamin Guggenheim in *Titanic* (CLOSBC), Miles Gloriosus in *Forum* (SCLO), El Gallo in *The Fantasticks* (MB Players), Dr. Carrasco in *Man of La Mancha* (SCLO), Captain von Trapp in *Sound of Music* (CCCLO/TTC) and Beverly Carlton in *The Man Who Came To Dinner* (TTC).

Steve Cisneros (Director) Steve created Phantom Projects at the age of 17 in 1996. Teaming up with his former high school teacher Bruce Gevirtzman, Phantom brings teen oriented dramas to schools throughout California in addition to an annual series at the La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts. As Producing Artistic Director of Phantom Projects, Cisneros oversees all of the daily operations of the group and has guided the organization to national acclaim. The troupe has been featured on national and local affiliates of NBC, CBS, FOX, ABC, and T.V. stations in Russia and France. Under the direction of Cisneros, the group has received over \$300,000 in grants and continues to tour to over 100,000 teens each year through the company's teen educational shows.