

Release

Four Area Campuses Host Capital Punishment Retrospect

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ALBANY, N.Y. (August 30, 2005) -- Four local colleges have joined forces to bring the theatre production of *Alice and Kafka are Dead / Long Live the Rosenbergs* to the Capital region September 16-21. The collaboration of Belgrade's Dah Teatar and Atlanta's 7 Stages looks at real-life and fictional tales of the issues surrounding capital punishment and those facing the death penalty. Performances will take place at Skidmore College, the University at Albany, Union College and the College of Saint Rose.

Alice and Kafka are Dead / Long Live the Rosenbergs is the fruit of two years of collaboration between artists from the United States and Eastern Europe. The production depicts stories about capital punishment, juxtaposing the fictional trial of the Queen of Hearts' *Alice in Wonderland* to the real-life 1953 trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and even the last public execution to take place in the United States. The final product is an innovative and thoughtful drama that challenges audiences to locate their place in these many conflicting narratives and in a country where even the innocent can still be sentenced to die.

The production has narrowed the subject to a performance piece after 18 months of research that illustrates the theater companies' understanding of the stories, news reports and court proceedings involved in capital crimes and the manner in which the criminals who commit these crimes are treated.

The ensemble of five performers in the production includes two actors from Atlanta and three from Belgrade. Direction is by Dijana Milosevic (no relation to former Yugoslavian and Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, whose nationalist policies her plays oppose), founder of Dah and director of all its productions since its inception. The performance also contains original music composed by Nebojsa "Nebe" Ignjatovic, one of Belgrade's well-known contemporary composers and associate dean of the Academy of Music. The scene design and video are by Nesa Paripovic, a visual artist of great renown, whose paintings and photographs grace many museum walls in Europe.

Atlanta's 7 Stages Theatre is a 26-year-old, non-profit theatre dedicated to the creation of new work that addresses issues in contemporary culture, often through national and international collaboration. 7 Stages has toured its work through the United States, Great Britain, Holland, France, Germany, Eastern Europe, South Africa and China. It is led by its co-founders, Del Hamilton and Faye Allen, who are also co-creators of and featured actors in *Alice and Kafka are Dead / Long Live the Rosenbergs*. Hamilton was named Best Director for 2002 by *Atlanta Magazine*.

Dah Teatar is a theatre laboratory founded in 1991 in Belgrade to create artistic opposition and public protests to the nationalist policies of Slobodan Milosevic. It was the first independent theatre company in the Balkans following the fall of communism. The Serbian word "dah" means breath, in the sense of life-giving spirit. The company's director, Dijana Milosevic is well-respected internationally for her work on stage as well as for her lectures "The Power and Importance of Art in Social and Political Change" and "Healing Power of Theatre in Times of War." She is a graduate of the faculty of special psychology at the University of Belgrade, and the 2001-2002 recipient of a Fulbright grant to become an artist-in-residence in the Department of Music and Theater at Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, GA.

The two theatre companies have been working together since 7 Stages invited Dah to join them for the Cultural Olympics activities in Atlanta in 1996. Their work for the last decade is in an attempt to learn what artists from two distinct cultures have in common and what they wish to share via their created performances with other artists and audiences.

Robert Meeropol will make a special appearance and take part in activities related to the performance at both the University at Albany and Union College. Meeropol is the younger son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. In 1953, when he was six years old, the United States Government executed his parents for "conspiring to steal the secret of the atomic bomb." For thirty years he has been a progressive activist, author and speaker. In the 1970s, he and his brother Michael successfully sued the FBI and CIA to force the release of 300,000 previously secret documents about their parents. In 1990, after leaving his private law practice, Robert founded the Rosenberg Fund for Children (RFC) and now serves as its executive director. The RFC provides for the educational and emotional needs of both targeted activist youth and children in this country whose parents have been harassed, injured, jailed, lost jobs or died in the course of their progressive activities. In 2003, on the 50th

anniversary of his parent's executions, Meeropol's memoir, *An Execution in the Family*, was published by St. Martin's Press.

Tickets at all locations are \$12 for the general public and \$10 for seniors. Admission for the faculty, staff and students varies on each campus. Contact the individual locations for details.

The performances and special events are as follows:

Friday, September 16, 2005 at 8 p.m.-Performance

Janet Kinghorn Bernhard Theater, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs

Tickets and information: Box Office (518) 580-5431

David Kaczynski, executive director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty and brother of Ted Kaczynski, will join the audience in responding to the play.

Saturday, September 17, 2005 at 8 p.m.-Performance

Main Theatre, Performing Arts Center, University at Albany

Tickets and information: Box Office (518) 442-3997

This performance is presented by the University at Albany Performing Arts Center in association with the School of Criminal Justice, the Department of Theater and the New York State Writers Institute.

Robert Meeropol, executive director of the Rosenberg Fund for Children, will address the audience following the show and will sign copies of his book *An Execution in the Family* in the theater lobby.

Sunday, September 18, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.-Performance

Yulman Theater, Union College, Schenectady

Tickets and information: Box Office (518) 388-6545

Prior to the performance at Union College, Robert Meeropol will give a talk on "McCarthy-Era Lessons for Dissidents in the U.S. Today" at Hale House beginning at 5 p.m. This talk is free and open to the public and will also feature David Alman, co-founder with his wife Emily, of the National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg-Sobell case.

Following the performance, Meeropol will respond to the play in discussion with the audience and cast.

Union is also sponsoring a dinner with Meeropol at 6 p.m. that evening.

Seating is limited and reservations are required by Wednesday, September 14.

Contact Gail George at (518) 393-0629 or georgegw@unidial.com.

Monday, September 19, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.-Panel Discussion

There will be a panel discussion of the play and the death penalty with the cast of the performance and special guest speakers. The discussion is free and open to the public and will take place at Union College's Hale House. Guest speakers will include:

David Kaczynski, director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty and brother of Ted Kaczynski

James Acker, associate dean of the School of Criminal Justice and Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University at Albany

Charles S. Lanier, project co-director of Capital Punishment Research Initiative (CPRI), Hindelang Criminal Justice Research Center, School of Criminal Justice at the University at Albany and co-founder (with James Acker) of the National Death Penalty Archives

Wednesday, September 21, 2005 at 7:30 p.m.-Performance

Campus Theatre, The College of Saint Rose, Albany

Tickets and information: School of Arts and Humanities (518) 454-2860

After the performance, there will be a discussion on the death penalty. The panel will include Antoinette Bosco, a Saint Rose alumna and an opponent of the death penalty, author of several books and the mother of murdered child John, and his wife

Nancy.

High-resolution photos are available for downloading:

http://www.albany.edu/main/photos/alice_kafka/

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