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The Jim Henson Company and iTheatrics to Develop Musical Stage Version of 'Emmet Otter's Jug-Band Christmas'

Collaboration to Adapt Classic Holiday Favorite to Musical Theater

HOLLYWOOD and NEW YORK – May 22, 2008 –The Jim Henson Company has partnered with iTheatrics to develop a musical stage version of its classic holiday television special “Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas.” The announcement was made today by the show’s producers, Brian Henson, co-CEO of The Jim Henson Company and Tim McDonald, CEO of iTheatrics. The show will feature a mix of stage actors and puppet characters and a toe-tapping score of new and original music by Paul Williams, who wrote the music for the award-winning original special.

“Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas” was a ground-breaking all-puppet television special that debuted in 1977 on HBO and received the Ace Award for Excellence in Pay Cable. The original show, produced and directed by Jim Henson and based on the book by Russell and Lillian Hoban, has become a beloved holiday classic with continuous successful releases on VHS and DVD.

The musical follows the story of Emmet Otter and his Ma, two poor but musically gifted otters, who each secretly enter into a talent show in hopes of converting the prize money into a special holiday gift for the other.

The stage production is currently in development workshops. The opening date and other production plans will be announced at a later time. McDonald will co-author the book with Christopher Gattelli. Gattelli, who will also direct the new Emmet Otter production, was recently nominated for a 2008 Tony Award for Best Choreography for Rodgers & Hammerstein’s South Pacific.

“‘Emmet Otter’ is a beloved story that has remained a favorite with fans around the world,” said Brian Henson. “I continue to admire the work of Tim McDonald and iTheatrics, as they create highly entertaining and faithful stage adaptations which stay true to the heart and spirit of the original material. Having Paul Williams on board to write our new songs ensures that our musical production stays true to Emmet’s story.”

“This show holds a beautiful message about how much we gain when we make a sacrifice for those we love,” said McDonald, “I am delighted to be working with The Jim Henson Company and Paul Williams to allow old and new audiences to experience this classic story in a new way,” said McDonald.

About iTheatrics

iTheatrics uses the transformative power of the arts to make the world a better place. The company adapts existing Broadway and West End musicals for students at all age levels – including elementary, middle, and high school – to perform. iTheatrics also creates a teacher’s tool chest of resources which provides educators with enhancements such as choreography DVDs, accompaniment CDs, directors guides and curriculum connections. iTheatrics’ clients include Music Theatre International, Disney Theatrical Productions and McMillan/McGraw-Hill. iTheatrics also develops new musicals for family audiences such as *The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley*, *The Phantom Tollbooth* and Roald Dahl’s *James and the Giant Peach*. These shows enjoy national tours with producing partners such as Intramusical Theatricals and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and are made available for schools to perform as Music Theatre International Broadway Junior titles. iTheatrics’ Junior Teaching Intensives provide professional development for teachers in the area of musical theater and its Junior Theater Academy provides young artists with an innovative outlet for developing their skills as performers and artists. iTheatrics also produces the Junior Theater Festival, the world’s largest festival exclusively dedicated to elementary and middle school students and musical theater.

About Paul Williams

Oscar, Grammy and Golden Globe winning songwriter, Paul Williams, is recognized as one of America’s most prolific and gifted lyricists and composers. A ‘Hall of Fame’ songwriter and recipient of the National Music Publishers President’s Award, Williams’ standards have been recorded by such diverse musical icons as Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand, Ella Fitzgerald, Ray Charles, David Bowie, Tony Bennett, Sarah Vaughn, Johnny Mathis, The Carpenters, Luther Vandross, REM, Mel Torme and Diana Ross. His songs have also found favor with Country legends including Chet Atkins, Garth Brooks, Kris Kristofferson, Charlie Pride, Crystal Gayle, Anne Murray, Lynn Anderson, The Oak Ridge Boys, Diamond Rio and Neil McCoy. Two of Williams’ songs, “Rainbow Connection” from *The Muppet Movie* and “Evergreen” from *A Star Is Born*, grace the American Film Institute’s list of the top movie songs of all time. Additional song scores include *The Muppet Christmas Carol* and *Bugsy Malone*. Pop classics include “We’ve Only Just Begun”, “Rainy Days and Mondays”, “You and Me Against the World”, “An Old Fashioned Love Song” and “Let Me Be The One.” His recent work has remained wonderfully diverse, from writing with the Scissor Sisters to penning the music and lyrics for Garry Marshall’s theatrical sensation *Happy Days*.

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The Jim Henson Company has remained an established leader in family entertainment for over 50 years and is recognized worldwide as an innovator in puppetry, animatronics and digital animation. Best known as creators of the world famous Muppets, Henson has received over 50 Emmy Awards and nine Grammy Awards. Recent credits include the Emmy® nominated "Sid the Science Kid," "Dinosaur Train," "Wilson & Ditch: Digging America" and "Pajanimals." Features include "The Dark Crystal," "Labyrinth," "MirrorMask," and "Unstable Fables" and television productions include "Fraggle Rock" and the sci-fi cult series "Farscape."

With additional locations in New York and London, The Jim Henson Company is headquartered in Los Angeles on the historic Charlie Chaplin lot, complete with soundstage and postproduction facilities. Independently owned and operated by the five adult children of founder Jim Henson, the Company is also home to Jim Henson's Creature Shop™, a pre-eminent character-building and visual effects group with international film, television and advertising clients, as well as Henson Recording Studios, one of the music industry's top recording facilities known for its world-class blend of state-of-the-art and vintage equipment. The Company's Henson Alternative brand has recently announced the national tour of "Stuffed and Unstrung," a live puppet improvisational show named one of the top 10 "Best Stage Shows of 2010" by *Entertainment Weekly*.

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