



# Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at Maryland Spetember 22, 2006

## Jim Henson's Legacy Celebrated at Clarice Smith Center

*Festivities include exhibition and film collection launch, conversation with Jane Henson, theatre performance*

**College Park, MD (September 22, 2006)** – A day-long celebration on Sept. 22, 2006 will honor the legacy of the late puppeteer and University of Maryland alumnus Jim Henson, whose 70th birthday would have been on Sept. 24. Held in various venues within the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, the day's activities, collectively called "Jim Henson: Creativity and Other Inspirational Stuff," are a collaboration between The Jim Henson Legacy, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library (MSPAL) and University of Maryland Department of Theatre. Henson's wife and early collaborator, Jane, will be on site to participate in numerous events, including a free public panel discussion. The events are also part of the UM College of Arts and Humanities Semester on Comedy and Humor, a series of academic courses, lectures, discussions, and special events.

On the 22nd, the MSPAL will launch the newly acquired and digitized collection of 71 Henson films and television programs, filmed workshops and commercial compilations — made possible by Jane Henson and with permission from The Jim Henson Company, Sesame Workshop and Muppets Holding Company, LLC. Included are rarely seen examples of Henson's early work such as "Sam and Friends," a five-minute show on Washington D.C.'s WRC-TV; Wilkins Coffee and Esskay Meats commercials; and the nine-minute experimental film Time Piece, which was nominated for an Oscar for Live Action Short Film in 1966. The collection also features television appearances by Muppets on the Dick Cavett Show, the Tonight Show and 60 Minutes; selected episodes of the Muppet Show, Sesame Street, Fraggle Rock, among others; and films such as Dark Crystal and Muppets Take Manhattan. The public may view the digitized collection in study carrels at the MSPAL and other libraries on campus.

A gallery exhibition, titled "Jim Henson: Performing Artist," will also open to the public on the 22nd in the MSPAL, and will be available for viewing through June 30, 2007. The exhibit explores Henson's career and innovations, and features six of his Muppets, as well as behind-the-scenes photography, timelines, essays and videos.

In a free public event at 3 p.m. in the Clarice Smith Center's Gildenhorn Recital Hall, Jane Henson will participate in "Jane and Friends: The College Park Legacy," a conversation exploring Jim's local roots and providing a first look at the video compilation "The Story of Sam and Friends," as well as other early work.

At 8 p.m. in the Center's Kay Theatre, the public can attend the world premiere of Blair Thomas & Company's "The Ox-herder's Tale," commissioned by the Clarice Smith Center and supported in part by the Henson Endowment for Performing Arts. Thomas is the UM Department of Theatre's 2006-07 Jim Henson

Artist-in-Residence. "The Ox-herder's Tale," which will also be performed on the prior evening Sept. 21 at 8 p.m., is based on the traditional Zen teaching tool of 10 paintings with accompanying verses that depict a journey of enlightenment, performed by masked actors with life-sized puppets, banners, shadows, and projections. Thomas workshopped the piece with Department of Theatre students in March 2005, and will be blogging about the work on the Clarice Smith Center's Web site beginning in September.

Tickets to "The Ox-herder's Tale" are \$30; \$7 for full-time students with I.D. Talk backs follow each performance. To order, or for more information, visit [www.claricesmithcenter.umd.edu](http://www.claricesmithcenter.umd.edu) or call (301) 405-ARTS. The Clarice Smith Center is located near the intersection of Route 193 and Stadium Drive on the University of Maryland, College Park campus. A parking garage is located across the street from the Center. Programs of the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center are supported by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council, an agency funded by the State of Maryland and the National Endowment for the Arts.

#### **About The Jim Henson Legacy**

Established in 1993, The Jim Henson Legacy was created by family and friends in response to the extraordinary interest in the life and work of Jim Henson. The organization is dedicated to preserving and perpetuating Jim Henson's contributions to the worlds of puppetry, television, motion pictures, special effects and media technology. By making Jim's creative body of work available to the public through presentations and exhibits, the Legacy will share the power of his art, his imagination and his positive view of life with generations to come.

#### **About the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center**

The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center transforms lives through sustained engagement with the arts. Through extended residencies, the Center forges relationships between extraordinary guest artists, faculty, students and the wider community, creating multiple avenues for learning and illuminating the creative process. Providing transformational experiences both onstage and off, the Center supports and develops provocative work that represents diverse perspectives, sparking dialogue and reflection. Located on the University of Maryland, College Park campus between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, the Center serves as home to the UM School of Music, Departments of Dance and Theatre, and the Michelle Smith Performing Arts Library.

#### **About the UM Libraries**

The University of Maryland (UM) is the only nationally-ranked public university in the Baltimore/Washington area. With a total student enrollment approaching 40,000, the University is supported in its academic endeavors by the University of Maryland Library System, which is comprised of eight libraries and more than three million volumes. The UM Library System is the largest library system in the state.

#### **About the UM Department of Theatre**

The University of Maryland Department of Theatre is committed to integrating theatre, art, and craft with scholarship and pedagogy, utilizing an approach informed by the past yet looking forward towards the future. Located within the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, it benefits from its location in the fastest-growing theatre market in the nation, with more than 80 professional theatres in the region. The Department offers a full range of degree programs: BA, MA, MFA, and Ph.D., and its distinguished faculty includes 3 Helen Hayes Award recipients for theatrical design, a winner of a regional Emmy, and a Bernard Hewitt Award recipient for the outstanding book in theatre history.



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 launched 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*.

<http://www.henson.com>

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