

wexner center for the arts

For immediate release: January 17, 2006

Media contacts: Erik Pepple, 614 688-3261 or epepple@wexarts.org; Karen Simonian, 614 292-9923 or ksimonian@wexarts.org

WEXNER CENTER LAUNCHES INTERNATIONAL PERFORMING ARTS SERIES FOR FAMILIES WITH THREE SHOWS THIS WINTER AND SPRING

The Wexner Center's new **International Performing Arts Series for Families**—new in 2006—features inventive theatrical performances especially for young people and families. The first three performances in this ongoing series are *The Happy Prince* from Scotland on February 12, followed by *Blue Hair* from England on March 18, and *Snowflake* from the U.S. on April 29.

"We are committed to creating a performing arts series for children that is as innovative, stimulating, and rigorous as the rest of the Wexner Center's programming," says Shelly Casto, the Wexner Center's new Director of Education, who organized the series. "Although we have occasionally brought performing artists to town to present shows specifically for children in the past, this is the first year we've packaged these kinds of shows as a series. We think it will provide an alternative entertainment opportunity for families in the Columbus community."

The Wexner Center's 2006 International Performing Arts Series for Families is presented with generous support from Cardinal Health. Youth programs are presented with support from American Electric Power, 12 1/4 Circle (a group of Wexner Center members), and the Corporate Annual Fund of the Wexner Center Foundation.

The Happy Prince

Annie Wood Productions (Scotland)

Recommended for ages 4–9

Date and time: Sunday, February 12 / 2 pm

Location: Mershon Auditorium at the Wexner Center for the Arts, 1871 N. High St. (at 15th)

Tickets: \$7 general public, \$5 members, available at the Wexner Center Ticket Office (614 292-3535) and Ticketmaster (614 431-3600).

"Revivifies Oscar Wilde's story with bags of visual invention and colour." *Sunday Scottish Herald*

The Annie Wood team presents a fantastic new version of this beautiful children's tale, a touching story about doing good deeds for others in need. As the performance



Gale LaJoye in *Snowflake*

begins, a girl and a boy arrive in a run-down park on their scooters, both determined to tell the story of a statue known as “the Happy Prince.” Finding the props, costumes, and puppets they need to create an amazing array of characters in the park’s rubbish, the dynamic performers transport themselves and the audience to a magical kingdom. They act out the tale of a tearful statue come to life, who finds joy with the help of a bright swallow, becoming happier and happier as he gives his riches to the people of his kingdom.

The Happy Prince is presented with support from Target.

Blue Hair

Created and Performed by Peter Cutts (England)

Recommended for ages 8–12

Dates and times: Saturday, March 18 / 10:30 am & 1:30 pm

Location: Wexner Center Performance Space, 1871 N. High St. (at 15th Ave.)

Tickets: \$7 general public, \$5 members, available at the Wexner Center Ticket Office (614 292-3535) and Ticketmaster (614 431-3600).

Weaving together poetry, music, imaginative storytelling, and strong visual images, actor Peter Cutts plays a host of different characters using props and costumes in *Blue Hair*. On a virtually bare stage, he creates the vastness of a Scottish beach, the eeriness of a deserted house, and the trepidation of crossing a rope bridge, bringing young audiences along as he follows a trail of clues on a remarkable journey. When Steve Hopkins receives an anonymous letter his curiosity leads him on a quest to find Blue Hair. His search takes unexpected twists and turns, as the layers within this fascinating story reveal themselves. Based in London, Cutts is a former teacher, and is noted for his innovative poetry performances and audio projects targeted for and often developed with young people. He was a visiting professor in OSU's Department of Theatre during the Autumn quarter of 2005.

Blue Hair is cosponsored by Ohio State's Department of Theatre.

Snowflake

Created and performed by Gale LaJoye (United States)

Recommended for ages 5–12

Date and time: Saturday, April 29 / 10:30 am

Location: Mershon Auditorium at the Wexner Center for the Arts, 1871 N. High St. (at 15th)

Tickets: \$7 general public, \$5 members, available at the Wexner Center Ticket Office (614 292-3535) and Ticketmaster (614 431-3600).

“No words are uttered in *Snowflake*...but the sounds of joy are immense.”—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

In *Snowflake*, without a single word, Gale LaJoye teaches children to turn sorrow into joy. Using the magic of illusion, he floats in mid-air, breaths life into toys, creates imaginative music, and dances *The Nutcracker* on skis. Drawing on experiences with the theater, the circus (as a clown), and the Japanese art of kabuki, LaJoye creates complex, compelling characters who face genuine adversity with humor and hope. In this funny and poignant play about an ingenious homeless man, LaJoye lives up to his international reputation as a unique and inspiring entertainer. Based in Marquette,

Michigan, LaJoye began performing silent comedies around the globe in the early '80s. *Snowflake*, after premiering in 1990, has toured throughout Asia, South America, Australia, Mexico, Canada and the United States. Find more information about Gale LaJoye at www.lajoye.com.

Snowflake is a collaboration with the Columbus Coalition for the Homeless.

The Wexner Center for the Arts is The Ohio State University's multidisciplinary, international laboratory for the exploration and advancement of contemporary art. Through exhibitions, screenings, performances, artist residencies, and educational programs, the Wexner Center acts as a forum where established and emerging artists can test ideas and where diverse audiences can participate in cultural experiences that enhance understanding of the art of our time. In its programs, the Wexner Center balances a commitment to experimentation with a commitment to traditions of innovation and affirms the university's mission of education, research, and community service.

####30####