



PRESS RELEASE

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Center for Puppetry Arts and The Jim Henson Legacy Host "Jim Henson Day"

ATLANTA, July, 2009 – When the Center for Puppetry Arts first opened its doors on September 23 1978, Jim Henson and Kermit the Frog were there to cut the ceremonial ribbon. The Center maintained a close relationship with Mr. Henson throughout his life, and since his death in 1990, the Henson Family and The Jim Henson Legacy have continued to work closely with the Center for Puppetry Arts in an effort to preserve the master puppeteer's memory and creative vision. Nearly thirty-one years since the ribbon cutting ceremony in which Mr. Henson helped kick off the Center's beginning, the Center for Puppetry Arts, along with The Jim Henson Legacy, was pleased to host a celebration of "**Jim Henson Day**" on July 18, 2009.

The celebration was attended mainly by members of Puppeteers of America, a national non-profit organization of puppeteers founded in 1937, which works to build a community that can provide information about puppetry as well as encourage puppeteers. Special guests Jane and Heather Henson, the widow and youngest daughter of Mr. Henson, were also there accompanied by Arthur Novell, Executive Director of the Jim Henson Legacy.

The day began with a special welcome to the guests from Puppeteers of America by Center for Puppetry Arts founder and Executive Director Vince Anthony. Jane and Heather Henson also said some words regarding the significance of the day to the Henson family. Their personal stories and relaxed demeanors made the audience feel less like they were in a crowded theater and more as though they had been invited into the Henson home, getting a little slice of life as a family member of the world's most beloved puppeteer. Special guest Camille Love, Director of the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs, was also there to present a Proclamation of "**Jim Henson Day**" from the Atlanta City Council to Heather and Jane Henson on behalf of the Center for Puppetry Arts. This proclamation acknowledged Jim Henson for his "extraordinary talent, his gift of entertainment, and his creative vision." It also acknowledged Mr. Henson's efforts as a muppeteer, humanitarian, and producer and director of children's films that encourage tolerance, interracial values, and equality, which earned him a posthumous Courage of Conscience Award in 1992.

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The proclamation officially declared **July 18, 2009** as “**Jim Henson Day**” in the City of Atlanta and will be on display in the Center’s lobby for viewing. The Hensons mentioned how Atlanta was the perfect city in which to hold the celebration as Mr. Henson’s southern roots had kept him connected to the south throughout his life and career. A southerner by birth, Mr. Henson’s relationship with Atlanta deepened after meeting Vince Anthony, founder of the Center for Puppetry Arts, and maintaining a relationship with the Atlanta Center since its’ very beginning. After the presentation of the Proclamation, the guests were treated to a special encore performance of Jon Ludwig’s hit show ***The Little Pirate Mermaid***, which was presented as part of **Puppets Take Atlanta & Beyond**, an international puppet festival being held here in Atlanta from July 6–26, 2009. The Mainstage Theater, filled with puppeteers who could truly appreciate the technicalities behind the puppeteering, erupted into applause at the impressive trick marionette techniques used throughout the show.

A reception for Puppeteers of America (hosted by The Jim Henson Legacy) followed the performance of ***The Little Pirate Mermaid***. Participants were also able to tour the Center’s many facilities including the museum, educational classrooms, and the studios of the Center’s award-winning Distance Learning Program. Heather Henson even gave some lucky guests guided tours of the Center’s three exclusive Jim Henson exhibits: ***Jim Henson: A Man & His Frog***, ***Jim Henson: Puppeteer***, and ***Jim Henson: Wonders from His Workshop***. During these tours, Ms. Henson was able to share her own personal memories of the items in these collections as well as stories about her father – a truly special treat for the members of Puppeteers of America. Many members expressed their excitement at being able to meet members of the Henson Family. As an Oscar-nominated film director and Emmy Award-winning television producer, Jim Henson’s Muppets are arguably the most well-known puppet characters in the world. Many Puppeteers of America members view Mr. Henson as nothing short of a hero in the puppet community.

The Center is especially proud to host Jim Henson Day as the Henson Family announced back in 2007 that they had chosen the Center for Puppetry Arts as the future destination for the definitive museum collection honoring Jim Henson. The momentous gift includes between 500 and 700 puppets, props, scenic elements, posters, sketches, drawings, films, and videos. The collection will be housed in a new wing named after Jim Henson which will be part of a proposed revitalization and expansion of the current Center and will include increased museum and education spaces.

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Center for Puppetry Arts is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization and is supported in part by contributions from corporations, foundations, government agencies, and individuals. Major funding is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners under the guidance of the Fulton County Arts Council. Major support is provided by the City of Atlanta Office of Cultural Affairs. This program is supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) through the appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly (GCA is a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts). The Center is a Member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG) and of the Atlanta Coalition of Performing Arts. The Center also serves as headquarters of UNIMA-USA, the American branch of Union Internationale de la Marionnette, the international puppetry organization.