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TEATRO MÁSCARA MÁGICA'S LA PASTORELA DE LOS
INMIGRANTES SPREADS HUMOR AND INSPIRATION
AT THE OLD GLOBE

San Diego – The Old Globe is pleased to announce its presentation of Teatro Máscara Mágica's (TMM) acclaimed production of *La Pastorela de los Inmigrantes* by **Max Branscomb**, directed by **William Virchis**, to play in the Cassius Carter Centre Stage **December 10 – 23**. Performances take place at 7:30pm on December 10-12; 16-19, and 21-23; matinees December 11, 12, 18 and 19 at 2pm. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$14 for students/military/seniors and groups of 15 or more, and \$8 for children under 17. For reservations and information call **(619) 23-GLOBE** (234-5623) or visit www.TheOldGlobe.org.

Celebrating its 14th anniversary this year, TMM's award-winning, Mexican-inspired Christmas musical is better than ever. Where else would theatre lovers see Michael the Archangel, Lucifer, Donald Trump, Mucha Lucha and other modern-day icons share the stage?

La Pastorela de los Inmigrantes is TMM's newest twist on the traditional story of the shepherds' journey to Bethlehem to witness the first Christmas. Called to action by Archangels Michael and Gabriel, the shepherds face temptation and danger from evil Lucifer and his nasty minions. The bilingual script is primarily in English with more than a dozen beautiful Christmas carols sung in Spanish.

La Pastorela has been acclaimed by critics: *The San Diego Union-Tribune* wrote, "A rambunctious pageant of song, jokes and mock battles between the angels and simple folks against the forces of evil; while the *L.A. Times* raved that the show is "packed with humor and song." *El Sol de San Diego* called it "great fun, treading a wonderful line between slapstick and sentimentality...a gift the whole community can enjoy."

Cast members include some of San Diego's most popular actors. **Timothy Evans** and **Anthony Hamm** are the devils Satan and Moloch, while **Von Schauer** portrays Lucifer. Television star **Willie Green** plays Michael the Archangel.

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The pastorela is a folk art form that dates back to the beginning of Christianity. During the second century early Christians in hiding acted out the Christmas story to hand it down in the oral tradition. It survived as an underground movement until the Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity. The Spaniards brought it to Mexico in the 1540s and it became that country's most popular form of theatre. More than 2,500 unique versions of the story are produced south of the border. Almost every city, town and village in Mexico has its own version of the pastorela.

A pastorela is the tale of the shepherd's journey to Bethlehem to witness the first Christmas. It is the side plot of the nativity, a journey fraught with temptations, distractions and mortal peril as the devils try to prevent the shepherds from reaching their special destination. It is a traditional morality play full of choices and introspection, but presented with levity, music, beautiful costumes and poetic dialogue.

Teatro Máscara Mágica and The Old Globe developed and produced the first English language pastorela in San Diego in 1991 at the Globe. Following a tradition established by Globe Education Associate Raúl Moncada, who wrote the 1991 pastorela, Branscomb's devils and angels are masters of disguise who appear throughout the shepherd's journey as historic and contemporary characters. TMM's pastorelas have inspired theatre companies throughout the Southwest United States to produce their own.

A journalism professor at Southwestern College, playwright **Max Branscomb** has written over 10 *Pastorelas* for Teatro Máscara Mágica, and several others for theaters in Los Angeles, Tucson, and Bakersfield, and other cities. Besides his work with Teatro Máscara Mágica, Branscomb is the founder and artistic director of the annual Bonitafest Melodrama, which just concluded its 26th season. Branscomb is San Diego County's most commissioned playwright. He has authored more than 60 produced plays and musicals for more than 20 theater companies.

William Alejandro Virchis, former professor and artistic director at Southwestern College, currently serves as Director of Visual and Performing Arts at the Sweetwater Union High School District. In the 1970s, Virchis directed the Old Globe's GET Tour; and in 1981, he, Dr. Jorge Huerta and Craig Noel founded Teatro Meta, the Globe's bilingual playwriting program. Virchis and Huerta co-directed the Puerto Rican play, *The Fanlights/Los Soles Truncos*, in the Carter in 1983, offering performances in English and Spanish. He has also directed productions at Starlight, SDSU, UC Riverside, San Diego Gilbert and Sullivan Repertory, Centro Cultural de la Raza, and many others. Virchis serves on the Public Arts Advisory Council for the County of San Diego and previously on the Commission for Arts & Culture. In 1999 he directed the national touring production of *Selena*.

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Virchis and Branscomb first teamed up in 1992 to update and revise the Lerner-Lowe musical "*Paint Your Wagon*" at Starlight Musical Theatre. Virchis hired Branscomb to rewrite the cliched Latino character Julio from a shuffling Mexican knockabout to a proud indigenous hero. The revision played to sold-out audiences at Starlight and was named Best Play of the Season by San Diego's theatre critics. They also worked together as playwright and director of DiverCity Works Theatre and the annual Martin Luther King Breakfast for the National Conference of Community and Justice, America's oldest civil rights organization.

Teatro Máscara Mágica was founded in 1989 by Virchis and UCSD professor Dr. Jorge Huerta to increase the production of multicultural theatre and to provide professional theatrical opportunities to underrepresented segments of the population. Another mission of the Teatro is to subsidize ticket prices to make live theatre affordable to families and less affluent persons. The company is a national leader in multicultural theatre that has been honored by the National Endowment for the Arts as well as numerous human rights organizations. TMM and La Pastorela were recipients of the **2004 Multicultural Heritage Award** for leadership in multicultural theatre.

This year's production will also include **La Posada**, a longstanding Mexican Christmas tradition, in which actors and audience members re-enact Joseph and Mary's journey through Bethlehem looking for shelter. The wanderers go from door to door, and are consistently refused sanctuary until they reach the manger where the Christ child is born. The name refers to the specific song ("Las Posadas") that is sung in which tells of the search for shelter and the "homeowners" who turn them away. La Posada will take place on the Globe Plaza at approximately 30 minutes before curtain on the evening of each performance, and will include traditional Mexican holiday food and drink.

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The internationally-acclaimed, Tony Award®-winning Old Globe is one of the most renowned regional theaters in the country and has stood as San Diego's flagship arts institution for nearly 70. The Old Globe produces a year-round season of 12-14 plays and musicals on its three stages, including the highly-regarded Shakespeare festival. The Globe has become a gathering place for leading theater artists from around the world, as exemplified by Tom Stoppard, Daniel Sullivan, Tina Landau, Nora Ephron and John Goodman, among many others. Numerous Broadway-bound premieres and revivals, such as Imaginary Friends, The Full Monty and Damn Yankees, have been developed at The Old Globe and have gone on to enjoy highly successful runs in New York and at regional theatres across the country. Under the leadership of Artistic Directors Jack O'Brien and Craig Noel and Executive Director Louis G. Spisto, the Globe is at the forefront of the nation's leading performing arts organizations, setting the standard for excellence in American theater.