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Imperial Silence: Una Ópera Muerta / A Mariachi Opera in Four Acts

Directed by John Jota Leaños

Galería de la Raza presents @ Brava Theater Center, Sat. Nov. 1, 7pm
Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts, Sun. Nov. 2, 8pm

October 2008 – San Francisco, CA – In celebration of Day of the Dead/Día de los Muertos, director John Jota Leaños presents his latest collaborative production, **"Imperial Silence: Una Ópera Muerta / A Mariachi Opera in Four Acts"** - a multimedia performance that journeys to the 'other' side to illuminate cultural taboos around silence, death, and dissent in the satirical Mexican and Chicana/o tradition of the Days of the Dead. Galería de la Raza presents the first performance on Saturday, November 1, 7pm, at the Brava Theater Center, 2789 24th St., and on Sunday, November 2, 8pm, it will be presented as part of the Gala Celebration for Day of the Dead 2008 at the Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts, 868 Mission St, both in San Francisco. For more info call the Brava Theater Center at 415-647-2822 or MCCLA at 415-821-1155.

This hybrid performance fuses dark humored animation with Mexican folklore dance, Mariachi music, hip-hop, bossa nova and blues conceived and created by director/librettist, John Jota Leaños, composer Cristóbal Martínez, the Mariachi ensemble, Los Cuatro Vientos and loco actor Sean Levon Nash. The live/dead performance includes a live DJ, stage actors, folklore dancers, and Mariachi singers who interact with projected animations. The animations in the opera have screened and have won several awards at national and international film festivals including Sundance Film Festival, Cannes Film Festival, Mill Valley Film Festival, and others.

The opera's four acts include Act I—*Los ABCs ¡Qué Vivan los Muertos!* an animated primer on war and empire; Act II—*Deadtime Stories with Mariachi Goose and Friends* an animation that re-examines Mother Goose children's rhymes and culminates with the great fall of Humpty Mariachi Dumpty; Act III—*¡Radio Muerto!* a live performance and animation of a skeleton traveling the road to Mictlan (the Aztec underworld) while listening to the radio; Act IV—*DNN: Dead News Network*, a dead animated newscast exploring the silencing of dissent and "spin" in the corporate news media. The opera's Intermezzi involve a live electronic mix and acoustic Mariachi accompaniment of the baroque songs "El Corrido de Pat Tillman," "Lamento Desaparecido," "This is the House that Blacks Built" and others.

The Mission of the **Galería de la Raza** is to foster public awareness and appreciation of Chicano/Latino art and culture. An interdisciplinary space for art, thought and activism – Galería organizes cutting-edge art exhibitions, as well as multimedia presentations, performances and spoken-word events, screenings, computer-generated murals and educational activities. Founded in 1970 by local artists active in el Movimiento (the Chicano civil rights moment), Galería is a non-profit, community-based Latino arts organization located in the heart of San Francisco's Mission District. It is nationally recognized and is one of the Bay Area's oldest, most well-respected arts organizations.

Established in 1977, the **Mission Cultural Center for Latino Arts** (MCCLA) works to promote, preserve and develop Latino arts and culture. Programs include theater, music, film and video, poetry readings, cultural forums and media panels. The center houses a 142-seat theater, performing and visual art studios, a state-of-the-art print screen facility and the Galeria Museo, which presents local and international exhibitions throughout the year that target audiences not traditionally reached by mainstream museums and galleries.

For interviews with John Jota Leaños and/or other artists, please contact: **Juliana Mojica**, 415-374-0070 or e-mail @ juliana@mojicaarts.com. Digital images also available upon request.

CALENDAR EDITORS PLEASE NOTE:

Calendar Listing / Multimedia Performance / Theatrical Production

WHAT: **Imperial Silence: Una Ópera Muerta / A Mariachi Opera in Four Acts**
presented by Galeria de la Raza and MCCLA.

WHO: Directed by **John Jota Leaños**
In collaboration with composer Cristóbal Martínez, the Mariachi ensemble, Los Cuatro Vientos and loco actor Sean Levon Nash.

WHEN: **Sat. Nov. 1, 7pm and & Sun. Nov. 2, 8pm**

WHERE: (Nov. 1) **Brava Theatre Center**, 2789 24th St. @ York, San Francisco
(Nov. 2) **Mission Cultural Center for the Latino Arts**, 868 Mission St,
(btw. 24th & 25th), San Francisco

PRICE: (BRAVA) Sat., November 1, **\$10-15** Sliding Scale (No one turned away due to lack of funds)
(MCCLA) Sun. November 2, **\$5** (Children Free. Admission covers the Gallery Exhibition as well as the performance.)

TICKETS: **415-647-2822 Brava Theater Center**
415-821-1155 Mission Cultural Center

WEBSITE(S): www.brava.org or www.missionculturalcenter.org
John Leaños: www.leanos.net

PHOTOS: digital images available upon request: juliana@mojicaarts.com

MEDIA : Juliana Mojica, Mojica Arts, 415-374-0070 or juliana@mojicaarts.com

About the Artists:

John Jota Leaños (Director/Animator) is a social art practitioner who utilizes all and any media to engage in diverse cultural arenas through strategic revealing, tactical disruption, and symbolic wagon burning. His practice includes a range of new media, public art, installation, and performance focusing on the convergence of memory, social space and decolonization. Leaños' work has been shown at the Sundance 06 Film Festival, Cannes Short Corner 07, the 2002 Whitney Biennial, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Leaños is a Creative Capital Foundation Grantee and has been an artist in residence at the University of California, Santa Barbara in the Center for Chicano Studies (2005), Carnegie Mellon University in the Center for Arts in Society (2003), and the Headlands Center for the Arts (2007). Leaños is currently an Assistant Professor of Social Practices and Community Arts at the California College of the Arts.

Los Cuatro Vientos (Musicians) is a Mexican quartet composed of highly accomplished musicians in the mariachi style based out of Tucson, Arizona. This unique ensemble consisting of two violins, guitar and folk harp, offers its audience the original mariachi sound—as it was heard over 150 years ago—while including in its repertoire, songs that have become standards in the American musical scene. Besides performing traditional mariachi music, the quartet has integrated a number of other musical genres such as jazz, hip hop, rock, blues and Tex Mex.

Christopher Martinez (DJ/Composer) Musician and composer Cristóbal Martinez was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico and raised in nearby Alcalde. He devotes most of his creative energy experimenting with new media forms of music composition and performance as he considers how they relate to older forms of music. Cristóbal produces work under the spell of his Northern New Mexican heritage, Latin American literature and the influence of his childhood fascination with science fiction. His works include music compositions such as *Count*, commissioned for modern dance at the Bonnie Bird Theatre at the Laban Centre in London, and multimedia operettas like *La Gran Barrera*, performed at Gammage Auditorium in Tempe, AZ.

Sean Levon Nash (Actor) is a Native American artist who combines traditional mediums with contemporary expression, as well as more conceptually oriented work, especially comic storytelling. Though he is known primarily for his contribution to painting in the genre of Art related to Day of the Dead, he has begun to work in animation and has achieved an expanded audience as a result. Nash uses tribute and satire as tools to build awareness, and bring laughter, the best medicine.

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