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NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS ANNOUNCES GRANT TO DEAF WEST THEATRE

\$60,000 grant will support a new sign language production based on Cyrano de Bergerac

June 3, 2011—[North Hollywood, CA] Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, has announced that Deaf West Theatre has been recommended for a grant of \$60,000 to support a new adaptation of the classic, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Deaf West Theatre is one of 1,145 not-for-profit national, regional, state, and local organizations recommended for a grant as part of the federal agency's second round of fiscal year 2011 grants. In total, the Arts Endowment will distribute more than \$88 million to support projects nationwide.

An independent agency of the federal government, the National Endowment for the Arts advances artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman said, "NEA research shows that three out of four Americans participate in the arts. The diverse, innovative, and exceptional projects funded in this round will ensure that Americans around the country continue to have the opportunity to experience and participate in the arts."

Deaf West Theatre's Artistic Director, Ed Waterstreet, is honored to working once again with Stephen Sachs who will be adapting and directing the a new sign language adaptation of Edmond Rostand's classic French play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. "Stephen brings a long history of working with and developing storylines that work well with the Deaf West style that appeals so much to our community and to our audiences," Ed stated.

In this production, *Cyrano*—who in the traditional tale appears with a grotesquely large nose—is deaf and therefore speaks with remarkable and unusual hands. *Cyrano's* inability to communicate his love directly to Roxane, who is hearing and does not sign, sets up the tension of the play. Mr. Sachs is placing the piece in a modern setting and using modern vernacular with references to popular culture and technological conveniences common in the deaf community such as texting and video phones. Through the inclusion of deaf characters, sign language and a contemporary setting, this adaptation will explore themes of communication, love and overcoming differences – all heightened with the utilization of deaf actors and sign language.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.

Deaf West Theatre, Inc., was founded in 1991 to directly improve and enrich the cultural lives of the 1.2 million deaf and hard of hearing individuals who live in the Los Angeles area. DWT provides exposure and access to professional theater, filling a void for deaf artists and audiences. Through the medium of Sign Language Theatre, a legacy of Deaf culture is created, shared, and preserved for the mutual benefit of deaf and hearing communities. Learn more at www.deafwest.org.

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