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Orlando Family Stage Brings MicheLee Puppets Under Its Umbrella
Enriching the Community with the Magic of Puppetry Arts

Orlando, FL (November 30, 2023) – Orlando Family Stage is thrilled to announce the exciting acquisition of MicheLee Puppets Inc., a beloved puppetry organization with a rich 38-year history in Central Florida, to ensure the artistic legacy of MicheLee Puppets continues after the passing of its founder, Tracey Conner. The acquisition is a significant milestone in Orlando’s performing arts, marking a new chapter for both organizations and the audiences they serve.

“Through this initiative, Orlando Family Stage aims to preserve the legacy of MicheLee Puppets while expanding our own commitment to puppetry arts through performance and educational programming,” says Executive Director, Chris Brown. Orlando Family Stage plans to honor the passing and legacy of Tracey Conner, in its lobbies.

“We are very fortunate to have an organization like Orlando Family Stage in our community,” states MicheLee Puppets Board President, RJ Manchester. “We began talking with them when we saw that without Tracey’s guiding hand, the work of the company would be jeopardized. By working with Orlando Family Stage and looking at its very similar mission, we can ensure the mission of MicheLee Puppets continues.”

“Our commitment celebrates the Foundation’s passion for the arts, our admiration for Tracey Conner and MicheLee Puppets, and the innovative leadership of the Board and staff of Orlando Family Stage,” says President & CEO of Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation David A. Odahowski.

MicheLee Puppets - A Legacy of Creativity and Education

For nearly four decades, MicheLee Puppets has enchanted audiences of all ages with its original characters, captivating stories, and innovative puppetry performances. They have left an indelible mark on Central Florida's cultural landscape, reaching thousands of young minds through in-school performances, community engagements, and an extensive online audience.

The acquisition of MicheLee Puppets by Orlando Family Stage will ensure the enduring legacy of founder Tracey Conner and her remarkable contributions to puppetry arts and education. This initiative reflects a commitment to preserving the past, embracing the present, and shaping the future of arts in the community.

Key Initiatives of the Merger

Orlando Family Stage has outlined several essential initiatives that will be central to the successful transition and merger of MicheLee Puppets:

- **Creation of the Director of MicheLee Puppets position:** A dedicated full-time Director will oversee the puppet programming and educational outreach, ensuring the continuity and expansion of the puppetry legacy within OFS.
- **Program Integration:** OFS will explore, adapt, and integrate MicheLee Puppets' rich program catalog into its offerings, opening new opportunities for innovative educational content and theatrical performances.
- **Expanded Puppet Capabilities:** The acquisition will bolster OFS's puppetry capabilities, both in production and education, to create enriching experiences for audiences of all ages.

A Bright Future for Puppetry Arts in Central Florida

This acquisition is not focused on preserving a legacy, but also about nurturing a vibrant future for puppetry arts in Central Florida. It will empower young minds, inspire creativity, and foster critical thinking through the magic of puppetry.

"As we embark on this exciting journey, we are committed to continuing the transformational work initiated by MicheLee Puppets," said Orlando Family Stage's Artistic Director, Jeff Revels.

"Our mission is to empower young people to be brave and empathetic by creating quality theatrical experiences, and this partnership allows us to do just that with even greater impact."

Orlando Family Stage looks forward to celebrating this merger with the community, and is actively planning events and initiatives that will engage and captivate audiences in the months and years to come. The organization invites all supporters, patrons, and community members to join in this remarkable journey, which will bring the wonder of puppetry arts to new heights.

About Orlando Family Stage

Orlando Family Stage (previously known as Orlando Repertory Theatre) is a professional theatre with a mission to empower young people to be brave and empathetic by creating quality theatrical experiences. The award-winning Youth Academy provides classes and camps for students, along with professional development opportunities for teachers. Housed in a three-theatre complex in Orlando's Loch Haven Park, Orlando Family Stage is also home to the University of Central Florida's MFA in Theatre for young Audiences graduate program. Orlando Family Stage exists on the traditional land of the Timicua and Seminole peoples past and present. With gratitude, we honor the land itself and its stewards throughout the generations. Orlando Family Stage is Florida's only professional Theatre for Young Audiences.

About MicheLee Puppets

Founded by Tracy Conner, MicheLee Puppets has been at the forefront of puppetry arts and education in Central Florida for over 38 years. MicheLee Puppets empowers lives through the art of puppetry. Since 1985, MicheLee Puppets has played a unique role in the Central Florida community as a creator of original issue-based performances for young people. In response to requests from schools and the community, they developed more than 30 live theatre and video productions on critical topics like divorce, child abuse, bully prevention, healthy lifestyles, literacy, and more. Their performances, videos, and puppetry classes have reached 1.9 million Pre- K through 12th grade students, promoting respect for self and others, personal responsibility, and positive life choices. In 2003 MicheLee Puppets received the Marjorie Batchelder McPharlin Award for outstanding contributions in the field of educational puppetry from the Puppeteers of America.

To learn more about Orlando Family Stage's upcoming programming, both on and offstage, visit orlandofamilystage.com or call 407-896-7365. Orlando Family Stage is located in Loch Haven Park at 1001 East Princeton Street, Orlando, FL 32803.

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