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Classical Theatre of Harlem Presents

ELECTRA

Written & Directed by Alfred Preisser

Based on *Electra* by Sophocles

Performances Begin on May 24th

At The Harlem School of the Arts Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Avenue

April 14, 2007

The OBIE, Drama Desk and Lortel Award-winning Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH) will present *ELECTRA*, a new version of Sophocles' classic, adapted and directed by CTH Artistic Director Alfred Preisser. Performances will be at the HSA Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Avenue, and will begin on Thursday, May 24th. Opening night is scheduled for Thursday, May 31st and the show will run through Sunday, June 24th.

Sophocles's *Electra*, written around 409 B.C., is based on the legend of the House of Atreus, a story which contemporary Greek audiences would have known from childhood. The major themes of this story concern retribution for crimes committed within the family of Atreus, who was Electra's grandfather. Electra's duty in the play is to avenge her father's murder, but this involves killing her own mother, another crime that will have consequences down the line. As with previous CTH adaptations of the Greek classics (*Trojan Women* and *Medea*), the Classical Theatre of Harlem's *Electra* will be a visceral and harrowing meditation on the costs of war. The text is a completely new take on the story.

Director Alfred Preisser is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of The Classical Theatre of Harlem and the director of the Theatre Division at The Harlem School of the Arts. His work with the company includes *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death* and *Macbeth*, which toured Germany at the Bonn Biennial and Globe-Neuss Shakespeare Festival. His original adaptations of Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Medea* were performed at CTH in 2002 and 2004, and he is the co-author of 2005's *Caligula*, which featured André De Shields in the title role. Mr. Preisser recently directed Mr. De Shields in *King Lear*; that production played to sold out houses in Harlem, Miami, and at the Folger Theater in Washington D.C. where it broke box office records.

ELECTRA features Zainab Jah (*Medea*, *Trojan Women*) in the title role. The remaining cast will be Trisha Jeffrey (Broadway's *All Shook Up* and *Little Shop of Horrors*), Samuel Ray Gates (*Nelson* at the Lion Theatre), and Petronia Paley (*The Cherry Orchard* at CTH). Longtime CTH performer Tracy Jack will play the leader of the Chorus, which includes Khadeejah Gray, Christina Sajous and Sandra Miller.

The Classical Theatre of Harlem is a dynamic and unique theatre company dedicated to producing the classics for a new, young, and culturally diverse audience. Their numerous awards and honors include a 2004 Drama Desk Award (as well as several nominations), 12 AUDELCO Awards (along with 77 nominations) for Excellence in Black Theatre, and five OBIE Awards, off-Broadway's most prestigious honor. Their production of *Funnyhouse of a Negro* was nominated for three 2006 Lucille Lortel Awards, the first year they were eligible. They were recently awarded a 2007 Lortel Award for Outstanding Body of Work. CTH's production of *Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death* was picked up by an outside producer and enjoyed a successful run at the nightclub T New York.

ELECTRA will begin performances on Thursday, May 24th with the opening scheduled for Thursday, May 31st and will run through Sunday, June 24th. The schedule will be Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8PM and Sundays at 3PM. Tickets are \$25-\$45 and can be purchased by calling Smarttix at (212) 868-4444 or by visiting their web site at www.smarttix.com. For more information about The Classical Theatre of Harlem, visit their web site at www.classicaltheatreofharlem.org.

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Written & Directed by Alfred Preisser

At The HSA Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave. (near 141st Street) in Upper Manhattan

SCHEDULE:

Performances begin on May 24th. The show will open on May 31st and run through June 24th

Wednesdays through Saturdays at 8PM and Sundays at 3PM.

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