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***LOCAL TALENT CAST IN WORLD PREMIERE OF
NEW MUSICAL SET FOR NATIONAL TOUR!***

TORRINGTON, CT (September 5, 2007) — The world premiere of *Magic Tree House: The Musical*, a new musical slated for a 200-city nation-wide tour in 2008 and based on the #1 NY Times Best-selling Children's series *Magic Tree House*, will feature several local actors in key roles when it premieres at the Warner Theatre next weekend. The show runs September 15-23.

Litchfield High School senior, **Katie Brunetto** will play the series' female lead Annie while Bristol resident **Matthew Martin** plays the male lead, Annie's brother Jack. Brunetto was last seen by local audiences in the Goshen Player's production of **THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE** while Martin was last seen in the Warner's production of **HAIR**. Other notable local actors in the cast are Farmington resident **Bif Carrington** as King Arthur and **Marcia Maslo** of Fairfield as **Guinevere**. Carrington and Maslo were last seen on stage together in the Warner Theatre's production of **THE SOUND OF MUSIC**. Torrington's Ken Rogers plays Merlin. Rounding out the local cast are actors from Bristol, Canton, Farmington, New Milford, Newtown, Simsbury, Waterbury and beyond. Students from the renowned Torrington-based McArdle School of Irish Dance will also be featured in the production's dance numbers.

Based on **Mary Pope Osborne's** beloved series of children's books, **MAGIC TREE HOUSE: THE MUSICAL** transports Jack and Annie's adventures onto the stage to create a theatrical event for the entire family. To restore joy and magic to King Arthur's kingdom, the brother and sister team must travel to Camelot's dreaded Otherworld and return with water from the mythical Cauldron of Memory and Imagination. If they fail, Camelot will be lost and forgotten forever -- and the Magic Tree House will be destroyed! Rising to each new challenge with courage, humor, and resourcefulness, Jack and Annie eventually discover that memory and imagination are gifts we can all use to fill our lives with magic.

"The great challenge of transferring a book series like the Magic Tree House from the page to the stage is the huge set of expectations all the young readers will have. In creating the world of Jack and Annie's adventures in Camelot we needed to be able to paint on a scale equal to the imaginative scope of the books," says **Joe Harmston**, director of *Magic Tree House: The Musical*. Harmston continues, "We searched for over a year to find the right environment to begin our adventure with this production. The Warner Theatre won hands down over the alternatives. It is a magnificent theatre - the

Warner brothers knew a thing or two about the magic of entertainment! - and the wealth of community acting and backstage talent creates the perfect positive environment for the delicate business of creating a world premiere."

The new musical was written by **Will Osborne**, who co-authors the lyrics with composer **Randy Courts**. They finished writing the show last spring, developed it through several readings and have now recorded the songs for a full-length CD that has just been released on the **PS Classics Label**. The creative team includes: **Alexander Dodge**, set design, **Matthew Richards**, lighting, **Sarah Iams**, costumes and **Mary Brehmer**, puppets.

"We are nearing the end of rehearsals and so far all elements are exceeding our expectations. The talent and commitment of all our actors is quite staggering. The atmosphere in the rehearsal room is one of the most pleasurable and productive I have ever known. Any slight concerns I may have had about the technical ability and experience of our cast have completely evaporated as I have watched, with admiration, everybody rise to the challenges [giant puppets, huge dance routines, complex music and all singing, all dancing set!] we have thrown at them, with determination and enthusiasm," Harmston added.

The musical will have six performances at the historic art deco theatre, starting with the gala world premiere on September 15th. The other performance dates include Sunday, September 16, 2007 at 2:00 PM; Friday, September 21, 2007 at 8:00 PM and Saturday, September 22, 2007 at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM. The final performance will take place on Sunday, September 23, 2007 at 2:00 PM. Warner Theatre Subscribers will be offered the production as an add-on to their 2007-2008 season subscription plan.

Tickets are **\$24.50, \$21.50, 18.50**. There is an additional \$1.50 per ticket Preservation Fee charged to help maintain the historic Warner Theatre facilities. For more information, on Magic Tree House: The Musical please visit <http://www.mthmusical.com/Home.html>. For more information on purchasing tickets, please contact the Warner Theatre Box Office at **(860) 489-7180** or visit the Warner Theatre Online at www.warnertheatre.org.

Magic Tree House: The Musical is sponsored by Random House Children's Books, with additional support from the First National Bank of Litchfield. Radio Media Sponsor is FM 97.3 WZBG and Internet Media Sponsor is Kidtivity.com.

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Magic Tree House® By the Numbers

Just how popular is Mary Pope Osborne's Magic Tree House® series? The Numbers Speak for Themselves...

45+ million

The number of Magic Tree House books sold (North America only)

7+ million

The number of Magic Tree House books sold Jan-Nov 2006 alone

1.5 million

The number of Magic Tree House Research Guides sold since the non-fiction series launch in 2000

\$19 million

Overall net sales Jan-Nov 2006 – up 9% over the same period in 2005

134,000

The number of discrete hits on www.magictreehouse.com in October, 2006

26,000

The number of teachers subscribing to Teachers' Tree House a teaching guide for using Magic Tree House in the classroom

1,500

The average number of people per night attending Magic Tree House Book signing events on Spring '06 publicity tour

115

The number of weeks the Magic Tree House series has spent on the New York Times Bestseller list — The same number of weeks as the Harry Potter books

36

The number of Magic Tree House titles in the series, with the latest, Magic Tree House #37: Dragon of the Red Dawn, on sale February, 2007

26

The number of languages into which Magic Tree House titles have been translated

15

The number of years that the Magic Tree House series has been entertaining generations of readers

5

Mary Pope Osborne's rank in BarnesandNoble.com's "Our Bestselling Writers" list (following James Patterson, Janet Evanovich, Nora Roberts, and Dan Brown)

5

The total number of Random House authors honored in Amazon.com's 25th Anniversary Hall of Fame of their all-time bestselling authors (all ages, all genres) John Grisham, Dan Brown, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dr. Seuss – and Mary Pope Osborne.

And finally...

#1:

The position of The Magic Tree House series on the New York Times and Booksense Bestseller lists with the release of each new title.

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About Mary Pope Osborne

"I'm one of those very lucky people who absolutely loves what they do for a living. There is no career better suited to my eccentricities, strengths, and passions than that of a children's book author."
—Mary Pope Osborne

Mary Pope Osborne is the author of the popular Magic Tree House series. She works with her husband Will and her sister Natalie on the nonfiction companion series, Magic Tree House Research Guides. Many of her books have been named to best-books lists.

"I grew up in the military. By the time I was 15, I had lived in Oklahoma, Austria, Florida, and four different army posts in Virginia and North Carolina. Moving was never traumatic for me, but staying in one place was. When my dad finally retired to a small town in North Carolina, I nearly went crazy with boredom. I craved the adventure and changing scenery of our military life. Miraculously, one day I found these things, literally only a block away—at the local community theater. From then on, I spent nearly every waking hour after school there.

'After graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the early 1970s, I lived an intensely varied life. For a while I camped in a cave on the island of Crete. Then I joined up with a small band of European young people heading to 'The East.' We traveled through 11 Asian countries and nearly lost our lives, first in an earthquake in northern Afghanistan and then in a riot in Kabul. My trip came to an abrupt halt in Katmandu when I got blood poisoning. During the two weeks I spent in a missionary hospital there, I read all of the Tolkien trilogy. To this day, my journey to 'The East' is tangled up in my mind with Frodo's adventures.

'After I returned home and recovered from my illness, I promptly headed back into the real world. I worked as a window dresser, as a medical assistant, and as a Russian travel consultant. One night I attended the opening of a musical about Jesse James. From the balcony, I fell in love with Will Osborne, the actor/musician playing Jesse. I loved his boots and his white cowboy hat; I loved how he sang and strummed the guitar. A year later, in New York City, we were married.

'Thereafter, when I wasn't on the road with Will, I worked as a waitress, taught acting classes in a nursing home, was a bartender, and had a job as an assistant editor for a children's magazine.

'Then one day, out of the blue, I began writing a story about an 11-year-old girl in the South. The girl was a lot like me, and many of the incidents in the story were similar to happenings in my childhood. The first draft was crudely written, but it must have communicated something to an editor, because shortly after I finished, it became a young adult novel called *Run, Run Fast as You Can*. Finally, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up.

'Now 24 years and 80 books later, I think I'm one of the most fortunate people on earth. Whenever I work on a book, I feel as if I've traveled to some amazing place in the world. Writing *Tales from the Odyssey*, I sailed with Odysseus through the ancient Greek world. Working on the *Spider Kane Mysteries*, I spent time in an abandoned cottage garden with a group of nutty and wonderful insects. Working on my novel *Haunted Waters*, I lived in a haunted castle with a sea spirit. While working on my new picture book, *Pompeii: Lost and Found*, I felt as if I myself were excavating an ancient Roman city. And of course, with my *Magic Tree House* series, I take daily journeys with Jack and Annie to different times and places, from the prehistoric world of dinosaurs to the world of Camelot. Though there are 36 books of fiction and 13 non-fiction books in the *Magic Tree House* series now, I don't think I'll ever run out of places to travel to in my imagination.

'The *Magic Tree House* has also whisked me to schools all over the country, and the contact I now have with millions of readers has brought overwhelming joy into my life. I love the letters I get and I love reading the countless *Magic Tree House* stories that children themselves have written. I feel as if my readers and I are all exploring the creative process together, using our imaginations and writing skills to take us wherever we want to go. This, I tell my small fellow authors, is true magic."

About the Warner

Built by Warner Brothers Studios and opened in 1931 as a movie palace, the Warner Theatre was described then as "Connecticut's Most Beautiful Theatre." Damaged extensively in a flood, the Warner was slated for demolition in the early 1980s until the non-profit Northwest Connecticut Association for the Arts (NCAA) was founded and purchased the theatre. The Warner reopened as a performing arts center in 1983, and restoration of the lobbies and auditorium was completed in November 2002. Today, the Warner is in operation year-round with more than 140 performances and some 92,000 patrons passing through its doors each season. NCAA's mission is to preserve the Warner Theatre as an historic landmark, enhance its reputation as a center of artistic excellence and a focal point of community involvement, and satisfy the diverse cultural needs of the region. To learn more about the Warner Theatre, visit our website: www.warnertheatre.org.