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**Warner Theatre Center FOR ARTS EDUCATION
ANNOUNCES NEW OUTREACH INITIATIVE WITH AREA SCHOOLS**

Torrington, CT – The Warner Theatre’s onsite school for the arts, the Warner Theatre Center For Arts Education, recently announced several new outreach initiatives that aim to bring the world of performing arts into local classrooms and to equip students with the necessary skills to build self esteem, practice conflict resolution and develop an appreciation for the arts.

In a new pilot program developed by the Warner Theatre Center for Arts Education (WTCAE) for the Torrington Public School system, Second graders in the city’s five public elementary schools will spend one hour each week in January with instructors from the WTCAE participating in acting and improvisation exercises that will bolster their self esteem and teach team-building techniques.

The program will incorporate the NY Times best-selling children’s book series, *The Magic Tree House*, written by Goshen CT author Mary Pope Osborne. Osborne’s series, which features a brother & sister team who travel through time and around the world to solve mysteries, learn about

history and explore other cultures, will take center stage as the focal point of the program's acting lessons and improvisational exercises.

"Upon hearing about this new outreach initiative with the Torrington Public schools, Mary offered her series as a vehicle for engaging these students in the area of performing arts and teaching life skills that can benefit children of all ages," said Isabel Carrington, WTCAE Director of Education. As Carrington explained, the WTCAE has a long history with the author since she appeared as a guest for the Center's Artist and Authors Series, which features prominent authors and artists talking about their craft.

The author and her husband, actor and writer Will Osborne, chose the Warner Theatre as the site to launch the world premiere of their new musical, *Magic Tree House: The Musical* in September 2007 and subsequently again in September 2008 to begin the national tour of the show. Some of the actors hired for the tour were alumni of the Warner Theatre Center for Arts Education.

The Torrington program is set to begin on January 5th.

The WTCAE has also developed a second outreach initiative which will engage students from New Hartford's Ann Antolini school in a one day, 90-minute workshop that will explore the art of improvisation and creative dramatics. Led by WTCAE instructor and former Region 7 drama teacher, Les Ober, and students from the WTCAE's advanced acting class, the program will introduce students to various forms of dramatic play through improvisation exercises and theater games. The program will also include a performance by the WTCAE students which will include scenes from *The Reluctant Dragon*, a children's play intended for young audiences.

"This will be a fantastic way to bring a sampling of our popular programs into the school and into the lives of these young students, as well as to provide an invaluable opportunity for our own students, who will get to experience first-hand what it's like to work with and perform for young children," said Carrington. The program at the Ann Antolini school will take place on Friday, December 18.

"Each of these programs will help us to further our mission of bringing the world of performing arts to all members of our community and to help spread awareness of the Warner Theatre Center for Arts Education's after-school enrichment programs," explained Carrington.

The two initiatives join the Warner's existing program for CT schools, the Daytime Performances for Young Audiences Series. Through this series, 8,000 CT school children visit the Warner Theatre for live performances by nationally renowned children's theatre companies each year.

School systems interested in speaking with the Warner Theatre's Education department about potential arts outreach programs that can be tailored to the curricular needs of their school district should contact WTCAE Director of Education, Isabel Carrington, at 860-489-7180 ext. 128 to set up an appointment to discuss their district's needs.

THE WARNER THEATRE

Built by Warner Brothers Studios and opened in 1931 as a movie palace (1,772 seats), 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 main lobbies and auditorium was completed in November 2002. In 2008, the new 50,000 square foot Carole and Ray Neag Performing Arts Center, which houses a 300 seat studio theatre, 200 seat restaurant and micro-brewery and expansive school for the arts, was completed. Today, the Warner is in operation year-round with more than 160 performances and 100,000 patrons passing through its doors each season. Over 10,000 students, pre K—adult, participate in arts education programs and classes. Together, with the support of the community, the Warner has raised close to \$17 million to revitalize its facilities. 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.