

sandra feinstein-



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THE GAMM ENTERS THIRD DECADE SOLID ON STAGE & STRATEGY

PAWTUCKET, RI (July 1, 2005) —Tony Estrella, artistic director for The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre (The Gamm), is pleased to announce that the organization ended its fiscal year in the black and with a newly acquired distinction as the state's second year-round professional theater.

The non-profit group's \$630,000 in revenues for the year ending June 30 represent an impressive 250% increase compared with the The Gamm's most successful year in its former home in Providence. Likewise, subscriptions for the theater's upcoming 21st season are at an all-time high of just over 1,000, including 75% renewals.

"Our 20th Anniversary Season has been our most successful by every measure. The theater has never been more popular nor has the on-stage product been more consistently challenging, thought-provoking and imaginative," Estrella said. "We are graced with an unbelievable group of artists, staff and volunteers who are poised to continue the momentum and make Season 21 even better."

The Gamm opens its 2005-06 season in September as a new member of New England Area Theatre (NEAT), a bargaining unit of the Actors Equity Association — the union of professional stage actors in the United States. NEAT represents a consortium of about 15 small- to medium-sized non-profit professional theaters in the Boston area. As the first Rhode Island theater to join the affiliate, The Gamm anticipates employing more union actors and production staff to the enhancement of the theater's artistic and financial strength.

"Our membership in NEAT legitimizes the professional level of work on and off our stage, and will bring us the regional attention and wider audience this theater so richly deserves," Estrella said.

From held-over performances of Henrik Ibsen's gripping *An Enemy of the People* to the New England premiere of Amy Freed's hilarious Off-Broadway hit *The Beard of Avon*, The Gamm played to 96% capacity houses during the 2004-05 season, exceeding the season's single tickets sales goal by 8%.

Managing Director Yvonne Seggerman echoed Estrella saying, "Nothing could have made me happier than to see the success The Gamm Theatre has enjoyed over the past two years since we moved to Pawtucket. The community has really responded to the wonderful, thought-provoking plays that Tony has produced. I thank our amazing board and staff for the intense, hard work that has made all of this happen. We look forward to a thrilling new season."

In addition to a strong season on stage and greater visibility, Estrella attributed the theater's continued growth to the increased generosity of individual board member and donors, as well as corporate and non-profit gifts. The Sharpe Family Foundation, Bristol County Savings Bank and Ocean State Charities Trust were among those organizations providing significant support during the 2004-05 season. Individual play sponsors included Barrington Printing, Citizens Bank Foundation, Rhode Island PBS, The Times and WBRU.

The Gamm is especially grateful to NBC 10, which has agreed to sponsor a third season.

"The Gamm Theatre is absolutely a fine contributor to the arts and cultural scene in Southern New England," said Clare Eckert, vice president of advertising and promotion at NBC 10. "The theater staff is unwavering in its effort and deserves much credit for bringing wonderful performances and thought-provoking theater to the public. We are proud to continue our sponsorship and look forward to working with The Gamm for years to come. Congrats to all!"

The Gamm also hosted its third and most successful formal fundraiser in May, netting more than \$47,000 toward artistic programming, or more than three times last year's event. The Shakespearean themed wine tasting and auction was underwritten by Citizens Bank Foundation with significant support from Collette Vacations, Rhode Island Monthly and Yankee Spirits, Inc.

The Gamm opens Season 21 in September with an approximately \$790,000 budget and a goal of increasing subscriptions by 20%. Additionally, both Estrella and Seggerman have signed 3-year contracts with the board.

The theater recently completed a 5-year strategic plan assisted by board member William P. Wingate, an arts consultant and former managing director for Trinity Repertory Company. In addition to its NEAT membership, The Gamm projects an annual operating budget of over \$1.1 million and more than 2,800 subscribers by its 2008-09 season, or the end of the 5-year cycle.

About The Gamm

Founded in 1984 as Alias Stage, the non-profit Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre performs great works of the classic and modern theater in an intimate setting that fosters the vital relationship between author, actor and audience. As the cornerstone of The Arts Exchange at the Pawtucket Armory, The Gamm seeks to engage and enrich the community through affordable entertainment and educational programming.

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