

For Immediate Release

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Mexican Heritage Plaza Goes “On The Road”

Los Lupeños de San Jose Featured at Portland Museum of Art

Plaza’s “Bracero” Research Featured in Smithsonian Institution

San José, CA—February 26, 2008—The Mexican Heritage Corporation, producer of the annual San José International Mariachi Festival®, announced today a unique “virtual” performance by MHC’s resident ballet folklorico company, Los Lupeños de San Jose at Portland’s Museum of Art on February 29, 2008.

Marcela Davison Aviles, President and CEO of MHC and Executive Producer of the festival, stated that the Lupeños “virtual appearance” will be a screening of the company dancing several selections from their repertoire at a special reception for museum donors and patrons. The reception highlights the Portland Museum’s current exhibition about the work of Mexican photographer Lola Alvarez Bravo. “We’re delighted to have been invited to perform, albeit virtually, at this special reception in honor of the famous Mexican artist Lola Alvarez Bravo,” stated Ms. Aviles.

The Museum’s exhibition about Lola Alvarez Bravo, features 55 vintage photographs spanning the artist’s entire career. Alvarez Bravo was a pioneering figure in the rise of modernist photography in Mexico and is widely recognized as Mexico’s first woman photographer. The first major representation of her work in over a decade, the exhibition will include several rarely seen and unpublished photographs and an excerpt from a short film by Alvarez Bravo featuring painter Frieda Kahlo.

“The arrangement between the Portland Museum and the MHC is an example of how arts and cultural organizations can leverage their resources and audiences for the benefit of their respective communities,” said Vanessa Nesvid, Coordinator of Community

Programs at the Portland Museum of Art. “We’re delighted to present this special bi-coastal virtual performance in our museum to celebrate Alvarez Bravo’s work.”

The Plaza also announced that an artifact donated to the Smithsonian Institution’s permanent collection from a member of the San Jose community is featured in the National Museum of American History’s exhibition, “Treasures of American History” now on display at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. The object, a farm worker’s hat worn by Mexican guest worker Savas Castro, is one of more than 150 objects from the museum’s collection which will be on view through April 13, 2008 in the Treasures exhibition. An oral history of Castro’s Bracero Program experience was heard and transcribed in a joint effort co-sponsored by the Mexican Heritage Plaza and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

“The Smithsonian Institution would like to thank the Mexican Heritage Plaza for hosting the Bracero History Project collecting initiative,” said L. Steve Velasquez, associate curator at the National Museum of American History. “We knew the Plaza would be a good community partner when, within the first hour of opening the doors, Jason Ramirez walked in with a well used work hat belonging to his grandfather and former bracero, Savas Zavala Castro. The Bracero History Project was very fortunate to have the Mexican Heritage Plaza as the first site for our collecting initiative,” Velasquez added. The hat was immediately recognized by the museum as a treasure and included in the special exhibition along with Thomas Edison’s lightbulb, the hat Abraham Lincoln was wearing the night he was assassinated and Jacqueline Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural ball gown. These artifacts are part of the museum’s 3 million objects and are on display while the National Museum of American History is closed for renovation.

To visit the exhibition online, please go to:

http://americanhistory.si.edu/exhibitions/small_exhibition.cfm?key=1267&exkey=143

or visit the Smithsonian’s website at www.si.edu.

About the Portland Museum of Art

The Portland Museum is the largest art museum in the state of Maine, with a collection of more than 18,000 objects housed in three historic and remarkable buildings showcasing three centuries of art and architecture.

About the Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum complex and research organization composed of 19 museums, 9 research centers, and the National Zoo. The Smithsonian is the nation's national museum, representing the treasured icons of our past, the vibrant art of the present, and the scientific promise of the future.

About Mexican Heritage Plaza

The mission of the Mexican Heritage Plaza of San José is to affirm, celebrate and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Mexican community and showcase multicultural arts within the region and nationally. The Plaza, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is a 200,000 square-foot cultural center that serves as a vibrant resource for cultural programming and education. Built in association with the San José Redevelopment Agency, it is one of the largest Latino cultural centers in the nation. To learn more about the Mexican Heritage Plaza, visit <http://www.mhcviva.org>.

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