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Open Dream Ensemble to Perform
Original Play Peril on the Red Planet at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory
As Well As Several Pasadena Area Schools

Winston-Salem, N.C. (October 25, 2010) – The Open Dream Ensemble, a professional multi-disciplinary children’s theater group based in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, will perform an original play, Peril on the Red Planet, on Monday, November 8 at 4:00 p.m. at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), California Institute of Technology at 4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, California. The Open Dream Ensemble also will perform the play at several schools in the Pasadena area during the same week. The performances are not open to the public.

The Imagine Mars Project, co-sponsored by NASA and the National Endowment of the Arts, has been working closely with the Open Dream Ensemble for the past three years and has provided science advisors during script development, NASA volunteers to talk to students, and Project Leader training to support associated Imagine Mars Projects. Their support and collaboration helped make it possible for the Open Dream Ensemble to present Peril on the Red Planet. The performance on November 8 marks the first time that most JPL employees and their families will have a chance to see the play performed live.

“NASA partners with groups like the Open Dream Ensemble to share excitement about Mars exploration through creative activities that align well with school curricula. The ensemble's play fits well with our Imagine Mars Project, because it imagines how a community on Mars might work,” said David Delgado, Outreach Coordinator for Mars Public Engagement and Team Lead for the Imagine Mars Project. “Peril on the Red Planet helps present information about Mars in a fun and meaningful way.”

Peril on the Red Planet, written by UNCSA alumna Mollye Maxner with Shona Simpson, is set in the future and tells the story of 13 year-old Diana as she works to end famine on Mars. She reconstructs the machine that made human habitation possible on Mars and unexpectedly unleashes more problems. Her efforts to save life on Mars lead her on an important quest, during which she learns life lessons about community, responsibility, teamwork and sacrifice. Peril on the Red Planet is geared to grades 2-7.
Original music for *Peril on the Red Planet* was composed by UNCSA alumnus James Stewart.

“The partnership with the educators and scientists at the Jet Propulsion Lab and Imagine Mars shows that creativity and imagination together with scientific exploration can inspire and challenge our youth to become artists, scientists, and explorers when they are ready,” said Margaret S. Mertz, executive director of the Kenan Institute for the Arts. “The American pioneer spirit is alive and well. We are extraordinarily proud of this venture.”

“*Peril on the Red Planet* focuses on important life lessons including dedication, determination, and courage,” said Rebecca Nussbaum, general manager of the Open Dream Ensemble. “It also highlights the power of imagination and learning in fun, creative, and engaging ways. The support of the Imagine Mars Project was instrumental in helping us create this play and we are delighted to be able to share it with employees and their families at the Jet Propulsion Lab and with the Pasadena community.”

The Imagine Mars Project is a national, standards-based, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) educational initiative that leads young people to work together with scientists, educators and professionals to create a futuristic Mars community for 100 people. It enables students to explore their own community and decide which arts, scientific, and cultural elements will be important on Mars. Then, they develop their ideal community from an inter-disciplinary perspective of the arts, sciences, and technology. For more information, visit [http://imaginemars.jpl.nasa.gov](http://imaginemars.jpl.nasa.gov).

The Open Dream Ensemble is a professional outreach program of the University North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA) in Winston-Salem and is comprised of professional artists who trained in dance, drama, and music at UNCSA. Using the diverse skills of its cast, Open Dream Ensemble presents original performances to school students throughout the Southeast. In addition, the Open Dream Ensemble performs curriculum-based residencies and workshops. More information is available at [www.OpenDreamEnsemble.com](http://www.OpenDreamEnsemble.com) or by calling (336) 782-7837.

The Open Dream Ensemble is a project of the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, which incubates projects that sustain artists at every point in their creative development through strategic partnerships that capitalize on visionary thinking in the arts. For more information, visit [www.kenanarts.org](http://www.kenanarts.org).

The University of North Carolina School of the Arts ([www.uncsa.edu](http://www.uncsa.edu)) is the University of North Carolina’s conservatory for the arts, dedicated entirely to the professional training of students possessing exceptional talents in the performing, visual and moving image arts. UNCSA offers students focused, intense, professional training at the high school, baccalaureate, and masters levels in its schools of Dance, Design and Production, Drama, Filmmaking and Music.