

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Excellent Press Photos Available upon request

## **World Premiere Musical, Carl Sagan's CONTACT Launches Centerstage's Stellar Season.**

**Run Dates: Sept. 25 - Oct.18, 2009. (Fri-Sun)**  
**Press Night: Sept. 25; 8:00 p.m.**

**Federal Way, WA** – South Puget Sound's Resident Professional Theatre, **Centerstage** is up to something big, really big, billions-and-billions-of-stars BIG. On September 25<sup>th</sup> Centerstage Theatre will present a world premiere musical, **Carl Sagan's CONTACT**. This new show is overflowing with "star stuff" and is sure to launch the theater's stellar 2009-2010 Season into the stratosphere!

Centerstage's Managing Artistic Director **Alan Bryce** explains his passion and enthusiasm for this new project, "Centerstage is dedicated to bringing high quality entertainment at an affordable price to South Puget Sound, and I am determined to push the artistic limits of this fantastic theatre by creating new work for our own community and the greater theatre community at large. **Carl Sagan's** mind-bending brilliance and drama will translate well to the stage, and I am thrilled that our theatre is the first to explore the theatrical potential of this new work."

The book was adapted by Alan Bryce who will also serve as the show's director. **Amy Engelhardt**, ASCAP award-winner and member of **The Bobs**, is the lyricist and European Composer of the Year **Peter Sipos**, wrote the music. LA-based **Roni Blak** will choreograph the show. **Dana Friedi** is the costume designer and set/lighting designer **Craig Wollam** will incorporate the elaborate video projections by skilled video designer **Riley Dickens** into the overall design. Bryce continues, "it's not every day that Federal Way audiences get a chance to participate in the development of a new musical and I know this experience will enlighten us all – as microscopic residents of this 'pale blue dot' in the middle of the vast universe we inhabit."

Carl Sagan's widow, **Ann Druyan** recently wrote to Centerstage, "My feeling is hugely positive ...I really believe your **CONTACT** has a place on Broadway and all around the planet." Carl Sagan and his wife spent long periods of time in Seattle during the mid 1990s when Sagan received bone marrow treatments at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center . Carl Sagan died December 1996, in Seattle , after a long battle with bone marrow disease. But he never gave up his dream of going to the stars.

Sagan created the character of Ellie Arroway, the director of "Project Argus," for his novel CONTACT which was first published in 1985. Like Sagan, Ellie unflinchingly searches for extraterrestrial intelligence. After encountering the first confirmed communication from extraterrestrial beings, she discovers something more dramatic and unexpected than anyone could have ever predicted. It is interesting to note that Sagan named Eleanor (Ellie) Arroway, after two people: Eleanor Roosevelt, a "personal hero" of Sagan's wife, and Voltaire, whose last name was Arouet.

American astronomer **Jill Tarter**, director of the Center for SETI Research, served as a consultant to actor Jodie Foster during the making of the film CONTACT. She also inspired and consulted with Sagan when he originally developed his fictional character of Ellie Arroway. Jill Tarter visited Seattle in August 2009 and met with Alan Bryce and the new musical's leading lady, **Caitlin Frances**. Photos of their Seattle meeting are available at <http://www.centerstagetheatre.com/press.html>

**Carl Sagan's CONTACT** is part of the discounted 5 - 9 - or 10-show Season Pass which is on sale now. Single tickets for all 12 performances are also on sale now and available by phone at (253) 661-1444, online at [www.centerstagetheatre.com](http://www.centerstagetheatre.com), and in person at the Knutzen Family Theater box office. Single tickets are \$25 for adults; \$20 for seniors, military, students 18 & over with ID; and \$10 for youth 17 & under. \$17 tickets are available for groups of 10 or more.

All shows are performed at the Knutzen Family Theatre and are general admission. There are 3 performances a week on Friday and Saturday evenings at 8:00 pm plus a Sunday matinee at 2:00 pm. The new **Wine with the Director** featuring

wines by Mount Baker Vineyard and Winery is Saturday October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Centerstage patrons meet with the show's director at 7:00pm for wine and hors d'oeuvres. The Director will give a short presentation on the show you are about to see that night with a general audience Q&A for anyone who wishes to stay after the performance. Tickets to the new ***Wine with the Director*** are \$10 and include a glass of wine.

The cast of 18 locally-based actors in ***Carl Sagan's CONTACT*** includes: **Caitlin Frances** (Ellie), **Matthew Posner** (Joss) and **Eric Hartley** (Hadden), **Zoe McLane**, **Jamie Pederson**, **Natalie Moe**, **Lance Channing**, **Joe McCarthy**, **Alison Monda**, **Sophia Federighi**, **Amber Cutlip**, **Dana Johnson**, **AnnaMaria Pasley Horn**, **Matthew Ahrens**, **James Patrick**, **Branden Edwards** and **Jonathan Wright**.

#### **ABOUT CARL SAGAN**

Astronomer, educator and author, Carl Sagan was the world's greatest popularizer of science, reaching millions of people through newspapers, magazines and television broadcasts. He is well-known for his work on the PBS series *Cosmos*, the Emmy-award-winning show that became the most-watched series in public-television history. It was seen by more than 500 million people in 60 countries. The accompanying book, *Cosmos* was the best-selling science book ever published in English. Sagan played a leading role in NASA's Mariner, Viking, Voyager and Galileo expeditions to other planets. He received NASA Medals for Exceptional Scientific Achievement and twice for Distinguished Public Service. He received 22 honorary degrees for his contributions to science, literature, education and the preservation of the environment and many awards for his work on the long-term consequences of nuclear war and reversing the nuclear arms race. Other awards include: the John F. Kennedy Astronautics Award of the American Astronautical Society; the Explorers Club 75th Anniversary Award and the Konstantin Tsiolkovsky Medal of the Soviet Cosmonauts Federation. He also was the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize (1978) and the Public Welfare Medal, the highest award of the National Academy of Sciences. Sagan was a Distinguished Visiting Scientist at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California and a contributing editor of *Parade* magazine, where he published many articles about science and about the disease that he battled for the last two years of his life. He died in Seattle in December, 1996.

#### **ABOUT CENTERSTAGE**

Centerstage is Federal Way's resident Theatre Company. It was founded in 1977 and for the past ten years has produced shows at the Knutzen Family Theatre on the shores of Puget Sound. Initially created as a performance conservatory for aspiring actors, Centerstage's mission has expanded and is now committed to producing "innovative, accomplished productions of popular work and for new work with the widest possible audience appeal." Hits like last season's *Always...Patsy Cline* certainly fall into the former category. Centerstage has produced many exciting new works in recent years including: *4 Christmases*, commissioned from 5-time Grammy Nominee, John Forster; a new musical version of the Dickens' classic *Nicholas Nickleby*; *Robin Hood* the first full production of Tom Meehan, Peter Sipos and Martin Charnin's new project; Alan Bryce's *Nightmare of a Married Man* which won the Tacoma News Tribune's "Best New Play Award, 2007-2008 Season"; and two traditional English "pantomimes," including the wildly popular *Aladdin*, from one of the masters of this uniquely British Theatrical art form, Paul Hendy. Perhaps the most ambitious project undertaken by Centerstage is the world premiere musical *Carl Sagan's Contact*. In April 2009, the City of Federal Way awarded the Knutzen Family Theatre management contract to Centerstage saving both the city and theatre company over \$50,000.

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