

MEDIA RELEASE

Mariposa County Arts Council
(209) 966-3155
phillips@mariposaartscouncil.org
www.mariposaartscouncil.org

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For Immediate Release

Mariposa's History Now Comes Alive on Stage

MARIPOSA, CA — At long last, Mariposa has its history play.

Actually, *The Story* is intended by its author to be the first play in a cycle of theatre pieces about Mariposa's past. Written and directed by Les Marsden, *The Story* stars an 11-member cast of local actors Audrey Davis, Harve Dearing, Tina Dearing, Greg Dunn, Matty Elliott, Ira Jones, Diego Naranjo, Rya Salonen, Karen Silver, Kyle Stivers, and Madia Westerlund. *The Story's* professional production team includes Production Manager Fred Friedland (Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Theatre Department at Merced College) and is stage managed by Carol Dewey, Yosemite Music Festival organizer and local business owner. Costumes are by Anna Rotondaro, veteran of more than three decades of professional costume design.

In addition to his script for the play, *The Story* also incorporates Marsden's original musical score and songs, as well as multi-media imagery and effects to tell Mariposa's story from the times of its earliest known history. The folklore of the region's native population is illuminated as *The Story* tells how first the Spanish, then the Mexican Republic claimed this region of lands already populated by native people for thousands of years. *The Story* ends shortly after John C. Fremont makes a discovery just after another country has claimed the lands of Mariposa: the United States of America.

The Story is a production of the Mariposa County Arts Council's Mariposa Theatre Alliance and is also an incarnation of Marsden's "Acting in Mariposa" (AIM) Program. Performances will take place on Friday and Saturday, Oct. 27 - 28 and Friday and Saturday, Nov. 3 - 4 at 7 p.m. with a matinee performance Sunday, Nov. 5 at 2 p.m. at the Mariposa County Park Amphitheatre (4889 County Park Road, Mariposa).

Though perhaps best known in this region as the Founder and Conductor of the Mariposa Symphony Orchestra, Les Marsden had a distinguished career as an actor, playwright, and director long based in London, Manhattan and Los Angeles. His 4,000+ stage performances ranged from Shakespeare to modern farce, with that career initiated by his award-winning internationally-performed show *A Night at Harpo's*, written and premiered when he was only 23 years old. That show was created by Marsden with the full cooperation of the late Harpo Marx's widow and family; his work while in his teens had already garnered him the imprimatur of Groucho Marx himself. Marsden was nominated for or won many international honors including the world's highest stage acting honor: London's prestigious Laurence Olivier Award, as well as the London Critics' Award, Carbonell Award and many others. Marsden was designated a Master Acting Instructor by the late American stage director, raconteur and HB Studios' own Charles Nelson Reilly. Disabled in an onstage accident while starring in a play in Washington DC in 1999 at age 42, Marsden consequently retired and moved his family back to California and ultimately to Mariposa in 2001.

The Arts Council is very excited to bring together such a high caliber of talent together to tell the story of Mariposa. Tickets are \$9 for Mariposa County Arts Council Members, \$10 for students and senior citizens, and \$12 for general admission. Tickets for *The Story* may be purchased in advance at the Mariposa County Arts Council's Treetop Gallery (5009 Hwy 140, Mariposa) and online at: www.mariposaartscouncil.org.

Please note, while this production will be presented indoors at the Mariposa County Amphitheatre, the facility's insulation is thin and audience members are encouraged to dress warmly.

The Story is made possible by the California Arts Council Artists Activating Communities grant.

The MARIPOSA COUNTY ARTS COUNCIL, INC. is an incorporated not-for-profit organization, created to promote and support all forms of the cultural arts, for all ages, throughout Mariposa County and is funding in part by Mariposa County, the California Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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