



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE HUMAN RACE THEATRE COMPANY BRINGS AUTISM AND SHAKESPEARE PROJECT TO DAYTON

10-week pilot program uses the language of Shakespeare's plays to aid Miami Valley children with autism.

(Dayton, OH) — The Human Race Theatre Company is partnering with United Rehabilitation Services of Greater Dayton and Dayton Children's Hospital to bring the Autism and Shakespeare Project to the Miami Valley in order to serve local children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The 10-week long series of classes is a pilot project lead by a group of Human Race teaching artists and utilizes The Hunter Heartbeat Method, a unique drama-based set of exercises created by London-based actor/director Kelly Hunter of the Royal Shakespeare Company, to build communication and socialization skills that assist in breaking through communication blocks often associated with ASD. The Human Race's Autism in Shakespeare Project sessions run Thursdays, September 8 – November 10, 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm at United Rehabilitation Services' Charles D. Berry Center. United Rehabilitation Services of Greater Dayton and Dayton Children's Hospital have already selected the initial group of 10 children to participate in the pilot. The three organizations hope to continue and expand the program if it proves successful this fall.

In May 2015, Ms. Hunter trained a core group of Human Race artists in her technique. Kevin McClatchy, assistant professor at Ohio State University's Department of Theatre, who has worked closely with Ms. Hunter, will lead an additional August 13 workshop to train an even larger group of artists, including Marilyn Klaben, Heather Powell, Jen Joplin, Andrea Morales, Jake Lockwood, Andrew Adams, John-Michael Lander, Chris Hammond, Jene Shaw and Louan Hilty.

Used both in England and through a collaboration between The Ohio State University Nisonger Center and OSU Department of Theatre, The Hunter Heartbeat Method consists of two central components: the spoken rhythm of Shakespeare's iambic pentameter text, which mimics the sound of a heartbeat and helps students on the spectrum relax and feel comfortable communicating with both voice and physical gesture; the exploration of the "mind's eye" which allows ASD students to not only mentally, but also vocally and physically, experience the imaginative worlds which may otherwise be locked away. The Method's interactive exercises are based on the stories and texts of Shakespeare's plays and are constructed to help ASD students: practice eye contact, learn observation and imitation skills, recognize facial expression, and

improve social skills in a group setting. The games are very structured, but extremely adaptable to the individualized needs of all ASD students. It is this adaptability that makes The Hunter Heartbeat Method successful across the vast spectrum of ASD.

For more information on The Human Race Theatre Company's participation in the Autism and Shakespeare Project, please contact Education Director Marilyn Klaben at (937) 461-3823 ext. 3132 or marilyn@humanracetheatre.org.

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Now celebrating its 30th anniversary, The Human Race Theatre Company was founded in 1986 and moved into the Metropolitan Arts Center in 1991, taking up residence at the 212-seat Loft Theatre. In addition to the Eichelberger Loft Season, The Human Race produces new works development and special event programming. Under the direction of President and Artistic Director Kevin Moore, the company also maintains education and outreach programs for children, teens and adults, as well as artist residencies in area schools, an In-School Tour, and a summer youth program. Human Race organizational support is provided by Culture Works, the Montgomery County Arts and Cultural District, the Shubert Foundation, the Erma R. Catterton Trust Fund, the Jesse & Caryl Philips Foundation, the Virginia W. Kettering Foundation and the Ohio Arts Council, which helped fund this organization with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans. The 2016-2017 Sustainability Sponsors are the ELM Foundation, Anne F. Johnson, Steve and Lou Mason, and Morris Home Furnishings. The 2016-2017 Loft season sponsor is the Jack W. and Sally D. Eichelberger Foundation of the Dayton Foundation, with additional support from Premier Health.