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Theater of War Presents Two Readings of Sophocles' *Ajax* at People's Light & Theatre Company

(Malvern, PA) – People's Light & Theatre will host Theater of War Productions, a social impact company that presents readings of ancient Greek plays, with two readings of Sophocles' *Ajax* on Monday, October 17th and Monday, November 28th at 7pm on the Main Stage. People's Light's Artistic Director Abigail Adams directs. Company Member David Bradley will facilitate a discussion afterwards. People's Light & Theatre is located at 39 Conestoga Road, Malvern, PA 19355. The readings are free, but reservations are required. For reservations call **610.644.3500** or visit **PeoplesLight.org**.

Ajax tells the story of a fierce warrior who slips into a depression near the end of the Trojan War, attempts to murder his commanding officers, fails, and takes his own life. It is also the story of how Ajax's wife and troops attempt to intervene before it's too late.

"Our collaboration with Theater of War supports and enhances our many efforts to deepen community engagement," Abigail Adams says. "We are so pleased that these readings of *Ajax* will begin our newest experiment in deepening engagement with a series of readings that also involve community partners."

Theater of War Productions, supported by a generous grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation in collaboration with the USO, is partnering with prominent theaters across the United States to present *Theater of War* for mixed audiences comprised of military service men and women and civilians. *Theater of War* is an innovative public health project that presents readings of ancient Greek plays, Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by service men and women, veterans, their families, caregivers and communities. Using Sophocles' plays to forge a common vocabulary for openly discussing the impact of war on individuals, families, and communities, these events will be aimed at generating compassion and understanding between diverse audiences. Each performance is approximately two hours long. The readings from the plays are followed by comments from a panel that features a diverse group of military community members, as well as a town-hall style audience discussion.

Panelists for the discussion will include combat veterans, family members of veterans, and medical professionals from the veterans' community. Community partners include the Coatesville Veterans Administration, the Pennsylvania Veterans Museum, and the Philadelphia Veterans Administration.

ABOUT PEOPLE'S LIGHT

People's Light, a professional, not-for-profit theatre in Chester County, Pennsylvania, makes plays drawn from many sources to entertain, inspire, and engage our community. We extend our mission of making and experiencing theatre through arts education programs that excite curiosity about, and deepen understanding of, the world around us. These plays and programs bring people together and provide opportunities for reflection, discovery, and celebration. Founded in 1974, we produce seven to nine plays each season, in two black box theatres with 350 and 170 seats respectively, mixing world premieres, contemporary plays, and fresh approaches to classic texts for our 6-Play and Discovery Series.

ABOUT THEATER OF WAR

Theater of War presents readings of Sophocles' *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* to military and civilian communities across the United States and Europe. These ancient plays timelessly and universally depict the psychological and physical wounds inflicted upon warriors by war. By presenting these plays to military and civilian audiences, our hope is to de-stigmatize psychological injury, increase awareness of post-deployment psychological health issues, disseminate information regarding available resources, and foster greater family, community, and troop resilience. To date, Theater of War Productions has delivered over 150 performances at more than 50 military sites throughout the United States and Europe. Over 30,000 service members, veterans, and their families have attended and participated in Theater of War performances and discussions to date. Visit Theater of War's website www.outsidethewirellc.com to find more information about the project, watch a short video of a performance, and find out about recent and upcoming performances. You can also find Theater of War on Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheaterofWar.

ABOUT STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation (www.SNF.org) is one of the world's leading international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and medicine, and social welfare. While prominent in its support of Greek-related initiatives, the Foundation's activities are worldwide in scope. To date, the Foundation has provided total grant commitments of €895 million/US \$1.2 billion through more than 1,900 grants to nonprofit organizations in 90 nations around the world.

Having started its grant-making activities following Stavros Niarchos' death in 1996, the Foundation adheres in its mission to his global legacy, Greek heritage, and interest in providing underserved populations with access to opportunity. With offices in New York City, Athens, and Monte Carlo, the Foundation funds institutions and projects that exhibit strong leadership and sound management and that have the potential to achieve a broad and lasting impact.

Among other projects, the Foundation has committed to building The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC) in Athens, which will include new edifices for the National Library of Greece and the Greek National Opera, as well as the Stavros Niarchos Park—all designed by internationally renowned architect Renzo Piano. The project's cost is estimated at Euro €566 million/US \$750 million, making it one of the largest individual gifts ever made by a foundation.

ABOUT THE UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS (USO)

The USO (United Service Organizations) lifts the spirits of America's troops and their families millions of times each year at hundreds of places worldwide. We provide a touch of home through centers at airports and military bases, top quality entertainment and innovative programs and services. We also provide critical support to those who need us most, including forward-deployed troops and their families, wounded warriors and their families and the families of the fallen. The USO is a private, non-profit organization, not a

government agency. We rely on the generosity of our volunteers and donors. In addition to individual donors and other corporate sponsors, the USO is supported by Worldwide Strategic Partners: American Airlines, AT&T, BAE Systems, The Boeing Company, Clear Channel Communications, The Coca-Cola Company, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft Corporation, Northrop Grumman Corporation, Procter & Gamble and TriWest Healthcare Alliance. We are also supported through the United Way and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC – 11381). To join us in this patriotic mission and to learn more about the USO, please visit www.uso.org.

BIOS

Abigail Adams (Director) is Artistic Director of The People's Light & Theatre Company. During her 33-year association with the Theatre, she has directed more than sixty plays, including *Dividing the Estate*, *Legacy of Light*, and *Nathan the Wise*. Ms. Adams has directed readings and workshops of new plays for Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey, Circle Rep, New York Stage and Film, and the Public Theatre. Abbey served for ten years on the faculty of Swarthmore College and has also taught at New York University, Bryn Mawr College, Carnegie Mellon University, and The Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Ontario. She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Ursinus College.

David Bradley (Facilitator) has been a part of People's Light's resident company for 20 years. His more than two dozen productions include *Doubt*, . . . *Young Lady from Rwanda*, *The Crucible*, *He Held Me Grand*, *A View from the Bridge* and many plays for the Family Series, including three pantos, *Gossamer* and *The Giver*. He's directed frequently at Indiana Repertory Theatre, most recently this season's *Holes*. Other recent theater projects include opening the fifth season of the National Constitution Center's play *Living News* (for which he is Artistic Director) and directing the Philadelphia Young Playwrights 2010 Professional Productions at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre. David works in Philadelphia and beyond as a director, arts educator and consultant, often focusing on the intersection of the arts and community/civic engagement. He's co-founder of LiveConnections, which creates music programs for underserved youth at World Cafe Live, and is a consulting artist for the Animating Democracy Initiative of Americans for the Arts, Pew's Heritage Philadelphia Program and CultureWorks. His arts education projects include collaborations with Art-Reach, the Rosenbach Museum and the Green Tree School. David is president of the board for Philadelphia's Shakespeare in Clark Park.

Lou Ferguson (Teucer) has been seen at PLTC in *My Children, My Africa* and *Dividing the Estate*. He recently appeared at The Wilma in Fugard's *Coming Home*. He has appeared in television, film, regional theatre and Broadway. His Broadway credits include *Seven Guitars*, *Two Trains Running*, and *Playboy of the West Indies*. Regional credits include *The Bluest Eye*, *Drowning Crow*, *Everyman*, *Les Blancs*, *Night of the Iguana*, *The Hasty Heart*, and *Oedipus the King*. Mr. Ferguson's television credits include *A Raisin in the Sun* (American Playhouse), *Jonny Zero*, *Third Watch*, *Law & Order*, *Another World*, and *General Hospital*. Film credits include *The Interpreter*, *Maid in Manhattan*, *Stone Mansion*, *Attica*, *Radical Jack*, *I Like It Like That*, and *The Tested*.

Melanye Finister (Athena/Tecmesa) was last seen at PLTC playing Aldonza/Dulcinea in *The Return of Don Quixote*. She is a Resident Teaching Artist at People's Light and has been a company member since 1991. She has also worked for Arden Theatre Company, Flashpoint Theatre Company, InterAct Theatre Company, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Venture Theatre and The Walnut Street Theatre. Melanye is board member at Stockton Rush Bartol and holds a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University.

James Ijames (Chorus) is a Philadelphia-based actor and playwright. Regional theater credits include: *An Empty Plate at the Café du Grand Boeuf*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Superior Donuts*(Arden Theatre Company), *Grey Gardens*, *Ruined* (Philadelphia Theatre Company), *PROM* (New Paradise Laboratories), *Angels in America Part 1 and 2* (BCKSEET Productions), *The Threshing Floor* (Mauckingbird Theatre Company), *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, *Gossamer*(PLTC). James was nominated for a Barrymore Award for *Around the World in 80 Days* at the Delaware Theatre Company and

Superior Donuts with the Arden Theatre Company. He was a 2010 and 2011 Finalist for the F. Otto Haas Emerging artist award.

Stephen Novelli (Odysseus—Nov. 28th) has recently performed in *The Return of Don Quixote*, as Halvard Solness in *The Master Builder* and as Voltaire in *Legacy of Light* at People's Light and as Mick Dowd in The Lantern Theatre production of *A Skull in Connemara*. Other roles at PLTC include Gloucester in *King Lear* and Saladin in *Nathan the Wise*. He directed *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* and *Tuesdays with Morrie* for People's Light. A member of the resident company since 1974, he now serves as Artistic Associate.

Pete Pryor (Ajax/Agamemnon) is a proud company member of PLTC and the new Associate Artistic Director. He is a co-founder of 1812 Productions and resident artist at the Pathway School. Last season he was honored as a Lunt-Fontanne fellow. He is an Independence Foundation Fellowship Artist and winner of three Barrymore Awards. A reading of his new play *Beautiful Boy* will be featured later this season in PLTC's Community Matters. Pete will direct this year's revival of PLTC's Panto *Treasure Island* and Bruce Graham's *Mr. Hart and Mr. Brown*.

Graham Smith (Odysseus—Oct. 17) received his B.A. at Davidson College and his M.F.A. at Hilberry Classic. He has been a PLTC company member since 1999. PLTC: *Valley Song, A Delicate Balance, The Crucible, The Miser, Twelfth Night, Nathan the Wise, King Lear, Dividing the Estate and The Return of Don Quixote*. Recent work includes *A Number* and *What the Butler Saw*: NCSC, *The Tempest*: ATL and NCSF, and *The Foreigner*: Festival Stage. Wife: Audrey Brown. Began career in 1961 touring with father's family-vaudeville-magic show *Saucy Sorcery*, a one-man show with others.

Bryan Doerries (Artistic Director, Theater of War Productions) is a New York-based writer, translator, director, educator and the founder of Theater of War, a project that presents readings of ancient Greek plays to service members, veterans, caregivers and families as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by military communities today. He is also the co-founder of Outside the Wire, LLC, a social impact company that uses theater and a variety of other media to address pressing public health issues, such as end of life care, prison reform, political violence and torture, and the destigmatization of the treatment of substance abuse. He is a self-described "evangelist" for classical literature and its relevance to our lives today. In addition to his work in the theater, Bryan lectures on his work at colleges and universities.

Phyllis Kaufman (Producing Director, Theater of War Productions) is a New York-based producer and lawyer with an expertise in social impact entertainment that combines traditional and digital media. She is the producer of Theater of War, a project that presents readings of ancient Greek plays to service members, veterans, caregivers and families as a catalyst for town hall discussions about the challenges faced by military communities today. She is also the co-founder of Outside the Wire, LLC, a social impact company that uses theater and a variety of other media to address pressing public health issues, such as combat related psychological injury, end of life care, prison reform, political violence and torture, and the destigmatization of the treatment of substance abuse and addiction. Phyllis' interest in the power of traditional and digital media has also led her to careers as a Partner at a New York-based law firm, Artistic Director of the Philadelphia Festival of World Cinema, and a producer of feature and documentary films.

QUICK FACTS

AJAX

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| Performances: | | Dates: October 17 th and November 28 th |
| Mon, October 17 | 7pm | Location: People's Light & Theatre Company Main Stage 39 Conestoga Road Malvern, PA 19355 |
| Mon, November 28 | 7pm | Tickets: Free, but reservations are required. Actors and performance dates and times are subject to change. Contact the box office for more details. |
| | | <u>Public Contact Information</u> Box Office: 610.644.3500 |
| | | <u>PRODUCTION TEAM</u> |
| | | Director Abigail Adams |
| | | Facilitator David Bradley |
| | | Translation Phyllis Kaufman |
| | | Producer Bryan Doerries |
| | | <u>CAST</u> |
| | | Ajax/Agamemnon Pete Pryor |
| | | Athena/Tecmesa Melanye Finister |
| | | Chorus James Ijames |
| | | Odysseus Graham Smith (Oct. 17 th) Stephen Novelli (Nov. 28 th) |
| | | Teucer Lou Ferguson |