Museum of International Folk Art

Dancing Shadows, Epic Tales: Wayang Kulit of Indonesia

March 8, 2009 through March 14, 2010

Santa Fe, NM (October 22, 2008)—*Wayang kulit* performance of Indonesia, among the oldest and greatest story telling traditions in the world, is said to lie at the heart of Javanese culture. *Wayang kulit* are flat, elaborately painted and intricately carved and perforated leather shadow puppets that cast dazzling shadows through a cotton screen. Traditional performances last all night, beginning in the evening and lasting to dawn. *Wayang Kulit* performances are always accompanied by a *gamelan* orchestra—a traditional Indonesian musical ensemble that includes a variety of instruments such as gongs, drums, metallaphones, xylophones, stringed instruments, and vocalists.

This highly refined and complex art form may be performed to commemorate important rites-of-passage (such as circumcisions and weddings), holidays, national events (such as political elections), and personal accomplishments.

Performances are usually based on classical literature such as the Indian epics, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* with contemporary issues incorporated into particular scenes. In fact, the Museum of International Folk Art houses George Bush and Saddam Hussein shadow puppets. Important moral, ethical, and philosophical ideas are taught in every show, while entertaining the audience at times with roaring humor and special action-packed scenes.

Dancing Shadows, Epic Tales: Wayang Kulit of Indonesia will introduce the distinct form of *wayang kulit* found in Central Java. Various aspects of this performance art will be explored, including gamelan, artistic techniques involved in making shadow puppets, the cast of characters, and regional variations of *wayang*.

The exhibit's highlight is a 3.5 meter, double sided screen. Much like audiences in Central Java, museum visitors can watch dancing and battling shadows (on video) on one side of the screen and walk around the stage to watch (a video of) the shadow master at work from "behind the scenes."

Featured in the exhibit will be a full gamelan ensemble and the Museum's own extraordinary collection of *wayang kulit*— a full set of over 200 gold and bronze-leafed Surakarta-style, court-based shadow puppets acquired from some of Java's prominent puppeteers. The puppets will flank the screen to the left and right creating the typical yet stunning arrangement that can be seen at actual performances in Central Java.

Dancing Shadows, Epic Tales: Wayang Kulit of Indonesia opens Sunday, March 8, 2009 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m., with a reception hosted by the Women's Board of the Museum of

New Mexico. There will be musical gamelan performances and art-making demonstrations. The reception is free to New Mexico residents.

The exhibition is curated by Felicia Katz Harris and will remain on view through March 14, 2010.

For images and additional information about this exhibition and about the Museum of International Folk Art, visit our Media Center at http://media.museumofnewmexico.org/. To download images and text you will need to register (a simple process) if you have not already done so.

Media Contacts

Felicia Katz Harris, Curator
505-476-1221
felicia.harris@state.nm.us

Steve Cantrell, PR Manager
505-476-1144
505-310-3539 – cell
steve.cantrell@state.nm.us

###

The Museum of International Folk Art *houses the world's largest collection of international folk art, with ongoing exhibitions* Multiple Visions: A Common Bond *in Girard Wing and* Familia y Fe *in the Hispanic Heritage Wing. Changing and traveling exhibitions are offered in the Bartlett Wing and exhibitions highlighting textiles are featured the Neutrogena Wing.* Lloyd's Treasure Chest *offers visitors interactive displays about collections and how museums care for collections.*

The Museum of International Folk Art is a Division of the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs.

Information for the Public

Location: The Museum of International Folk Art is located on Museum Hill™, Camino Lejo off Old Santa Fe Trail.

Contact: 505-476-1200 or www.internationalfolkart.org.

Days/Times: Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M. **Between Memorial Day and Labor Day the Museum is open on Mondays at the same times.**

Admission: School groups free. Children 16 and under free. New Mexico residents with ID free on Sundays. New Mexico resident Senior Citizens (age 60+) with ID free Wednesdays. Museum Foundation members free. NM Veterans with 50% or greater disability free. Students with ID $1 discount. Single visit to one museum: $8.00 for non-state residents; $6.00 for New Mexico residents. Four-day pass to five museums

including state-run museums in Santa Fe plus The Museum of Spanish Colonial Art $18.00. One-day pass for two museums (Museum of International Folk Art and Museum of Indian Arts and Culture OR The New Mexico Museum of Art and Palace of the Governors) $12.00. Group rate for ten or more people: single visit $6.00, four day pass $16.00.