FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 1, 2004

WHAT: El Chonchón Puppet Theater
WHEN: Wednesday & Thursday, September 29 & 30
WHERE: Rand Theater
       University of Massachusetts Amherst
       Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or
       go online to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets
       Press release text and press-quality images are also available on our website
       at www.fineartscenter.com/press

(Cast of Puppets Take on Shakespeare’s Romeo & Juliet)

El Chonchón, whose members are from Argentina and Chile, will bring their sophisticated performance of the Shakespeare classic, “Romeo and Juliet” (“Juan Romeo and Julieta Maria”), to the Rand Theater on the UMass campus, September 29 and 30 at 7:30pm as part of the Fine Arts Center’s/Center Series season. The September 30th performance will be performed entirely in Spanish.

El Chonchón’s cast of innocents performs a funny, touching and true-to-the-Bard version of Shakespeare’s great romantic tragedy. Four puppet protagonists tackle all the roles, fussing with their little wigs, their clumsy ladders, and their lack of technical support in a valiant and determined attempt to achieve Shakespearean dimensions. Despite numerous setbacks and their simple natures, the true courage and heart of these little actors reveal the deepest meaning of “Romeo and Juliet.” The production has been reviewed as “uproariously funny and heartwarming.” Although puppets tell the tale, the subject matter lends itself to audiences 12 years of age and older.

El Chonchón has staged many works by playwrights who specialize in texts for the puppet theatre: Javier Villafañe, Roberto Espina, Oto Freytas, Federico Garcia Lorca. These are writers adept at manipulating the rules of puppet theater, from gestural to linguistic issues,

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generating a dramatic text from which exploring and ideal setting emerges naturally. The company is equally concerned with exploring the universe of hand-puppet animation, the relationship between object and character, and what distinguishes puppets from other of expression.

El Chonchón was founded in 1979 in Valparaiso, Chile by the then 11-year-old Miguel Oyarzún. In 1989, a 21-year-old Oyarzún moves to Córdoba, Argentina and El Chónchon becomes a fully functioning puppet theater company. The group has toured extensively within Argentina and internationally including tours in Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Spain, and the United States. Charm, grace, rich improvisational skills and masterful puppet manipulation technique are the distinguishing characteristics of El Chonchón.

El Chonchón will perform Wednesday & Thursday, September 29 & 30 at 7:30pm. The performance on the 30th will be performed entirely in Spanish. Tickets are $25 and $15; 17 and under are $10 and Five College student tickets are $10 and $7. Recommended for audiences 12 years of age and older. For tickets and information, call the Fine Arts Center Box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or go online to www.fineartscenter.com/centerseries.

El Chonchón is presented by the Center Series in collaboration with the Department of Theater at the University of Massachusetts. Local sponsorship comes from Florence Savings Bank. This presentation of El Chonchón is part of the Performing Americas Project, a partnership between the National Performance Network (NPN), LA RED and Arts International. This program is designed to increase the traffic and creative opportunities for contemporary performing artists and increase the artistic exchange in the western hemisphere. Major funding is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Ford Foundation.

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