



FOR RELEASE: June 24, 2010

CONTACT:

Leslie Farrell, 813.222.6415 — lbsfarrell@gmail.com or
Paul Bilyeu, 813.222.1050 — paul.bilyeu@strazcenter.org

Patel Conservatory appoints Eric Davis as artistic advisor of theater department

TAMPA, Fla. – The David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts is pleased to announce the appointment of Eric Davis as artistic advisor of theater programs at the Patel Conservatory.

“As a professional actor, director and teacher, Davis brings to the Conservatory an enriched and informed perspective that will greatly benefit our students,” said Wendy Leigh, vice president of education. “It is important to us that our instructors are working professionals, like Eric, so our students receive ‘real life’ advice and knowledge. Eric’s vast background in the business will be a real asset.”

As an actor, Davis has worked on stages around the Tampa Bay area and performed around the world. Locally, he has performed in plays and musicals for Stageworks, Gorilla Theatre, American Stage, Disney Creative Entertainment and the Straz Center for the Performing Arts. In London, he performed at the New End Theatre in *The Turn of the Screw*.

Davis founded Reno/Sparks Group Theatre in 1994 and is the founding artistic director of freeFall Theatre in Tampa, whose 2008 production of *The Wild Party* was named Best Play of the Decade by *Creative Loafing*. Davis’ directing credits include American Stage’s recent production of *HAIR*, which John Fleming of the *St. Petersburg Times* declared “the best show in the park’s 25-year history.”

As a teacher, Davis served as director of musical theatre at Tampa’s Blake School of the Arts for five years. Former students have attended some of the most prestigious college-level theater programs in the country and have developed careers in all aspects of the theater and film industries. Past students have also played lead roles in the national tours of *The Lion King* and *Spring Awakening*, and in the ensemble of the Chicago production of *Wicked* and in the Broadway show *Memphis*, which won this year’s Tony® for Best Musical.

“I’m thrilled to join the Patel Conservatory in this capacity,” Davis said. “I look forward to taking their excellent programs to the next level with focused training that allows students to grow as young artists, whether they are aiming for a career in the theater or seeking enrichment through exploring the arts.”

As part of the non-profit David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts, the Patel Conservatory offers camps and classes in dance, music and theater. More information is available by calling 813.222.1002 and by visiting www.patelconservatory.org.

The David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts and its programs are funded in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts; the Arts Council of Hillsborough County and the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners; the Tourist Development Council/Hillsborough County; and the City of Tampa.