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ARTIST BIO: LUMA
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Marlin: World class juggler, off-Broadway performer, producer and director, toy inventor, author, illustrator and entrepreneur - and the creative force behind LUMA: A Theatre of Light, the most important and innovative new performance art form in the last decade. LUMA is doing for light what STOMP has done for percussion.

Based in Madison, WI, Marlin's First Light Company is startling audiences who may have never stopped to ponder the wondrous, cosmic implications of light. Through LUMA, Marlin escorts his audiences on an original journey through time, space and darkness, allowing them to reconsider light and marvel at all they have taken for granted.

Marlin is living proof that creative genius can flower outside of large urban centers. Unlike most of the modern world, Marlin does not take for granted the phenomenon of light. Instead he explores light with the eternal fascination and respect of our forebears. Marlin recalls first truly appreciating the importance of light while watching lava flow in Hawaii. "I was mesmerized by flow of the lava, and how everything seemed to turn toward and be drawn into light, as if it had a gravitational pull of its own."

Translating and expanding upon this insight into a broad-based theatrical experience took time, and could not have been accomplished without the mentoring and advice of Rachel Rosenthal, "Grand Dame" of performance art. "The idea is to create a vocabulary of patterns with new objects," Marlin explains. "We are constantly adding new techniques and new technologies - from arcane physical disciplines and circus arts to hi-tech flexible electroluminescent lights that are 50 feet long."

Marlin developed LUMA as a vehicle through which he can engage in ongoing public dialogue of light as a universal force, in all its incarnations and with all of its implications. It draws upon such diverse inspiration as meteor showers, fireflies, lightening, fireworks, carnivals, screen savers, EKG monitors, mysticism, and physics, the show traverses an evolution of light.

LUMA opens with the audience in a silent, blackened theatre. Marlin allows the audience to experience the slight unease of the absence of light, and the comparative slow passage of time. Through brief introductory narratives, Marlin, your "Concierge into the Unknown," escorts the audience through three suites that compare and contrast: Natural Light, Artificial/Man-made Light and Metaphysical/Metaphorical Light ("the light of creativity, of spirit that shines within every living thing"). Each suite, in turn, is further divided into a number of movements. Luminous spheres, electric hoops, DNA strands and glowing trapeze dancers move about the stage, and are just some of the effects that enchant the audience. A rich tapestry of sound effects and eclectic music reinforces the visual experience.

Marlin has engaged Industrial Artist Management in New York to spread awareness of LUMA's applications at corporate and association conferences. IAM's co-president, David Yamner, is excited about LUMA's future citing "Corporate Business's constant search for something new and creative to spark the imagination of their managers and sales forces. LUMA is an ideal art form for launching new, state-of-the-art products, as well as for meetings that stress the importance of creativity, progressive-thinking, and teamwork." Marlin can customize his performance and props so that they have direct application to a wide range of industries, like pharmaceuticals, automotive, high tech and electronics.

Mercedes Benz recently tapped LUMA to reinforce the state-of-the art features of their new S Class line of vehicles, at their 1998 dealer meeting in Hawaii. Yamner also believes that since the fascination with light is universal, LUMA will also be in demand in the small but growing non-English speaking, international corporate market.

People of all ages, races and interest are enthralled by the uniqueness and beauty of this multisensory show. The company's market research findings indicate 99% of the typical audience would "recommend the show to a friend," 92% find the show to be "inspirational" and 67% have "never seen anything like it." Madison Civic Center director, Bob D'Angelo, (who co-produced Mummenschanz on Broadway) quoted in Madison Magazine, said Luma is "breaking ground for a new art form...it's not like anything that's come before it..." Luma recently appeared at a theater festival in Philadelphia and received, not only a standing ovation, but this review:

"...a magical treat in the dark...it is part visual lullaby, gentle and thoughtful -- and part funny circus of lights."

The show's market diversity and adaptability, combined with the company's expanding outreach and mounting successes, and Marlin's global experience, give credence to the company's ultimate geographical target -- the world.

Marlin envisions a touring road show that would complement a permanent running performance at their home base in Madison, the Luma Theatre and Arts Center. The strategy is to build momentum through performing at arts festivals, regional theatres and corporate engagement and eventually bring the show to off-Broadway for an open-ended run.

The talented core group includes Marlin and his wife, Kira Maerlyn, a trapeze artist and costume designer: aerialist/choreographer Gretchen Miller co-founder of the Cycropia Trapeze Troupe; stage manager Ted Brown, and four others.

Luma's impress extended support structure includes local businesses and strategic advisers and connections near and far. Seven-time Tony winner for lighting design, Jules Fisher, is Luma's creative consultant and Marlin's mentor. Luma's name and logo were designed by widely acclaimed graphic designer, Margo Chase, who works with Cher, Madonna, Copperfield, and Dennis Rodman, among others.

If a world venue still seems far-fetched, here are just a few highlight of Marlin's formidable, already-global experience and credentials including previous lives as comic juggler, Michael Marlin and juggler-interpreter to classical music:

- *Rave reviews for Marlin's show Luma during brief runs in Philadelphia, Minneapolis, Chicago and San Francisco
- * Successful stints in the worlds of classical music and ballet for the Pacific Symphony Orchestra of Orange County and national tours with the LA Chamber Ballet
- *Gigs in Las Vegas, Atlantic City, Reno and Tahoe, playing as a solo opener for headliners or as a specialty act in large revue shows
- * Several appearances on nationally televised talk shows and variety/comedy specials
- * Shared stage appearances with some of the world's greatest magicians-Doug Henning, Blackstone, Ricky Jay and Jeff McBride.
- *Performances in 49 of the 50 states!
- *Performance tours in China, Saudi Arabia (four times) and South Africa
- *Immense European exposure-some 50 million have seen Marlin perform live on national television in England, France, Holland and Spain.
- *Immense Asia exposure- about one billion in Asia see Luma in a televised film awards production that is the equivalent to our "Oscars". (contract pending at time of this writing)

Lack of appropriate local and performance space. Until November 1997, Luma was operating in just 3,000sq. ft and performing at small-local theatres. Strategic contacts between Marlin and landlord/real estate developer Ross Menard, a former theatre technician himself, led to a solution: A 10,400sq.ft. space provided by Menard in a new warehouse that First Light converted into a theatre/arts center/dance palace. Fred Foster, President of ETC, offered significant support by loaning lighting equipment. Ideally, the location- just off Interstate 90/94 and Highway 12/18 will attract both locals and tourists from Milwaukee and Chicago and provide the needed ongoing exposure for Marlin to launch his innovative vision of light as an artistic form.

Maintaining needed time for creativity and growing the business. Marlin's current number challenge! Solutions came in the form of Don Gigante, who recently joined First Light and has taken on the role of administrator and heads up the sales and marketing division for LumaTheatre and Marlin's outrageous new invention, "Slingerzz, The Original Lasso Toy."

As yet, Luma has no copycats. As Marlin puts it, "There is no turbulence on the leading edge,"

A key insight into Luma's success is Marlin's genius in applying his personal charisma and considerable skills as a performing artist to the challenges and requirements of the business.

Marlin demonstrates how the elements that are part of any successful performing artist's bank of strengths-vision and execution, inspiration and creativity, diligence and discipline, teamwork and promotion-can be put to equally good use in "choreographing" the right business moves and strategies.

Marlin's "people" and promotional skills are a dramatic case in point. Whenever people are part of the equation-and they are everywhere- Marlin offers them the opportunity to participate in the creative process and/or the business operation. "I invite people to play in the First Light arena and provide an environment in which they can step into the possibilities they see for themselves" Marlin explains.

Examples of how this "enrolling" process enriches the company are numerous. It helps to attract talented solo artists, and inspires them to think in the larger terms and to work together as a company. It helps to enlist financial support and business and artistic expertise, offering excitement of a new initiative and a climate that nurtures unique individual talents and teamwork. Marlin's personal charisma and ability to make things happen creates an opportunity that is especially compelling and rewarding.

An interesting case study by any standard, Marlin shines as a role model for other artists/business owners in effectively harnessing the skills of the performing artist to the requirements of entrepreneurship.

At the time of this writing LUMA is in negotiations to appear in India in January 1999 for an film awards ceremony that will be broadcast to over one billion people throughout Asia.