

For Immediate Release
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The New York Botanical Garden Lifts the Curtain Again on Auricula Theater April 11 through May 11, 2008

Last year, The New York Botanical Garden unveiled a new auricula theater amid the herbs and flowers of the Nancy Bryan Luce Herb Garden. This year, the charming traditional display of magnificent auricula primroses returns from April 11 through May 11. Designed by The Dowager Marchioness of Salisbury (Lady Salisbury), the renowned horticulturist who restored her legendary garden at Hatfield House in Hertfordshire, England, in the spirit of its original 17th-century design, the dramatic display of auricula primroses will delight and inspire garden visitors of all ages.

An auricula theater is an arrangement of tiered staging used to showcase these rare and choice primroses when they are in flower. Auricula primroses, velvety flowers in numerous stunning—even startling—color combinations and patterns, derive from two species native to the mountains of Europe. The combination of *Primula auricula*, a delicate alpine species with yellow flowers, and *Primula hirsute*, with red and blue flowers, has produced a kaleidoscope of amazing and highly collectible cultivars.

The tradition of building auricula theaters began in France and Belgium, perhaps as early as the 17th century. The earliest versions, built to protect the exquisite flowers from rain and wind, ranged from shallow, open-fronted boxes with simple shelves to more elaborate forms ornamented with ormolu, an alloy resembling gold in appearance.

The practice of building auricula theaters was raised to an art form in 19th-century England, where many estates with fine gardens included an auricula theater, the most elaborate of which evoked grand stages, with faux-painted curtains and proscenium arches adding drama to the composition. At the same time, the cultivation and display of auricula primroses became popular among coal miners in England and Wales, who took delight in the beautiful flowers and the elaborate stages.

Dozens of auricula primroses, grown from seed and divisions by the horticulturists in the Botanical Garden's Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, will be showcased in this beautiful and engaging theater designed by Lady Salisbury. Interpretative panels will introduce Garden visitors to the history of auricula primrose cultivation and display.

The auricula theater was fabricated by Christianson Lee Studios.

Spring Season sponsored by MetLife Foundation.

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. The Garden is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, Rock and Native Plant Gardens, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$7 for children ages 2–12, Members and children under 2 are free. (APRIL 8–24 ONLY: \$13 for adults, \$11 for seniors and students with ID, \$5 for children ages 2–12, Members and children under 2 are free.) A *Grounds-Only Pass* is available: \$6 for adults, \$5 for adult Bronx Residents; \$3 for seniors, \$2 for students with ID, \$1 for children ages 2–12, children under 2 are free. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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