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## **GUTHRIE REPORTS BALANCED BUDGET IN 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR**

### **Theater boasts steady growth in number of season ticket holders and individual donors, achieving highest outcomes in several years**

#### **Martha Goldberg Aronson elected Chair of Board of Directors**

(*Minneapolis/St. Paul*)—At its 2017 annual meeting today, the Guthrie Theater reflected upon the artistic and financial successes of its 2016-2017 Season, which ended on August 31, 2017 and marked the first fully-curated season under the leadership of Artistic Director Joseph Haj. In a season defined by new literary adaptations, an epic Shakespeare, the first Sondheim musical on a mainstage and the debut of the Level Nine Series – an initiative which offered \$9 tickets in the Dowling Studio as well as opportunities for community dialogue – the theater achieved an operating surplus of \$19,029 on a \$28 million budget, as well as the highest number of season ticket holders in five years and the highest number of individual donors in four years.

Artistic Director Joseph Haj stated, “Our 2016-2017 Season was one in which our artistic and community partnerships took center stage. And like everything we dare to dream and accomplish in this storied organization, those partnerships all started with great theater. This past year we joined forces with a diverse lineup of artists who created work that thoroughly engaged our audiences and spoke directly to our present moment.” Haj added, “I am grateful to the Guthrie staff, our patrons and donors, and all of our partners, both creative and community-based, who helped make the 2016-2017 Season such a successful one in all aspects – financially, artistically and in our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.”

Managing Director Jennifer Bielstein remarked, “We are grateful to our community of audiences, artists, board, staff, donors and volunteers for their work this season. Through them we were able to impact thousands of lives through the power of live theater. Thanks to the combination of their efforts, we are pleased to report that we covered the expenses necessary to deliver an array of programs in 2016-2017, maintaining the Guthrie’s fiscal health while ensuring a strong position as we look toward the future.”

Haj’s first fully-curated season included 28 productions and 655 performances across three stages. Among the highlights and artistic accomplishments were two well-received literary adaptations: Kate Hamill’s brilliant spin on *Sense and Sensibility* and Lydia R. Diamond’s powerful adaptation of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*; Shakespeare’s epic *King Lear*, with two local veteran actors alternating performances in the title role; *Refugia*, a world premiere developed by The Moving Company; *Sunday in the Park with George*, the Guthrie’s first Sondheim musical to be presented on a mainstage; and *Native*

*Gardens*, a fresh new comedy by Karen Zacarías that was co-produced with Washington, D.C.'s Arena Stage. As part of an exclusive U.S. tour, the theater also presented a limited engagement of Peter Brook's *Battlefield*, including a public dialogue with the legendary director.

In addition to producing three new works by nationally known playwrights in the Dowling Studio – Jeanne Sakata's *Hold These Truths*, Jackie Sibblies Drury's *We Are Proud to Present* and Frank Boyd's *The Holler Sessions* – the Guthrie welcomed six outside companies to present a broad range of theatrical work on Level Nine, including zAmya Theater Project, 7<sup>th</sup> House Theater, Transatlantic Love Affair, The Telling Project, Mu Performing Arts and The New Griots Festival.

Programming expanded dramatically with the debut of the Level Nine Series which offered \$9 tickets for all Dowling Studio productions and offered an impressive lineup of 128 audience engagement events throughout the season led by newly appointed Director of Community Engagement Dr. Carra Martinez. Four community gatherings called "Happenings" – including *Anthems for Community*, curated in response to Charlottesville, and *Water is Sacred*, a partnership with Indigenous Direction to highlight the relationship between Native communities and water rights – were programmed in response to current events. Conceptualized by Haj and supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through a grant of \$1 million over three years, the Level Nine Series emphasizes the creation of a theater that wrestles with urgent questions and inspires dynamic dialogue with its audience, expands the diversity of voices, visions and styles on its stages, and engages community members currently underserved by its work.

As part of the Guthrie's commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, one of its four core values, the theater reported dramatic progress over the last two years. From FY15 to FY17, 28 percent of the Guthrie's full-time staff hires were people of color. In that same time span, actors of color on its stages saw their representation increased from 15 percent to 37 percent. Behind the scenes, creative teams diversified as well, shifting from a makeup of 11 percent artists of color to 36 percent and from 18 percent female collaborators to 39 percent. In addition to reporting on its hiring practices, the theater recognized the accomplishments of its Community Engagement Department in forming a 17-member Community Advisory Network to further the discussion about equitable access to the Guthrie, create interaction between art and local communities and catalyze social dialogue in response to the arts.

The Guthrie's overall patron attendance of 368,292 in 2016-2017 was comparable to the previous season which was only slightly higher due to a full day community open house offered in 2015-2016, Haj's first season as director.

In fiscal year 2016-2017, the number of season ticket holders reached 19,623 – an increase of 423 over 2015-2016 and the theater's highest number of subscribers in five years, bucking perceptions of declining interest in the subscription model. The number of individual donors increased by 16% in the 2016-2017 Season, due in large part to an increased focus on building the Guthrie's donor base across all levels and encouraging patrons to contribute to the theater by rounding up their ticket transactions.

Maintaining its commitment to accessibility, the Guthrie provided 23% of its tickets to students, teachers and other community members either free of charge or at an average price of less than \$10 per ticket.

Bolstered by the support of a generous community of donors, the theater reduced debt on its Riverfront home from \$14 million at the end of last season to just \$6.5 million remaining. Now 11 years into existence and operation as a public facility open to patrons and visitors year round, the Guthrie fulfilled its plan to invest nearly one million dollars in necessary expenditures for theater maintenance and equipment in 2016-2017.

At its annual meeting the Guthrie Board of Directors elected officers. **Martha Goldberg Aronson** (Former Executive Vice President and President of Global Healthcare, Ecolab Inc.) was elected as Chair; **Y. Marc Belton** (Founder, Wisefellows Consulting) was elected as Past Chair; Artistic Director **Joseph Haj** as Director; **Ken Spence** (Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Travelers) as Treasurer and **Susan W. Allen** (BrandImpact™ Consulting) as Secretary.

The following individuals were re-elected to the Board for a second three-year term: **Priscilla Brewster** (Community Volunteer), **Patrick Kennedy** (Accenture), **Suzanne Kubach** (Policy Innovators in Education (PIE) Network), **Brad Lerman** (Medtronic) and **Michael Solberg** (Bell Bank), while **Y. Marc Belton** was re-elected for a one-year special term.

**James L. Chosy** (Executive Vice President and General Counsel, U.S. Bancorp) and **Lee Skold** (Corporate Vice President, Cargill and Past Chair of the Board for Outward Bound USA) return to the Board, while **Rick Gomez** (Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer, Target), **Garry Jenkins** (Dean and William S. Pattee Professor of Law at the University of Minnesota Law School), **Paul Keel** (Senior Vice President, Business Development, Marketing & Sale for 3M) and **Dr. Lisa Saul Paylor** (President of the Mother Baby Clinical Service Line of Allina Health) were welcomed as newly elected members who will each serve a three-year term.

As previously reported following the June 6, 2017 full Board meeting, the following individuals were elected for one three-year term: **Jennifer Reedstrom Bishop** (Chair, Gray Plant Mooty Health Law & Nonprofit Organizations Practice Group), **Stacy Bogart** (Vice President, General Counsel and Corporate Secretary, Winnebago Industries), **Lisa Johnson** (Vice President with Bernstein Private Wealth Management), **Audrey Manacek** (Managing Senior Partner for the Minneapolis office of McKinsey & Company) and **Brian Pietsch** (Senior Vice President, Public Affairs and Community Relations for Ameriprise Financial).

**THE GUTHRIE THEATER** (Joseph Haj, Artistic Director) was founded by Sir Tyrone Guthrie in 1963 and is an American center for theater performance, production, education and professional training, dedicated to producing the great works of dramatic literature and to cultivating the next generation of theater artists. Under Haj's leadership, the Guthrie is guided by four core values: Artistic Excellence; Community; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; and Fiscal Responsibility. The Guthrie produces a mix of classic and contemporary plays on three stages and continues to set a national standard for excellence in theatrical production and performance, serving nearly 400,000 patrons annually. In 2006, the Guthrie opened a new home, designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, located on the banks of the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Open to the public year-round, it houses three state-of-the-art stages, production facilities, classrooms, full-service restaurants and dramatic public lobbies. [guthrietheater.org](http://guthrietheater.org)

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