



MCC Theater Breaks Ground on First Permanent Home Unifying and Expanding Institution's Programming

Facility Integrates Spaces for Artists, Audiences, and Students to Encourage Interaction and Dialogue Throughout the Theater-making Process

New York, NY (March 22, 2016) – MCC Theater broke ground today on its first permanent home, which will unite the company's diverse roster of programs under one roof for the first time in its three-decade history. MCC Artistic Directors Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, and William Cantler were joined by Executive Director Blake West, members of the Board of Directors, New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl, and members of the Theater's extended community of theater artists.

Set to open in 2018, the new facility will also allow MCC to expand its programming and establish it as a cultural anchor within the Clinton neighborhood. As one of New York's leading nonprofit Off-Broadway companies, the institution fosters the dynamic exchange of ideas between artists, audiences, and young people through its productions of world, American, and New York premiere plays and musicals, a robust playwright development initiative, and one of the nation's leading arts-education programs.

"We have developed a close-knit community of theater artists dedicated to new work and deep collaboration, and we're so grateful to the playwrights, actors, designers, directors, audiences, and young people who have grown along with us over the past 30 years," said Robert LuPone, co-artistic director of MCC Theater. "We are proud of what we've built, but we've been missing a home of our own in which this community can grow together and learn from one another—all under the same roof. We are so thrilled to break ground on a home that will help us do just this, and we look forward to welcoming our artists and audiences here in the years to come."

Designed by Andrew Berman Architect to advance the company's distinct mission, the 27,000-square-foot facility will act as a hub for all of MCC's programming, allowing the institution to better serve its growing audiences and broaden its offerings—increasing its productions from four to six per season, supporting a greater roster of young writers, developing new work exploring a range of contemporary topics, and expanding its groundbreaking arts education programs for New York City public school students. The \$35-million project is funded by a public-private partnership between the Theater and the City of New York, which has contributed \$25.5 million to the project. The campaign has raised \$29.9 million to-date.

"At the core of MCC's mission is our commitment to using theater as a means of provoking conversations about this uniquely immediate and dynamic art form, and also about our contemporary daily lives and shared experiences. We strive to bring our audiences into these dialogues because we believe the theater-going experience should not be a passive one, but that the energy of a play should continue well beyond curtain call," said MCC Co-Artistic Director Bernard Telsey. "We have worked closely with Andrew Berman to create a home that will foster these conversations, a center that energizes and connects all aspects of theater-making and theater-going."

MCC Theater's new home will serve as a generator for creative exchange, and has been designed to provide fluid connections between spaces dedicated to performance, behind-the-scenes development, and front-of-house—all of which will provide artists greater freedom for the company's artists and provide audiences greater access and insight into all of MCC's work. The facility will feature two state-of-the-art theaters, with 249 and 99 seats, respectively, designed to accommodate both traditional and non-traditional stagings. Spaces for rehearsals, workshops, meetings, public conversations, and other events are integrated into the heart of the new home and connected to one another—and to the performance spaces—by a central staircase. A public lobby will invite connection between the outside courtyard space on 52nd Street and the facility's interior, and will be utilized by audiences, professional artists, and students alike. Raw materials are employed throughout, including concrete and warm woods, reflecting the process-based nature of theater-making to which the facility is dedicated.

Known for premiering plays and musicals that often challenge artists and audiences to confront contemporary personal and social issues, MCC has developed and produced works that have gone on to adaptations on Broadway and film, as well as additional stagings in New York, throughout the country, and internationally—amplifying the impact of the company's work with some of theater's most influential and provocative voices.

The Theater is also distinguished by its artist development and education initiatives. The PlayLabs program helps foster the next generation of playwrights by providing writers intensive dramaturgical support early in their careers, as well as the opportunity to work alongside professional directors and actors and engage public audiences in the development of new work. The PlayLabs reading series incorporates informal post-show gatherings for conversation between the artists and audiences that enliven and stimulate the often solitary and insular writing and development process. Plays developed as part of PlayLabs have gone on to full productions at MCC, as well as at other nonprofit theaters in New York and overseas, adding vibrant new works to the contemporary theatrical cannon. MCC's new home will allow an expansion of these artist development programs, and a deeper investment in development of musical theater projects, an area of growth for the company.

MCC's education initiatives serve more than 1,200 public school students throughout New York each year through a mix of programs for students and teachers inside and outside the classroom. Employing the tools of theater alongside traditional academic and career-readiness, the programs empower young people to find and express their own voices, and become engaged citizens throughout and beyond their academic careers. Dedicated mentors provide students with support as they explore acting, writing, directing, and theater production alongside professionals in the field, and provide college- and career-readiness opportunities to complement the theater-focused initiatives.

The MCC Theater Youth Company is the centerpiece of MCC's education programs and was the first free, after-school company of its kind associated with a professional theater. Since its founding in 2001 as an eight-member ensemble, the Youth Company has grown to serve more than 100 students each year and now includes a flagship Youth Company and satellite groups developed in partnership with schools in Washington Heights and Brooklyn. MCC's flagship Youth Company, satellite Youth Company programs, and initiatives that provide support for program graduates will grow in the Theater's new home—serving many more students throughout the five boroughs, providing greater opportunities for integrating these young people into the company's work with professional artists, and utilizing the facility's spaces for the performance of original work by Youth Company students.

“MCC Theater was born from a group of artists who craved a safe space for acting classes, collaboration on new work, and the creation of a true ensemble, and many of these tenets are found throughout our Youth Company today,” said MCC Co-Artistic Director Will Cantler. “These students are vital to our MCC community, and we've learned more from their creativity and bravery than we could have ever imagined when we began the program. Our new home will allow us to provide these extraordinary young people the

resources for greater artistic and personal opportunity, and integrate them more deeply into every aspect of what we do.”

Francesco Simeti has been commissioned to create two new visual art installations for the Theater’s new home as part of New York City’s Percent for Art program. For the Theater’s 53rd Street façade, Simeti will create a collage of historic images of New York City that speaks to the cultural and ecological history of the neighborhood. Utilizing digital printing on Mylar interlayers between glass panels, “A Tale of a City” (working title) will incorporate illustrations and references to native weeds and flowers that are now extinct in New York, as well as elements of the botanic, natural, and the human-made urban environment. In the interior of the theater, the artist will install a tapestry composed of historic imagery relating to theater, sets, masks, and props from cultures all around the world.

Located on West 52nd Street at 10th Avenue, the facility occupies the ground floor of the Avalon Clinton complex, which also includes residential units as well as office and performance spaces for A.R.T./New York and the 52nd Street Project.

MCC Theater will stage the world premiere of Halley Feiffer’s *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Gynecological Oncology Unit at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center of New York City* beginning May 19, at the Lucille Lortel Theater where it has performed its mainstage works for 10 years. The company’s 2015/2016 season also included the New York premiere of John Pollono’s *Lost Girls*, developed as part of MCC’s PlayLabs program, the New York premiere of Matthew Lopez’s *The Legend of Georgia McBride*, and the New York premiere of Noah Haidle’s *Smokefall*.

MCC’s annual gala fundraiser, *MISCAST*, will be held on Monday, April 4, and will honor Marisa Tomei. The Oscar-winner starred early in her career in the Theater’s first staging of a full-length play, Alan Bowne’s *Beirut*, in 1986, and has subsequently returned to work with MCC multiple times throughout her career. The evening will feature an all-star lineup of actors performing songs from roles in which they would never be cast. Proceeds support the Theater’s artistic and education programming.

About Andrew Berman Architect

Andrew Berman Architect is focused on the realization of unique and finely executed buildings and spaces. The work of the studio capitalizes on the qualities of place and seeks opportunities in the desires and programmatic requirements of each of its clients. Informed by working within the constraints of the dense urban fabric of New York City, Andrew Berman Architect utilizes an economy of means to create dignified and spatially rich architecture. Natural light, attention to landscape and context, and appropriate materials are the media through which the studio engages its work with its use and place.

Andrew Berman Architect works on a wide range of project types at various scales for an equally wide range of clients—public, institutional, and private. The studio’s interests and experiences allow it to approach each project on its own unique terms, through an intense engagement with user and site, while drawing on experience with design and construction. Since its founding in 1995, the practice has gained recognition through notable projects such as the Center for Architecture for the American Institute of Architects (2003), Writing Studio (2008), Engine Company 259 Firehouse for the FDNY (2009), MoMA PS1 Entrance Building and gallery renovation (2011), The National Opera Center (2012), Stapleton Library for the New York Public Library (2013), and SculptureCenter (2014).

The work of the studio has received numerous design excellence awards, and has been widely published internationally. In 2010, Andrew received the Architectural League’s Emerging Voices Award, an invited competition for North American firms and individuals with distinct design voices and significant bodies of realized work. In 2014 Andrew was elected to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, one of the highest honors the AIA can bestow upon its members. Andrew regularly participates in design

juries at architectural schools, and lectures on the firm's work and their Re-Envisioning Branch Libraries Proposal commissioned by the Center for an Urban Future.

About MCC Theater

MCC Theater is one of New York's leading nonprofit Off-Broadway companies, driven by a mission to provoke conversations that have never happened and otherwise never would. Founded in 1986 as a collective of artists leading peer-based classes to support their own development as actors, writers, and directors, the tenets of collaboration, education, and community are at the core of MCC Theater's programming. One of the only theaters in the country led continuously by its founders—Artistic Directors Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, and William Cantler—MCC fulfills its mission through the production of world, American, and New York premiere plays and musicals that challenge artists and audiences to confront contemporary personal and social issues, and robust playwright development and education initiatives that foster the next generation of theater artists and students.

Plays and musicals developed by the company have gone on to stagings around the globe. Notable productions over the course of the company's 30-year history include Robert Askins' *Hand to God*, nominated for five Tony Awards and currently playing in London's West End; Sharr White's *The Other Place*, starring Laurie Metcalf; *The Submission* by Jeff Talbot, winner of the inaugural Laurents/Hatcher Foundation Award for new American plays; Bryony Lavery's *Frozen*, a 2004 Tony nominee for Best Play and winner for Brian F. O'Byrne's performance; *Wit* by Margaret Edson, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1999; the classic cult musical *Carrie*, which has gone on to international productions since the Theater's extensive redevelopment work and staging in 2012, the first in more than two decades; and nine plays by Playwright-in-Residence Neil LaBute, including *Fat Pig*; *Reasons to Be Pretty*, a 2009 Tony nominee for Best Play; and *Reasons to Be Happy*. Blake West joined the company in 2006 as executive director. MCC will open its first permanent home in 2018 in Manhattan's Clinton neighborhood, unifying the company's activities under one roof for the first time and expanding its producing, artist development, and education programming. The Theater is currently in the midst of a \$35-million campaign to support its expansion and growing artistic operations, with more than \$29 million raised to-date. mcctheater.org

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