



The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust Awards \$2.5 Million Challenge Grant to MCC Theater

**Philanthropy's First Matching Gift to a Theater Company
Supports MCC's First Permanent Home,
Unifying and Expanding Institution's Programming**

**Two Performance Spaces in New Home Named for
Marianne and Steve Mills, Ruth and Harold Newman, and Susan and Ronald Frankel**

New York, NY (March 28, 2017) – MCC Theater announced today the launch of a matching gift challenge made possible by The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust. The Trust has awarded a \$2.5 million challenge grant in support of MCC's first permanent home and expanded programming. The campaign has raised \$30 million to-date. Upon the Theater completing the dollar-for-dollar matching challenge by April 30, 2018, the company will meet the campaign's \$35 million goal. MCC's new home will unite the company's diverse roster of programs under one roof for the first time in its more than three-decade history.

Set to open with the Theater's 2018/2019 season, the facility will also allow the company to expand its programming and establish it as a cultural anchor within the Clinton neighborhood. One of New York's leading nonprofit Off-Broadway companies, MCC Theater fosters the dynamic exchange of ideas between artists, audiences, and students through its production 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.

Robert W. Wilson was a well-known and successful investor from the mid-1960's to the mid-1980's. After his retirement, he devoted his life to philanthropy. Wilson was a transformative philanthropist, primarily funding worldwide organizations in the preservation and conservation areas.

An avid New Yorker, he was also involved with a number of New York's cultural institutions. He was a major supporter of, and held leadership roles with, the Whitney Museum and the Metropolitan Opera, where he was a board member for many years. In addition, he and the Trust support the New York Public Library, Central Park Conservancy, BAM, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden. This matching gift marks the Trust's first grant to a theater company.

"We are very grateful for the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust's generosity and we're proud to launch this matching challenge with their support," said **Bernie Telsey, Co-Artistic Director of MCC Theater, speaking on behalf of the company's artistic leadership.** "As we wrap up our 30th anniversary season, it's thrilling and truly humbling to consider where we started—operating out of a studio apartment—and the bright future for MCC Theater as we move closer to opening the first home of our own. From new plays and musicals, to workshops developing the next generation of bold artists, to the voices of students in our Youth Company from across the five boroughs, our home will be a vibrant hub of activity in the Clinton neighborhood. We're eager to open its doors to everyone."

Designed by Andrew Berman Architect, the 27,000-square-foot space will advance MCC's mission and act as a hub for all of its 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 broad and diverse 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 both at its new home and in classrooms across the five boroughs.

“We are thrilled to support MCC Theater at this important moment of expansion for the company,” said **Richard G. Schneidman, a trustee of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust**. “Bob enjoyed and supported cutting-edge theater. We admire the impact MCC has had on the American theater landscape, and its commitment to supporting emerging artists and young people. We invite the cultural community to join us in supporting this great New York company as it broadens its reach and embarks on this exciting period of growth.”

MCC Theater's new home will feature resources for rehearsals, workshops, meetings, public conversations, and two state-of-the-art theaters, with 249 and 100 seats, respectively, designed to accommodate both traditional and non-traditional stagings. Adjacent to a public lobby that invites connection between the outside courtyard space on 52nd Street and the interior, these two theaters will be the heart of the new home.

The 249-seat theater will be named for Ruth and Harold Newman and Marianne and Steve Mills, who serve as campaign co-chairs alongside Board members Judith Light and Julianna Margulies, in recognition of their leadership gifts. Mr. Newman and Ms. Mills are also longtime board members who have provided significant support for MCC Theater's education and artistic programs. Mr. Newman is the lead individual donor to one of MCC Theater's renowned arts education programs, the in-school and after-school partnership programs at George Washington High School in Washington Heights, where he is an alum. Ms. Mills served as MCC's *Miscast* gala chair for a decade, helping shape the evening into one of the most anticipated fundraising events each season. The 100-seat theater will be named for Susan and Ronald Frankel in recognition of their campaign gift. Mr. and Mrs. Frankel have been active with the company since 2015. They are proud to be a part of MCC Theater's development and education of artists and NYC high school students. Mrs. Frankel is also an MCC Theater board member.

“MCC Theater's journey to our first permanent home continues to be a thrilling time for everyone at MCC,” said **Susan Raanan, Chair of the Theater's Board of Directors**. “I want to thank our entire Board for their leadership and support of this campaign as we take this great leap forward and acknowledge the generosity of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust. We invite everyone to help us meet this matching gift challenge as we continue building support for this exciting next phase in MCC Theater's history.”

“Having the support of our partners at the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust means the world as we build a home to serve our artists, audiences, and students for generations to come,” said **Blake West, Executive Director of MCC Theater**. “The Trust's generous challenge grant will have an extraordinary impact on this transformational project. As we look forward to welcoming everyone to this great new space for our 2018/2019 season, we invite our entire community to join our campaign.”

An engine for creative exchange, the company's new home has been designed by Andrew Berman Architect to provide fluid connections between spaces dedicated to performance, behind-the-scenes development, and front-of-house—all of which will provide greater freedom for MCC Theater's artists and give audiences greater access and insight into the company's work. Raw materials are employed throughout, including concrete and warm woods, reflecting the process-based nature of theater-making to which the facility is dedicated.

Francesco Simeti has been commissioned to create two new visual art installations as part of New York City's Percent for Art program. For the 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 a second floor interior public space, 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. The \$35-million project broke ground on March 22, 2016 and 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 supports construction and expanded artistic and educational programming. Several naming opportunities are still available, including public lobby and backstage areas.

MCC Theater's annual *Miscast* gala will be held on April 3 at The Hammerstein Ballroom. This year's event celebrates MCC's 30th anniversary and features an all-star lineup of performers, including Tony® winners Annaleigh Ashford, Norbert Leo Butz, Jennifer Holliday, and Kelli O'Hara. Proceeds support the Theater's artistic and education programming. The company's final presentation of its 30th anniversary season, the American premiere of Matthew Perry's new play *The End of Longing* begins at the Lucille Lortel Theatre on May 18.

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 raising \$35 million to support its expansion and growing artistic operations, with \$30 million raised to-date. The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust awarded MCC Theater

a \$2.5 million challenge grant, which will bring the company to its \$35 million goal upon meeting the dollar-for-dollar challenge by April 30, 2018. mcctheater.org / mcctheatercampaign.org

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