



## **MCC Theater Names New Home In Honor of Philanthropist Robert W. Wilson And Sets Opening for November 2018**

**The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space Advances  
MCC's Three-Pronged Mission of Expanding Premiere Programming,  
Supporting New Play Development, and Providing Impactful Education Initiatives**

New York, NY (June 7, 2018) – MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) announced today the naming of its new home, **The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space**, in recognition of the cultural, environmental, and preservation philanthropist, and the public opening of the space in November 2018. Following a special ribbon cutting ceremony and a series of community events, MCC will welcome its playwriting and education programs onsite; its two stages will be inaugurated in early 2019 with the New York premiere of *The Light* in The Susan & Ronald Frankel Theater (January 9 – February 17, 2019) and the world premiere of *Alice By Heart* in The Newman Mills Theater (January 30 – March 10, 2019). Designed by Andrew Berman Architect, The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space enables MCC to advance its three-pronged mission—supporting the production of premiere plays and musicals, a robust playwright development initiative, and one of the nation's leading arts-education programs—and expand its engagement with the public, artists, and students alike.

The campaign for MCC's new home has raised over \$37 million to date towards its expanded \$45 million goal that encompasses increased support for the company's programming and outreach initiatives. The campaign has been supported by the City of New York, which contributed \$28.3 million, and by a \$2.5 million challenge grant from The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust—which MCC Theater met this spring—as well as additional individual and foundation support.

“Thanks to the tremendous generosity of The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust and the City of New York, we are on the brink of realizing our dream of unifying all of MCC's work and bringing together artists, students, and audiences under one roof. Convening in a physical space that is our own after operating in multiple locations over the last 30 years will bring collaborations to a new level and allow the MCC community to grow and engage with one another in conversations, debate and discovery and, ultimately, expand the American theater canon together in really exciting ways,” said **Bernard Telsey, Co-Artistic Director of MCC Theater, speaking on behalf of the company's artistic leadership.**

“We are thrilled that our challenge grant will enabled MCC Theater to cut the ribbon on its first permanent home,” said **Richard G. Schneidman, a trustee of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust.** “Bob would be elated to have such a dynamic, cutting-edge organization bear his name. We admire the ongoing impact MCC has had on American theater, and its commitment to supporting emerging artists and the next generation of theater professionals and audiences.”

“MCC is a leader in New York’s world-renowned theater community—challenging and entertaining audiences with socially engaged work, supporting the growth of many theater artists, and providing creative opportunities for NYC’s young people,” said **Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs**. “We congratulate MCC on its new home, and are proud of the City’s significant investment in making it happen. It will allow MCC to continue doing the important work of incubating emerging talent, attracting new audiences, and forging the next generation of theater artists and audiences.”

MCC Theater is recognized internationally for premiering plays and musicals that challenge artists and audiences to confront contemporary issues and for helping to launch new productions that go on to Broadway, additional stagings throughout the country and internationally, and film adaptations—amplifying the impact of the company’s work with some of today’s most influential and provocative voices. The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space will act as a hub for all of MCC’s productions and 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 and established playwrights, developing new plays and musicals exploring a range of contemporary topics, and expanding its groundbreaking arts education programs for New York City students.

“The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space will serve as a generator for creative exchange, provide connections between spaces dedicated to performance, behind-the-scenes development, and front-of-house,” said **Blake West, Executive Director of MCC Theater**. “Our new home will provide greater freedom for the company’s artists, more opportunity for young people to express themselves, and provide audiences greater access and insight into the full range of MCC’s work.”

“MCC Theater’s journey to our first permanent home continues to be a thrilling experience for everyone at MCC,” said **Susan Raanan, Chair of the Theater’s Board of Directors**. “I want to acknowledge the generosity and enthusiasm of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust and the City of New York for their continued extraordinary support and a special thanks goes to MCC’s Board of Directors for their leadership and passionate support of MCC’s journey.”

The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space will feature two state-of-the-art theaters, The Newman Mills Theater (245 seats) and The Susan & Ronald Frankel Theater (100 seats), 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 invites connection between the outside courtyard space on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street and the facility’s interior. Raw materials are employed throughout, including concrete and warm woods, reflecting the process-based nature of theater-making to which the facility is dedicated.

Artist Francesco Simeti was 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 53<sup>rd</sup> Street façade, Simeti is creating a collage of historic images of New York City that speaks to the cultural and ecological history of the neighborhood. 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 52<sup>nd</sup> Street at 10<sup>th</sup> 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 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Project.

Highlights of the 2018/19 Season at The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space include: the world premiere of *Alice By Heart*, a new musical with a book by Steven Sater with Jessie Nelson, music by Duncan Sheik, lyrics by Steven Sater (*Spring Awakening*), and choreographed by Sonya Tayeh; Halley Feiffer’s *Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow*, directed by Trip Cullman; *BLKS* by Aziza Barnes, directed by

Robert O'Hara; *The Light* by Loy A. Webb and directed by Logan Vaughn. For a list of the full season, please visit [www.mcctheater.org](http://www.mcctheater.org)

### **About The Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust**

A successful investor from the 1960s through the 1980s, Robert W. Wilson devoted his life to philanthropy after his retirement, focusing on supporting organizations on preservation and conservation initiatives worldwide. An avid New Yorker, Wilson was also deeply engaged 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, the Trust continues to support the New York Public Library, Central Park Conservancy, BAM, Wildlife Conservation Society, DDF, Nature Conservancy, WMF, and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, organizations he championed during his lifetime. He played a leading role in transforming many of these institutions. The matching gift to MCC was the Trust's first grant to a theater company. The trust is now managed by three trustees: Richard Schneidman, Robert Feidelson, and Ron Zimmerman.

### **About Andrew Berman Architect**

Andrew Berman Architect designs spatially rich buildings across public, private, and institutional sectors. Informed by the dense urban fabric of New York City, the studio's architectural designs respond to both the qualities of place and the vision and programmatic requirements of its clients. 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.

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 design excellence awards and been published internationally. In 2010, Berman received the Architectural League's Emerging Voices Award and, in 2014, 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. Berman regularly participates in design juries at architectural schools and lectures nationally.

### **About MCC Theater**

MCC 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.

MCC Theater's celebrated productions include Jocelyn Bioh's *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play* (2018 Lucille Lortel Award, Best Play); Penelope Skinner's *The Village Bike*; Robert Askins' *Hand to God* (Broadway transfer; five 2015 Tony Award® nominations including Best Play); John Pollono's *Small Engine Repair*; Paul Downs Colaizzo's *Really Really*; Sharr White's *The Other Place* (Broadway transfer); Jeff Talbott's *The Submission* (winner of the inaugural Laurents/Hatcher Award); Neil LaBute's *All The Ways To Say I Love You, Reasons to Be Happy, reasons to be pretty* (Broadway transfer, three 2009 Tony Award® nominations, including Best Play), *Some Girl(s)*, *Fat Pig*, and *The Mercy Seat*; Michael Weller's

*Fifty Words*; Alexi Kaye Campbell's *The Pride*; Bryony Lavery's *Frozen* (Broadway transfer; four 2004 Tony Award® nominations including Best Play, Tony Award® for Best Featured Actor); Tim Blake Nelson's *The Grey Zone*; Rebecca Gilman's *The Glory of Living* (2002 Pulitzer Prize finalist); Margaret Edson's *Wit* (1999 Pulitzer Prize); and the musicals *Coraline*, *Carrie*, and *Ride the Cyclone*. Many plays developed and produced by MCC have gone on to productions throughout the country and around the world.

### **About MCC Theater's Playwright Development and Education Initiatives**

MCC Theater's playwright development program encompasses the PlayLabs series, which stimulates the MCC artistic community by providing writers intensive dramaturgical support while giving audiences the opportunity to become a part of the development process through a public reading series that is the culmination of each playwright's tenure. The PlayLabs series incorporates informal post-show gatherings for conversation between 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 canon.

### **About the MCC Theater Youth Company Playwriting Lab and Education Programs**

Eighteen years ago, MCC Theater initiated a series of intensive in-school and after-school education programs that now serve approximately 800 New York City public high school students each year. At the core of all MCC education programs, be they in school, after school, or in the office, is this: MCC programs for teens and young adults foster the desire to be heard and the courage to speak out. The goal of this work is to showcase and celebrate the mosaic of New York City's young people, creating a platform for their voices to be heard and their experiences and individual identities to be honored. MCC's programs build the skills and provide the encouragement, to make this possible.

The centerpiece of the institution's education programs is the MCC Theater Youth Company, the first free, after-school company of its kind associated with a professional theater in NYC. The Youth Company has several cohorts, including an Acting Lab, a Playwriting Lab, an Ambassador Leadership program, and a school campus-based satellite program on the campus of the High School for Public Service in Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

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