



**MCC Theater Officially Opens
The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space,
Marking the First Permanent Home for the
Off-Broadway Theater in its Over Three-Decade History**



(L-R) Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl, Department of Design and Construction Lorraine Grillo, MCC Artistic Director William Cantler, MCC Artistic Director Robert LuPone, Playwright Jocelyn Bioh, MCC Board Member Julianna Margulies, MCC Artistic Director Bernard Telsey, MCC Board Member Peter Hedges, MCC Board Chair Susan Raanan, and Executive Director Blake West. Photo: Da Ping Luo.

New York, NY – January 9, 2019 – MCC Theater (Robert LuPone, Bernard Telsey, William Cantler, Artistic Directors; Blake West, Executive Director) officially opened The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space today with a special ceremony celebrating the first, permanent home for one of New York City’s premiere Off-Broadway theaters. For the first time in over three decades, MCC will bring the company’s mainstage productions, programs to develop new theater works, and its public engagement and education programming under one roof. With 27,000 square feet dedicated to two state-of-the-art theaters, rehearsal spaces, and administrative offices, the new facility will deepen MCC’s commitment to provoking conversations and the exchange of ideas between artists, audiences, and young people.

MCC’s Executive Director Blake West kicked off the celebratory event that included artists, government officials, longtime friends of the company, and supporters. MCC’s Artistic Directors Bernard Telsey, Robert LuPone, and William Cantler, discussed the trajectory of the storied theater from inception to its new home, with additional remarks from MCC’s Board Chair Susan

Raanan, MCC Board Member and Honorary co-chair of the Campaign for MCC Theater, Julianna Margulies (MCC's *Intrigue with Faye*, 2003), MCC Board Member Peter Hedges (MCC's *Good as New*, 1997), and playwright Jocelyn Bioh (MCC's *School Girls; Or, the African Mean Girls Play*, 2017/18). Both Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl and Commissioner of the Department of Design and Construction Lorraine Grillo spoke on behalf of New York City, the lead supporter of the project. As attendees took tours around the building, artist Francesco Simeti unveiled two commissions that were installed as part of New York City's Percent for Art program. (full press kit is available at <https://bit.ly/2Qwaq91>)

In celebration of the opening of The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space, MCC announced two new development programs and an expansion of its access initiatives. SongLabs is a program that supports the development of new musical works by providing writers with dramaturgical assistance and the opportunity to participate in a public reading series. WorkLabs is a program that brings four early-career playwrights together who will receive resources, artist feedback, and professional support while developing a script. The program culminates in a rigorous workshop process and public reading series. As an expansion of its public engagement programs, MCC will offer front-row, \$30 seats for all performances in the Newman Mills Theater as well as limited \$30 accessible seating. These tickets will be available on a first-come, first-served basis online and will also be made available by phone or in-person beginning January 20 at the box office. Patrons needing accessible seats may purchase online using code 30NMT.

"On behalf of Bernie, Bob, Will, myself, and the entire MCC family, I am honored to officially welcome you all to the opening of MCC's first permanent home," said **MCC Executive Director Blake West**. "It is a dream fulfilled to have a space that will unite and expand our unique education and public engagement programs and benefit our growing community of writers, directors, actors, students, audience members, as well as the community in which we will now be working and producing—Hell's Kitchen—and all New York City residents. MCC is marking its 32nd season this year, and it is wonderful to feel both the continuity of what we do and the excitement of change this moment represents."

"Since Bobby, Will, and I started together, making theater and finding new voices has never felt more urgent. Now we can bring together our expansive MCC Theater family in our new home after operating in multiple locations over the last 30 years. Offering new opportunities for collaboration; allowing the MCC community to grow and engage with one another in conversation, debate, and discovery; and expanding the American theater canon is our mission. This moment is humbling, thrilling, and a challenge we relish," said **Bernard Telsey, Co-Artistic Director of MCC Theater**, speaking on behalf of the company's artistic leadership.

MCC's Board Chair **Susan Raanan** said, "It is incredible to celebrate the opening of the beautiful new Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space. I want to extend deep gratitude to everyone who had a hand in this project including the unyielding support of the City of New York, our partners at the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust, our Board of Directors, Campaign Co-Chairs Marianne and Steve Mills and Ruth and Harold Newman; Honorary Co-Chairs Judith Light and Julianna Margulies and all the generous donors who have helped to make this great space a reality."

The Campaign has been supported by the City of New York, which contributed \$28.9 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.

DCLA Commissioner **Tom Finkelpearl** noted that, "MCC Theater is a cornerstone of NYC's vibrant Off-Broadway theater scene. They provide a platform for new voices, develop work by

emerging and mid-career artists, and their well-regarded education programs help high school students tap into their own creative energies. MCC's permanent new home is a long-awaited and much anticipated addition to the 52nd Street Project and the Alliance of Resident Theaters/New York, which they join as the third and final occupant of a key theater hub on Tenth Avenue."

"This beautiful new space with two theaters will give MCC the ability to expand its programming, feature even more artists and touch even more people," said DDC Commissioner **Lorraine Grillo**. "We're very proud to help bring this addition to the community, and to complete it in time for MCC's scheduled January programming as well as within budget."

"I know I speak on behalf of everyone at the Trust when I say it is truly an honor to be a part of the Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space," said **Richard G. Schneidman**, a trustee of the Robert W. Wilson Charitable Trust. "We know the space that bears Bob's name will be a tremendous asset to this community and a generator to some of the most important art of our time. We couldn't ask for a more fitting institution to help drive home Bob's commitment to supporting education and culture."

"I became a Board Member of MCC Theater because I wanted to help make a difference in the lives of the courageous, creative, and hard-working young people who are such an important part of the MCC family," said **Judith Light**, MCC Board member and Honorary Co-Chair of The Campaign for MCC Theater. "When you introduce young people to the theater, you positively influence their lives and the lives of future generations. Now, in our new home, all under one roof, we have an opportunity to give young people an even richer experience, as they interact with actors, playwrights, creative teams, and theater professionals every time they enter the Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space."

The 2018/19 Season at The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space includes: 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, and choreographed by Rick and Jeff Kuperman; *The Light* by Loy A. Webb, directed by Logan Vaughn; Halley Feiffer's *Moscow Moscow Moscow Moscow*, directed by Trip Cullman; *BLKS* by Aziza Barnes, directed by Robert O'Hara. For more information, please visit www.mcctheater.org/2018-19-season. Subscriber and single tickets are currently on sale but must be made over the phone or online; an official box office opening for in-person sale walk-ups will be announced at a later date.

The Robert W. Wilson MCC Theater Space

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 52nd 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 53rd Street façade, Simeti created "Tale of a City," 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 installed "Set Perspectives," a tapestry composed of historic imagery relating to theater, sets, masks, and props from cultures all around the world.

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, EDF, 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 G. Schneidman, Robert Feidelson, and Ron Zimmerman.

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); 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

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 as they develop their artistic voices. 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 a Performance 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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