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**UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESIDENT ROBERT J. ZIMMER TO DISCUSS THE
ROLE OF THE ARTS IN EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT
ARTS ALLIANCE ILLINOIS' MAY 20 BENEFIT LUNCHEON**

Steppenwolf Theatre Company's **Martha Lavey** and **David Hawkanson** to be Honored
Special Introductions by **Ben Cameron** and **Theaster Gates**

CHICAGO – The third annual **Arts Alliance Illinois** *Voices of a Creative State* benefit luncheon will feature a keynote address by University of Chicago President **Robert J. Zimmer**, who will discuss the vital, transformational role the arts play in education and civic engagement. The event also will pay tribute to two individuals who have made profound and lasting contributions to Chicago's theater scene: Steppenwolf Theatre Artistic Director **Martha Lavey** and former Steppenwolf Executive Director **David Hawkanson**. The event will take place Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at the Swissôtel Chicago, 323 E. Upper Wacker Drive.

The annual luncheon raises critically needed funds to support the work of Arts Alliance Illinois, the state's leading arts advocacy organization. Now in its third year, the event is expected to attract 500 leaders from Illinois' creative, corporate, and civic communities to network and pay tribute to the vibrancy and diversity of Illinois' cultural sector. Proceeds from the event support initiatives to foster and grow support for arts organizations throughout the state through arts-friendly policy change, studies demonstrating the economic impact of the state's arts and culture industry, and the development and implementation of policy improvements to advance arts education access, equity and quality in Illinois.

The Honorary Chair for the event is Cook County Board President **Toni Preckwinkle**. The Benefit Co-Chairs are **Greg Cameron** (Joffrey Ballet), **Greg Thompson** (UnitedHealthcare), **Cheryl Cooke** (Allstate), **Nora Daley** (Board Chair, Steppenwolf Theatre Company) and **Sean Conroy** (Grosvenor Capital Management). The Event Planning Committee Co-Chairs are **Brooke Flanagan** (Chicago Shakespeare Theater) and **Julie Schmidt** (Board Member, Arts Alliance Illinois).

The highlight of the program will be Zimmer's address, which will touch upon the power of culture and the arts to open minds, foster collaborations, and create more vibrant communities. Under Zimmer's leadership, the University of Chicago has forged connections with the local South Side and Chicago-area cultural organizations and education programs. UChicago Arts—the University's collection of professional and presenting organizations, academic art departments and programs, and arts and culture initiatives—is becoming a national model for how an urban research university fosters an integrative approach to the arts.

"No other research university in America is doing more to harness the power and potential of the arts than the University of Chicago," said Ra Joy, Executive Director of Arts Alliance Illinois. "We are proud to have President Zimmer deliver this year's keynote address. Under his bold leadership, UChicago is leveraging the arts and creative expression as a catalyst for positive change on Chicago's South Side and beyond."

Ben Cameron of New York's Doris Duke Charitable Trust (and formerly of the Theatre Communications Group) will come to Chicago to introduce and celebrate **Martha Lavey**, who since 1991 has served as artistic director of Chicago's internationally recognized Steppenwolf Theatre, and **David Hawkanson**, who served as the company's executive director for 11 years. The two, who were instrumental in nurturing the continued artistic evolution of the Theater's internationally acclaimed ensemble and, through the Public Square initiative, revolutionized how an artistic institution interfaces with and engages its audiences and the broader community, will be presented the Citizen Advocate Award for their local and national contributions.

Ms. Lavey has served in leadership roles with the National Endowment for the Arts, The Theatre Communications Group, Three Arts Club, USA Artists and as a City Arts panelist; Mr. Hawkanson has chaired the board of directors for Arts Alliance Illinois, and also has worked with Guthrie Theater, Arizona Theatre Company and Hartford Stage, Theatre Communications Group and the National Endowment for the Arts.

"It is impossible to measure the impact that the team of Martha Lavey and David Hawkanson have made in the arts in Chicago, and throughout the world," said Nora Daley, who also serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees of Steppenwolf Theatre. "Under their stewardship, nine Steppenwolf productions were transferred to New York, and additional productions were seen in England, Ireland and Australia, elevating the profile of Illinois artists, showcasing the unique strength of an ensemble-driven company and raising the bar for those working in theater throughout the world. In addition, they have been passionate about mentoring and advising emerging talent, ensuring that Steppenwolf's programming speaks to and is enjoyed by a wide range of audiences, and have been articulate advocates for the power of the arts. We are proud to honor them with the Citizen Advocate Award."

Allstate is the Premier Sponsor of the Voices of a Creative State luncheon. "At Allstate, we believe that the arts strengthen and contribute to the vitality of our communities by enriching the daily lives of all residents, especially our young people," said Cheryl Cooke, Manager of Allstate's Corporate Giving program. "We are proud to support Arts Alliance Illinois and their efforts to advance the arts and arts education throughout the state."

Voices of a Creative State begins at 11:30 am with a networking reception. At noon, guests enter the Zurich Ballroom for lunch and the benefit program.

Ticket, Table and Sponsorship Information

Individual tickets are \$350 and \$500 with a limited number of \$150-level tickets available exclusively for artists, arts administrators and students. Sponsorship packages for tables

of 10 start at \$3,500. To purchase tickets, tables and sponsorships, visit www.artsalliance.org/luncheon or call 312.855.3105 x13.

About Arts Alliance Illinois

Incorporated in 1982, Arts Alliance Illinois is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts advocacy and service organization promoting the value of the arts to all residents of Illinois. With nearly 30,000 advocates and hundreds of member organizations, the Alliance is the largest statewide arts advocacy network in the country and the only organization in Illinois that represents artists and cultural organizations across all disciplines, budget sizes, and geographic areas.

Arts Alliance Illinois works to amplify the collective voice of the arts sector through legislative and grassroots action, close collaboration with policymakers and public agencies, and a robust online and social media presence. The Alliance ensures that the arts are central and indispensable to Illinois by empowering arts and culture stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to be active participants in the policymaking process and the civic life of their communities; by proving data-driven evidence on the impact, assets, and needs of the arts and creative industries in Illinois; and by connecting and supporting leaders across multiple sectors around common goals and shared outcomes. www.artsalliance.org

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