



PlayhouseSquare



THE CLEVELAND
**PLAY
HOUSE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2009

Autumn Kiser / 216-348-5270

Autumn@playhousesquare.org

Brian Johnston / 216-523-7279

b.johnston@csuohio.edu

Lisa Craig / 216-795-7000

lcraig@clevelandplayhouse.com

THE CLEVELAND PLAY HOUSE AND CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY FIND SYNERGY, RESOURCES, A NURTURING ARTS SCENE AND THE PERFECT HOME IN THE ALLEN THEATRE AT PlayhouseSquare.

Cleveland, Ohio – The Cleveland Play House, America’s longest running regional theater, and Cleveland State University have begun discussions to partner in the reconfiguration and joint occupancy of the Allen Theatre at PlayhouseSquare, the largest performing arts center in the country outside of New York City. The agreement to pursue plans for the partnership was announced by Peter A. Kuhn, Chairman of the Board of The Cleveland Play House, Michael Schwartz, Cleveland State University President, Thomas W. Adler, Chairman of the Board of PlayhouseSquare and Art J. Falco, PlayhouseSquare President and CEO.

The partnership will provide a number of benefits for the Northeast Ohio community and the three participating organizations, including:

- An additional 100,000+ audience members visiting downtown Cleveland each year
- Creation of a unique collaboration between CSU and The Play House to foster technical theater education at the undergraduate level
- Operational cost-savings for The Play House
- Enrichment of PlayhouseSquare’s mission to present a wide variety of quality performing arts, advance arts education and create a destination for entertainment, business and housing
- The Play House and the CSU program of Dramatic Arts will become resident companies at PlayhouseSquare, sharing in existing resources while managing their own staff, office space and business affairs

-more-

The Allen Theatre will be reconfigured from a 2,500 seat theater into two individual theaters with respective seating capacities of 550 and 300 for flexible use that can best accommodate the performance, set, costume design and technical needs of The Play House, CSU and PlayhouseSquare. A third 175-seat black box theater will be constructed immediately adjacent to the Allen Theatre. The modifications, led by Cleveland-based architectural firm of Westlake, Reed, Leskosky, are set to begin in June of 2010 with completion in the fall of 2011. The project, while still in the early conceptual stages, will be in the \$30+ million range. All three organizations will be procuring the funding from foundation and private sources, having already received some commitments. The specifics of the fundraising campaign and current pledges will be announced at a later date.

For The Play House, the partnership with Cleveland State University and PlayhouseSquare represents a bold move to create a mission-centric business model that is artistically vital and financially stable. The Play House will continue to produce its core programs, including: a mainstage season, commissioning program, children's theater, and a full range of arts education programs, including the acclaimed Master of Fine Arts in Acting Program with Case Western Reserve University. These programs will be enhanced and augmented through the deeper relationship with CSU.

"We are ecstatic to be a part of this historic collaboration," stated Peter A. Kuhn, "and believe that this project has the potential to be one of the greatest arts, higher education, and urban revitalization partnerships in the United States. We look forward to serving this great community of ours for decades to come from our new home as a resident company at PlayhouseSquare, continuing to operate under the name 'The Cleveland Play House'."

Michael Bloom, Artistic Director of The Play House, continued: "Our vision is to be a contemporary, top-tier theater company – with partners like CSU and PlayhouseSquare, we can create a thrilling new home in one of the busiest theater centers in America, and focus exclusively on our mission of theater and arts education for the people of Greater Cleveland."

"We have been looking at options to create a more cost-effective facility situation for a couple of years, including the possibility of renovating the current space or building new elsewhere," said Kevin Moore, Managing Director of The Play House. "Based on that research, we can say with certainty that this is the most exciting partnership we could possibly have created – superb partners, a great design team, a vibrant theater district, and so much more. It also happens to be the most cost-effective, which is great for the partners and the community."

CSU envisions the Allen Theatre becoming a regional center for collegiate theater, as other colleges and universities - as well as high schools and other organizations - eventually will be able to make use of the space.

The reconstructed theater will not only feature magnificent performance spaces and comfortable accommodations for visitors, but also classrooms, rehearsal and dance spaces, an art gallery, and ample space for set construction, wardrobe and other essential components of the total theater enterprise. The theater will be an economic driver for the region and attraction for students, not only aspiring actors but also those interested in technical theater, arts careers and film.

"This is a very deliberate effort on our part to partner and collaborate academically with a well-known regional theater - The Cleveland Play House - and reflects our wider interest in collaborating with local organizations in general for the good of our students and the region as a whole," stated Michael Schwartz.

"A partnership with The Cleveland Play House would strengthen and build our own excellent program and go a long way in attracting students of a national caliber to CSU who want to study the theater and performing arts as well as theater marketing and management. We anticipate quadrupling the number of students who enroll at CSU in these programs. Lastly, and equally important, another partner in this collaboration includes the Great Lakes Theater Festival, who will join us and The Play House in making use of new and much-needed set construction space that will also provide a valuable learning environment for our students who want to pursue that much in-job-demand craft.

"Creating a cultural center around the Allen Theatre that will serve college students, theater professionals, local arts organizations, and patrons from across Northeast Ohio will strengthen the core of the CSU neighborhood, the adjoining PlayhouseSquare district, and the city. The excitement surrounding this project will make the city and our downtown campus more appealing to students, encouraging them to live on or near campus."

Critical elements of the not-for-profit PlayhouseSquare mission are area development—using the theaters to drive the economy and help local businesses, and arts education—providing ageless access to the arts in order to enrich the lives of all students.

"The vision of PlayhouseSquare has always been to use the stage to create a thriving and active neighborhood

and provide educational resources for the community. This is a perfect fit and a win-win-win-win situation. The fourth win is for downtown Cleveland, because we found a way to innovate, collaborate and save the community's resources," said Thomas W. Adler. "The students in our area will benefit from a broader learning experience. Our audiences will benefit by having greater artistic choices and our businesses will benefit by the patronage of those audiences."

"When the modification is complete and CSU and the Play House move in, audiences will find the best of Broadway, contemporary and classic theater, opera and dance in one bustling, exciting district," stated Art J. Falco. "We hope that the Northeast Ohio community will embrace this partnership as a point of pride because it benefits our students, our economy, and our stature as a vibrant, forward-thinking city."

Transformation of the Allen Theatre

The transformation of the Allen Theatre at PlayhouseSquare is being led by national historic restoration and cultural and performing arts specialists Westlake Reed Leskosky of Cleveland, Ohio, a nationally-recognized and integrated design specialist in cultural and performing arts and historic theater preservation.

The new venues include the 550-seat Main Stage in the existing lower orchestra area of the Allen and the 300-seat Second Stage in the balcony. The 175-seat Black Box Stage, as well as additional rehearsal spaces, will be newly constructed in the courtyard between the Allen and the Ohio Theatres. "This is not a renovation or restoration, but rather an insertion of contemporary new venues within the shell of the Allen," remarked Paul Westlake, Managing Principal. "They will be newly developed without compromise and without disturbing the original historical fabric."

The three theaters will bring the total number of performing spaces at PlayhouseSquare to 10, continuing to make it the largest performing arts complex in the country, outside of New York City.

Synergy-An available home for one becomes space for all

The Allen Theatre was intended for use by large touring productions, such as *Phantom of the Opera*, *Lion King*, *Wicked*, and long-running productions. The Cleveland Ballet's move to San Jose created the ability to present large productions in the State Theatre, making the Allen available to welcome new resident companies. The Cleveland Play House draws more than 100,000 patrons each year, but their physical space created operational

challenges and expenses that no longer made economic sense. The CSU overall vision included a new performing arts space to help them build their drama and dance programs, using it as a recruiting tool for students. A reconfiguration of the Allen met these needs.

The Play House brings a rich and deep theater heritage of artist-driven new and classic works, contributing an important genre of arts programming that will compliment what is already in place at PlayhouseSquare. In addition, the nurturing environment around PlayhouseSquare can help to bring new audiences to The Play House, while offering CSU students the opportunity to learn and thrive in that same environment.

All three organizations share the same educational agenda. CSU students will benefit from arts education opportunities, learning from artistic and technical field experts from The Play House, as well as PlayhouseSquare and the Great Lakes Theater Festival. They will also have access to scene and costume shop space and there are plans for cooperative educational programs that strengthen, rather than duplicate, each organizations' efforts. No other college or university in the country will offer theater programs at the undergraduate level, making CSU the first.

The relocation brings PlayhouseSquare's core of resident companies to a total of six {the first four include the Great Lakes Theater Festival, Opera Cleveland, DanceCleveland and Tri-C JazzFest}. The new combined annual attendance of 200,000 will build upon the growing PlayhouseSquare footprint, while audiences for each will benefit from an energetic, bustling and economically viable downtown performing arts environment. More importantly, Northeast Ohio entertainment and cultural seekers will find contemporary and classical theater, dance, opera, national Broadway touring productions, comedy and musical concerts contained all within a two blocks. That same area also includes a concentrated arts education, technology and broadcasting hub in the Idea Center at PlayhouseSquare {the nation's first PBS/NPR-performing arts center partnership of its kind}.

The occasion to move is simply physical and not a merging of businesses. The Play House and CSU will manage their own staff, office space and business affairs. But, as with the other resident companies, they will be able to share existing resources, such as ticketing and box office operations, which are managed by PlayhouseSquare.

###

Founded in 1915, **The Cleveland Play House** is the first permanently established professional theatre in the United States. More than 12 million people have attended over 1,300 productions at The Play House – including more than 130 American and/or World Premieres. Today, under the leadership of Artistic Director Michael Bloom and Managing Director Kevin Moore, The Cleveland Play House is an artist-driven theatre that serves the Greater Cleveland community by holding true to its mission: *To produce plays of the highest professional standards that inspire, stimulate, and entertain our diverse audiences, to conduct training and educational programs that enhance the quality of life for those we serve and help to insure the future of theatre.* The Cleveland Play House is funded through the generosity of Cuyahoga County residents through **Cuyahoga Arts and Culture**, and **The Ohio Arts Council** which helps to fund The Cleveland Play House with state tax dollars to encourage economic growth, educational excellence and cultural enrichment for all Ohioans.

Cleveland State is a comprehensive metropolitan university committed to providing affordable education of high quality to students with diverse backgrounds, experiences, interests and needs. Located in downtown Cleveland with extended campuses in Westlake and Solon, Cleveland State offers degrees in hundreds of undergraduate and graduate programs and law, as well as professional development programs. Approximately 15,500 students attend Cleveland State

PlayhouseSquare is a not-for-profit performing arts center—the largest in the nation outside of New York City--that presents and produces over 1,000 performances annually and strives to advance arts education while focusing on area development activities in order to strengthen the economic vitality of the region. With eight performing spaces, PlayhouseSquare welcomes over one million visitors per year and still represents the world's largest theater restoration project, as five of the eight spaces were restored to their original 1920's condition. In 2005, the Idea Center at PlayhouseSquare, opened as a joint partnership between PlayhouseSquare and ideastream. It houses the studios, technical facilities and offices of ideastream's WCPN (90.3 FM) and WVIZ (Channel 25) as well as the classrooms, dance studio and rehearsal space for PlayhouseSquare's arts education programs. The PlayhouseSquare Real Estate Services division is focused on area development and enhancement projects that surround the PlayhouseSquare District as well as property/asset management consulting and services for areas outside of the District.