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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR EXTENSIVE RENOVATIONS

**Renovations include addition of an elevator, new restroom facilities,
and lobby spaces, among many others**

The Non-Profit Performing Arts Organization Launches Largest Capital Campaign in Its History in Preparation for Its 100th Anniversary

New Brunswick, NJ (August 31, 2020)—State Theatre New Jersey has announced extensive renovation plans to ensure that it preserves its rich history while continuing to serve the community as a state-of-the-art cultural venue far into the future. The primary plans for this renovation are guided by three major initiatives: accessibility and safety; audience and artist experience; and operational efficiency. To learn more about the renovations and how you can support this campaign, please visit **STNJ.org/NextStage**.

“State Theatre is committed to improving our accessibility and operations to ensure the finest experience for live performance and arts education programs in our beautiful historic venue,” said **Scott Fergang, State Theatre New Jersey Board Chair**. “Since State Theatre’s last major renovation in 1988, we have welcomed over 5.9 million people through our doors. These upgrades will allow us to continue to serve our community and build audiences for the next 100 years and beyond.”

The renovation’s upcoming upgrades include the priority of becoming ADA accessible with the addition of an elevator, accessible seating throughout the venue, and new restroom facilities. Renovations also include modernizing the stage rigging system, dressing rooms, and lobby

spaces—all designed to improve access, experience, and safety of our audiences, artists, and staff.

In the last few months, the COVID-19 crisis has brought into sharp focus the need for many of the upgrades planned. “We are using this time to accelerate the construction timeline and immediately address projects that focus on safety and security for all,” said **Sarah K. Chaplin, President & CEO**. **“State Theatre will be at the forefront in providing a safe and clean environment for the community to experience live performing arts and entertainment in a post-COVID-19 world.”**

The improvements made critical by the COVID-19 crisis include the replacement of the HVAC system to improve air flow control and filtration, installation of magnetometers with thermal scanning at all entrances, the installation of protective barriers at service areas, the installation of new modular seating to facilitate social distancing if required in the future, and the addition of touchless technology in all restroom facilities.

“These improvements would not be possible without the support of the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders and all of the generous donors who have supported us during the early stages of this Next Stage Campaign,” said Chaplin. “We have reached 86% of our \$26,500,000 project goal, and our fundraising efforts continue in order to meet our overall goal and complete the project.”

“The State Theatre has entertained audiences for almost 100 years. This effort will ensure State Theatre continues to offer world class programming for generations to come,” said **City of New Brunswick Mayor and Next Stage Campaign Co-Chair Jim Cahill**. “The enhancements funded by this campaign will elevate the overall experience for patrons and artists alike to new heights.”

Funds raised to date for the renovation represent a strong public and private partnership between State Theatre New Jersey; Middlesex County; and many corporate, foundation, and individual donors who support and recognize the impact the theater has on the arts, the economy of the region, and the well-being of its citizens.

During the leadership phase of the campaign, State Theatre received major support from Middlesex County and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Other major donors include the late philanthropist Betty Wold Johnson; Johnson & Johnson; Joan and Robert Campbell; the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation; Andrew J. Markey; the Presser Foundation; the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust; the John and Susan Heldrich Family Fund; the Hyde and Watson Foundation; and Investors Bank. Longtime and recent State Theatre New Jersey members have stepped forward to provide exceptional leadership gifts to the campaign, bringing the goal within reach and making this vision a reality.

“I would like to thank everyone who has already contributed to this campaign,” said Chaplin. “The outpouring of support and generosity by so many is tremendously appreciated by the State Theatre Board and staff and will ensure a long future for the arts in our region.”

In preparation for this project, State Theatre conducted an extensive planning study with the help of the Princeton-based architecture and historic preservation firm of Mills + Schnoering. The theatre is now in a design/build phase with DLR Group, and the Somerset, NJ office of Turner Construction.

As one of the world’s preeminent designers of performing and visual arts spaces, **DLR Group** is dedicated to delivering projects that set the stage for cultural and economic vitality. DLR Group’s experience in design for the Cultural and Performing Arts spans nearly five decades and encompasses work on more than 300 cultural facilities around the world. They have worked on four of the six largest performing arts centers in the U.S. as well as on arts facilities serving college campuses and smaller communities. Some example of the their Arts work are: Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, D.C.; Neil Simon Theater, NY; New York City Center, NY; Straz Center for the Performing Arts, FL; Broward Center for the Performing Arts, FL; Cleveland Public Auditorium, OH; Playhouse Square - Multiple Projects, OH; Los Angeles Theatre, CA; Caramoor Pavilion, NY; Project Niagara, National Arts Centre and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, Ontario, Canada.

Turner is an internationally renowned construction management company with offices across the United States and a local office in Somerset, NJ. The company has earned a strong reputation for undertaking large, complex projects, focusing on safety, fostering innovation, embracing emerging technologies, and making a difference in the lives of its clients, employees and the communities in which its people build. Turner has worked on many arts facility projects including: the 65th Street Development Project at Lincoln Center, NY; Jazz at Lincoln Center, NY; August Wilson Center for African American Culture, PA; Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, OH; and Princeton University, Lewis Arts complex, NJ.

About State Theatre New Jersey

State Theatre was built in 1921 as a silent film and vaudeville palace. Recognizing the historic significance of the theater, PBS honored State Theatre New Jersey by featuring it in its documentary series, Treasures of New Jersey, in the fall of 2018. “Treasures of New Jersey: State Theatre New Jersey” can be streamed at STNJ.org/History. The half-hour long program takes a behind-the-scenes look at State Theatre’s past, present, and future through archival film, photos, and interviews.

Today, State Theatre is the largest performing arts center in Central New Jersey and has welcomed **over 5.9 million people through its doors** since reopening as a non-profit performing arts center in 1988. State Theatre New Jersey is a cornerstone of the cultural vitality of Middlesex County, and averages a total economic impact on New Brunswick and the surrounding area of more than \$18 million a year. The mainstage programs have featured high-caliber artists such as Diana Ross, Tony Bennett, Kevin Hart, Ringo Starr, Melissa Etheridge,

John Leguizamo, Harry Connick, Jr., Diana Krall, and Crosby, Stills & Nash. Program offerings include Broadway, orchestra, family, dance, comedy, rock/pop, jazz, Performances for Schools, and Sensory-Friendly Performances. Additionally, State Theatre provides free and heavily subsidized tickets to more than 40,000 people annually in the local community, including the local public schools through educational performances, programs, and artist residencies.

To learn how you can support State Theatre's Next Stage Campaign, please visit STNJ.org/NextStage.

STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY

Creating Extraordinary Experiences Through the Power of Live Performance

15 Livingston Ave

New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Guest Services - 732-246-SHOW (7469)

Online - STNJ.org

Grant funding has been provided by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders





THE NEXT STAGE CAMPAIGN

STATE THEATRE
NEW JERSEY

HONORARY CHAIRS

Omar & Madiha Boraie
Bob Campbell
Michael Feinstein
Roger S. Fine
Betty Wold Johnson
In memoriam
Wynton Marsalis
Audra McDonald
Neil Sedaka

CO-CHAIRS

Senator Christopher
"Kip" Bateman
Mayor Jim Cahill
Kevin Cummings
Scott Fergang
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A VISION FOR
THE HISTORIC
STATE THEATRE
NEW JERSEY

PRESS RELEASE SUPPLEMENT

State Theatre New Jersey is proud to have garnered the support of the distinguished individuals who make up the Next Stage Campaign's leadership, listed to the left.

Honorary Co-Chair of State Theatre's Next Stage Campaign, world-renowned singer and actress **Audra McDonald** said, "State Theatre New Jersey is a local treasure! This gorgeous venue is filled with dedicated and vibrant members of the theater community. I'm delighted to support State Theatre in its mission to bring the finest national and international performing artists to its many devoted patrons of all ages and backgrounds."

Honorary Co-Chair of State Theatre's Next Stage Campaign, multi-award winning musician and composer **Neil Sedaka** said, "It has always been a joy for me to perform at State Theatre New Jersey, and I am happy to help them realize their dream of making this historic theater fully accessible and updating its backstage and auditorium. The dedicated folks at State Theatre do so much to improve the quality of life for millions of people through the magic of the performing arts, and I applaud their excellent work!"

Ambassador of the Great American Songbook, musician, and Honorary Co-Chair of State Theatre's Next Stage Campaign, **Michael Feinstein** said, "Having performed at the beautiful and historic State Theatre New Jersey for over 25 years, I am proud to serve as an Honorary Chair of their important Next Stage Campaign because State Theatre joins me in keeping the tradition of Broadway and Hollywood song alive. In addition, I admire the broader scope of their diverse programming, and the critical outreach and education work they do. I look forward to visiting the wonderful Middlesex County community again soon!"

"Middlesex County has a long history of investing in the Arts—it is a cornerstone of this community. The Arts bring us all together, transcends color and economic background, and is a key facet of our identity," said **Ronald Rios, Freeholder Director of the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders**. "State Theatre New Jersey showcases world-class artists from around the world, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year—it is a significant economic driver for our County. This investment is part of a long-term strategic plan to improve the quality of life for our residents both now and into the future."

"Beyond just positive economic development, investing in the Arts drives vital cultural change. Creativity and imagination empower our people to express their true selves, it allows them to dream and aspire for a better world. In a polarizing time, the Arts connects us all under one unified community. The Board of Chosen Freeholders is proud to be part of the modernization of this prestigious and historic institution in our County, the State Theatre—for generations to enjoy, celebrate and be inspired," said **Freeholder Deputy Director and Chair of Business Innovation, Education, & Opportunity Committee, Kenneth Armwood**.

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Next Stage Press Release Photo Captions

Photos can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/2YPjyMU>

Façade rendering:

Architectural rendering of State Theatre New Jersey for its Centennial Celebration in 2021. Courtesy of Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC & Design Distill

Studio rendering:

Architectural rendering of State Theatre New Jersey's studio space. Courtesy of Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC & Design Distill

Balcony rendering:

Rendering of State Theatre New Jersey's balcony with accessible seating. Courtesy of Mills + Schnoering Architects, LLC & Design Distill

New Marquee:

State Theatre New Jersey's new LED Marquee in February 2020. © Jeffrey Auger

Ron Rios and Audra McDonald:

Next Stage Campaign Honorary Chair Audra McDonald with Middlesex County Freehold Director Ronald Rios following her 2017 Gala Performance at State Theatre New Jersey. © Jeffrey Auger

Audra McDonald:

Next Stage Campaign Honorary Chair Audra McDonald on stage during her 2017 Gala Performance at State Theatre New Jersey. © Jeffrey Auger

Scott Fergang and Neil Sedaka:

Next Stage Campaign Honorary Co-Chair Neil Sedaka with State Theatre New Jersey Board Chair Scott Fergang following Sedaka's performance in 2017.

Sarah Chaplin:

State Theatre New Jersey President & CEO Sarah K. Chaplin. © Alexandra Pais

Michael Feinstein:

Next Stage Campaign Honorary Chair Michael Feinstein © Stephen Sorokoff

Wynton Marsalis:

Next Stage Campaign Honorary Chair Wynton Marsalis.