



15 Livingston Ave | New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
732-246-SHOW (7469) | STNJ.org

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Contact: Kelly Blithe, Director of Communications & Community Engagement  
732-247-7200, ext. 542 [kblithe@STNJ.org](mailto:kblithe@STNJ.org)

# **STATE THEATRE NEW JERSEY ANNOUNCES VIRTUAL GROUNDBREAKING EVENT**

**Wednesday, December 2, 2020, 12pm – On Facebook Live**

New Brunswick, NJ (November 23, 2020)—State Theatre New Jersey announces a **Virtual Groundbreaking** event to celebrate the start of the theatre's major renovations as part the Next Stage Campaign on **Wednesday, December 2 at 12pm**. The Virtual Groundbreaking will be hosted on the State Theatre's Facebook page at [Facebook.com/StateTheatreNJ](https://www.facebook.com/StateTheatreNJ). For more information on the renovations or how to donate to the Next Stage Campaign, please visit [STNJ.org/NextStage](http://STNJ.org/NextStage).

Speakers at the virtual groundbreaking event will include **State Theatre's President & CEO Sarah K. Chaplin** and **Board Chair Scott Fergang**; Next Stage Campaign Co-Chairs **Middlesex County Board of County Commissioners Director Ron Rios** and **New Brunswick Mayor Jim Cahill**; and **Next Stage Campaign Honorary Chair and renowned musician, Michael Feinstein**.

Funds raised for the renovation of the 100-year old building—owned by Middlesex County and operated by State Theatre New Jersey—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.

“These renovations will be transformative for the State Theatre, but more importantly, they will ensure that we preserve our rich history while continuing to serve the community as a state-of-the-art cultural venue far into the future,” said **State Theatre New Jersey President & CEO Sarah K. Chaplin**.

“Middlesex County has a long history of investing in the Arts—it is a cornerstone of our community,” said **Ronald Rios, Freeholder Director of the Middlesex County Board of Chosen**

**Freeholders.** “This groundbreaking event marks the start of a new era of growth and enrichment at the State Theatre New Jersey that will continue to inspire change and provoke creative thinking as well as attract new audiences to our County. Our investment is part of a long-term strategic plan to improve the quality of life for our residents both now and in the future.”

“Beyond just positive economic development, investing in the Arts drives vital cultural change. 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.**

The primary plans for the non-profit State Theatre’s renovation are guided by three major initiatives: accessibility and safety; audience and artist experience; and operational efficiency. The upgrades include the priority of becoming ADA accessible with the addition of an elevator, accessible seating throughout the venue, and new restroom facilities. Other renovations 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.

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

The State Theatre’s Next Stage Campaign has received major support from Middlesex County and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Other generous 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.

State Theatre’s renovation partners include DLR Group and the Somerset, NJ office of Turner Construction.

### ***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. Today, State Theatre is the largest performing arts center in Central New Jersey and has welcomed 6 million people through its doors since re-opening 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.

*State Theatre New Jersey's programs are made possible by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. Grant funding has been provided by the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders through a grant award from the Middlesex County Cultural and Arts Trust Fund.*

**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

**PHOTOS AND INTERVIEWS FURNISHED UPON REQUEST**

Please contact Kelly Blithe at  
732-247-7200, ext. 542 or by email at [kblithe@stnj.org](mailto:kblithe@stnj.org).  
Information in this release is current as of November 23, 2020.

Up-to-the-minute information on events and State Theatre news,  
online at [STNJ.org](http://STNJ.org).

# # #