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AMERICA'S OLDEST THEATRE – PHILADELPHIA'S MOST POPULAR THEATRE COMPANY

WALNUT STREET THEATRE

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\$39 million theatre and education center expansion project announced for The Walnut Street Theatre

PHILADELPHIA, PA: The Walnut Street Theatre proudly unveiled their \$39 million expansion plan during the annual Gala Concert, which was appropriately themed *The Future Lives Here*. Addressing the growing needs of the community the Walnut serves, the expansion will include a fully renovated lobby and box office, additional space for its growing education programs, two state-of-the-art rehearsal halls, a 400-seat theatre-in-the-round, which will be the first of its kind in the region, and a public restaurant. Groundbreaking is to begin in the spring of 2020 and the project is expected to be completed in 2022.

The expansion plan provides over 35,000 square feet of critically needed space in order to secure the Walnut's ability to continue to fulfill its multi-faceted mission. The plan calls for a capital campaign, which will raise the necessary funds from public resources and private philanthropy. The campaign is accepting donations from subscribers, individual ticket buyers, friends, corporations and foundations, as well as from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

"For over two centuries the Walnut has adapted to the needs of its community," states The Walnut Street Theatre President and Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard. "This is the latest reinvention of the theatre that so many in the Greater Philadelphia area call home, and guarantees that generations to come will also be able to make the Walnut their theatre home."

Immersive Theatre Experience

The centerpiece of this expansion is a 400-seat theatre-in-the-round, providing a dynamic viewing experience for audiences that will be unique in the Delaware Valley. The theatre-in-the-round contains a central stage surrounded by an audience of just six rows on all sides, creating what will be one of the most immersive theatrical performance spaces in the Delaware Valley. The actors' entrances and exits will be made through the theatre aisles, allowing theatre-goers to sit right alongside the action. Without walls or barriers, productions within the theatre-in-the-round will support an intimate relationship between the cast and the audience.

Theatre for All Audiences

The theatre-in-the-round will aid the Walnut in increasing its artistic repertoire for upcoming seasons and its ability to serve more of the community, with an emphasis on new works, Shakespeare, and additional children's and family programming.

Strengthening its commitment as an arts incubator for the region, the expansion will also benefit Philadelphia's emerging theatre companies who are without rehearsal and performance spaces of their own. Consistent with the Walnut's history of assisting other arts groups, the theatre-in-the-round will be offered at an affordable rate to give other theatre companies the opportunity to utilize the space for expanded creativity.

"The expansion will allow us to strengthen our role as an incubator for theatre arts in Philadelphia, while at the same time preserving our history and strengthening our legacy," says Walnut Street Theatre Board Chair Richard A. Mitchell. "Our mission statement says in part that we are a non-profit, regional theatre whose purpose is to sustain the tradition of professional theatre, contributing to its future and vitality. Our project does just that."

Enhanced Guest Amenities

To meet the needs of a modern audience, the Walnut Street Theatre will expand its box office lobby for an enhanced customer experience.

The new box office lobby's open concept will make for a more inviting and streamlined patron experience. The new lobby will also contain three accessible restrooms for the historic Mainstage. A grand staircase and two elevators will lead to the second floor, complete with a bar, gift shop and a beautiful balcony overlooking Walnut Street. The lobby will feature a timeline of the first two centuries of America's Oldest Theatre, as well as new historical displays, showcasing the Walnut's unique place in American theatre and its immense collection of historical memorabilia for the public to enjoy.

A new public restaurant space accessible from both the new lobby and Walnut Street is included in the expansion, able to accommodate audiences before and after shows, as well as welcome the general public while there is no performance.

Exponential Growth in Theatre Education

The additional space will allow the Walnut to serve the demand for an expanded education program. The Walnut Street Theatre has the largest theatre education program in the nation according to Theatre Forward, serving an average of over 150,000 students, teachers, and families each year.

The capital expansion will allow former rehearsal halls to be converted into the first dedicated education spaces in Walnut history, paving the way for the theatre's extraordinarily successful education programs to grow exponentially. The expansion will create three new dedicated classrooms which will enhance the capabilities of the Theatre School, offering a more extensive array of specialized acting, voice, and dance classes.

Walnut Street Theatre Director of Education Thomas P. Quinn adds, "This new education center will provide the capacity to fulfill the needs of the schools and communities the Walnut serves in order to continue to grow as one of the city's premiere educational resources for young people."

For more information about the expansion, including an animated fly through of the new building, visit www.walnutstreettheatre.org/thefutureliveshere.org.

ABOUT THE WALNUT STREET THEATRE

Walnut Street Theatre is America's Oldest Theatre and the most popular theatre company in Philadelphia. As a producer of live theatre, many of the artists on the stage, in the orchestra and behind the scenes are from the Philadelphia area. As a non-profit institution, the Walnut is recognized nationally for bringing affordable theatre to more subscribers than any other theatre company in the world. In addition to its five Mainstage productions, popular Walnut Street Theatre for Kids Series and Independence Studio on 3 Series, the Walnut's education and outreach programs bring live theatre to over 150,000 students, teachers, parents, and kids every year.

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