

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 27, 2010

Betsy Shea
312-334-2459
bshea@harristheaterchicago.org

HARRIS THEATER FOR MUSIC AND DANCE PRESENTS INAUGURAL *BROADWAY LUMINARIES* SERIES THIS MARCH FEATURING “MASTER OF THE MUSICAL” STEPHEN SONDHEIM AND HOMETOWN TONY AWARD-WINNING ACTRESS AND SONGSTRESS CHRISTINE EBERSOLE

CHICAGO (January 27, 2010) – This March the **Harris Theater for Music and Dance** in Millennium Park will present its inaugural ***Broadway Luminaries*** series as part of the *Harris Theater Presents* 2009-2010 season of world-renowned national and international artists and ensembles. Featuring Broadway legends of script and song, the series features an “*A Life in the Theater*” dialogue with composer and lyricist **Stephen Sondheim**, Thursday, March 4 at 7:30 pm and an evening with Winnetka native and two-time Tony Award-winning actress and songstress **Christine Ebersole**, Thursday, March 25 at 7:30 pm.

Marking the first-ever *Harris Theater Presents* dialogue and what promises to be an important moment of the 2010 theater season in Chicago, composer and lyricist **Stephen Sondheim** will offer a personal and engaging view of his life in the theater and present a rare look into the mind of the most important artist to work in American musical theater over the past half century. During the live, unscripted conversation at the Harris, Stephen Sondheim and moderator **Gary Griffin**, Associate Artistic Director at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, will reminisce about his career, including his collaborations with Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Robbins and Tim Burton; and his predecessors, including his mentor Oscar Hammerstein II. The intimate exchange will also include Mr. Sondheim’s reflections on the state of American musical theater; the differences between film and theater; and, in a very personal series of reflections, his own creative process, speaking specifically on works ranging from his early shows *Gypsy* and *West Side Story*, considered to be twin pinnacles of the post-war Broadway musical, to such later classics as *Company*, *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*.

Mr. Sondheim, whom *TIME Magazine* hails as the “Master of the Musical,” will celebrate his 80th birthday on March 22, 2010. Throughout his career he has collaborated on more than a dozen landmark shows, including *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Passion* and *A Little Night Music*, which received its Broadway revival in December 2009. For his contributions to musical theater, Mr. Sondheim has received countless awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize; an Oscar; eight Tony Awards, including an award for Lifetime Achievement in the Theater in 2008; two Grammy Awards; and the Kennedy Center Honors. He is considered the single most influential force in bringing the Broadway musical into the modern age. As he enters his 81st year, numerous birthday celebrations across the country have been planned in his honor, including the Roundabout Theater Company’s production of *Sondheim on Sondheim*, conceived and directed by James Lapine with music and lyrics by Mr. Sondheim; and a benefit gala at City Center, featuring performances by Angela Lansbury, Barbara Cook and Patti LuPone, among others.

A frequent interpreter of Stephen Sondheim, Gary Griffin has directed productions of Mr. Sondheim’s *Passion*, *A Little Night Music*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Pacific Overtures* at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. *Pacific Overtures* was subsequently reproduced at London’s Donmar Warehouse where it received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Musical Production. He directed the American Premiere of *Saturday Night* and *Company* at Pegasus Players and *Assassins* at Apple Tree Theatre. Mr. Griffin recently directed *West Side Story* for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada. He directed the Broadway and National Tour productions of *The Color Purple* and the Broadway and Encores productions of *The Apple Tree* starring Kristin Chenoweth. Additionally, in Chicago he has directed at Court, Marriott, Drury Lane, Northlight, Writer’s Theatre, Famous Door and About Face Theatre and has received eight Joseph Jefferson Awards for Directing.

Following the conversation, Sondheim will conduct a Q&A with audience members.

Winnetka native **Christine Ebersole** returns to her Illinois roots in order to make her Harris Theater debut with Musical Director and pianist John Oddo in a special evening of songs from The Great American Songbook and Broadway classics, among them a few Stephen Sondheim numbers in honor of his 80th birthday a few days earlier.

Noted by *The New York Times* as having "the voice of a nightingale," Christine Ebersole has enchanted audiences throughout her performing career, from the Broadway stage to cabaret performances, television series and specials, films, concert appearances, and recordings. She has received virtually every Off-Broadway award and is the recipient of two Tony Awards for Leading Actress in a Musical for her performances in *42nd Street* and *Grey Gardens*, considered her "dual role of a lifetime." This past summer she co-starred in the hit Broadway comedy *Blithe Spirit* opposite Angela Lansbury and in November she performed to critical acclaim at The Kennedy Center as part of the Barbara Cook *Spotlight* series. Additionally, Ms. Ebersole was recently featured in the film "Confessions of a Shopaholic" as well as 2009 episodes of "Samantha Who?," "Boston Legal," "Ugly Betty," "Law and Order," and many other hit television shows. This February, Ms. Ebersole and John Oddo return to The Café Carlyle for their second four-week engagement this year; it follows a critically acclaimed performance at the Carlyle which earned her the 2010 Nightlife Award for "Outstanding Cabaret Vocalist in a Major Engagement." In concert, Ms. Ebersole has appeared in numerous halls throughout the country; as a recording artist she has released such albums including: "Christine Ebersole: Live at the Cinegrill," "In Your Dreams," and "Sunday in New York."

Tickets for **Stephen Sondheim *A Life In The Theater*** on Thursday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m. range from \$35 - \$65; tickets for ***An Evening with Christine Ebersole*** on Thursday, March 25 at 7:30 p.m. range from \$45 - \$75. Tickets for these and all Harris Theater engagements are available at the Harris Theater box office located in Millennium Park at 205 E. Randolph Dr., by calling 312-334-7777 or by visiting www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org.

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All programs, prices and dates are subject to change.

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Opened in 2003, the Harris Theater's mission is to partner and collaborate with an array of Chicago's emerging and mid-sized performing arts organizations to help them build the resources and infrastructure necessary to achieve artistic growth and long-term organizational sustainability. The Harris Theater for Music and Dance was the first multi-use performing arts venue to be built in the Chicago downtown area since 1929 and today the Theater continues to host the most diverse offerings of any venue in Chicago, featuring the city's world-renowned music and dance institutions and the *Harris Theater Presents* series of acclaimed national and international companies. To learn more about the season at the Harris Theater, visit www.harristheaterchicago.org or call the box office at 312-334-7777 to request a brochure.

For additional information about the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago's state-of-the art 1,470 seat performance venue, please visit www.harristheaterchicago.org.

For high-res images please contact Betsy Shea, Harris Theater for Music and Dance at 312.334.2459 or bshea@harristheaterchicago.org.

The Harris Theater is pleased to announce that UBS is serving as the 2009-2010 Season Sponsor.

United Airlines is the Official Airline of the Harris Theater.

The Harris Theater gratefully acknowledges the Irving Harris Foundation for its leadership support of the Presenting Fund.

The Feitler Family Fund is the Presenting Sponsor of the Stephen Sondheim engagement.

BlueCross Blue Shield of Illinois is the Lead Corporate Sponsor of the Christine Ebersole engagement.

Windy City Media Group is the Media Partner for the Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, Sharon Isbin and Mark O'Connor, Stephen Sondheim and Christine Ebersole engagements.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation is the Lead Underwriter of the Harris Theater's Rental Subsidy Program.

The Harris Theater gratefully acknowledges The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's support of the theater's collaborative partnerships.

The Harris Theater is partially supported by the CityArts Program 4 grant from the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

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