



## Harris Theater for Music and Dance Announces \$5M Gift and Naming of Auditorium Ahead of 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**A historic gift from Abby McCormick O’Neil and D. Carroll Joynes will advance the Harris Theater’s mission as Chicago’s home for music and dance**

Chicago, IL, October 26, 2023— The Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance today announced a \$5 million gift from **Abby McCormick O’Neil** and **D. Carroll Joynes** that will help ensure a sustainable future for the institution as it celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In recognition of the couple’s donation and the family’s long history of support for Chicago’s cultural and civic institutions, the Harris’ 1,500-seat performance hall will be named **Deering McCormick Hall** in honor of both sides of Abby’s family in a dedication ceremony on November 9th, nearly 20 years to the day of the Theater’s opening in 2003.

Abby McCormick O’Neil was one of the pioneering founding Board Members of the Harris Theater which opened its doors in November 2003. She has served on its Board of Trustees since the early planning stages of the Theater in the 1990s and served as Board Chair from 2010-2014. During her term as Chair, the Theater presented landmark international artists such as Paris Opéra Ballet and the Vienna Symphony, and continued to foster a vibrant community of Chicago’s small and mid-size Resident Companies. Under her leadership, the Theater also launched its historic \$38.5M ‘Imagine’ Comprehensive Campaign. A tireless advocate for the Theater’s programmatic vision, Abby remains committed to supporting artistic excellence in Chicago, as well as bringing a global perspective to programming. Her contributions as a leader have been integral to the Theater’s growth and evolution throughout its first two decades.

A historian of Early Modern Europe, Carroll Joynes co-founded the University of Chicago’s Cultural Policy Center in 2001 and held the directorship for the Center’s first decade. He previously served as Associate Dean of Humanities at the University of Chicago. He is currently a trustee and in a leadership role in several civic organizations, particularly the Newberry Library and the Better Government Association.

Together, Abby and Carroll are leaders in Chicago’s arts and culture community, as longstanding supporters of the Harris Theater and many other non-profit arts organizations in Chicago. They have also provided transformational leadership and support for three cultural institutions in New Zealand including [Three Lakes Cultural Trust](#), [Te Atamira](#), and [Te Wahi Toi](#).

The McCormick Family came to Chicago from Virginia in 1847 and soon after founded the McCormick Reaper Works. The company soon merged with Deering Farm Equipment, and ultimately became International Harvester. Deering McCormick Hall honors original company founders Cyrus and Leander McCormick, as well as subsequent generations including Chauncey McCormick and his wife Marion Deering McCormick. The merger of McCormick and Deering was not just a business alliance but also a family alliance when Abby’s grandparents – a

McCormick and a Deering – married. The result of their union is the sustained philanthropic legacy of the McCormick and Deering families that has deeply impacted arts and culture in Chicago over generations.

“Abby and Carroll have been steadfast supporters of the Harris from the very beginning, and their impact extends to the very foundation of what we do,” said **Lori Dimun**, Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols President and Chief Executive Officer of the Harris Theater. “We are immensely grateful for their confidence in our mission, and for this historic gift that will enable us to continue to adapt to the changing cultural landscape and needs of our artists. We can think of no better way to honor their deep connection to the Theater than with the naming of the auditorium into which we welcome our artists and audiences to experience the transformative power of performance.”

“It’s a pleasure to be a Trustee of the Harris and to express my love of this organization, my fellow Board Members, the Harris team, and the performing arts in Chicago and beyond,” said **Abby McCormick O’Neil**. “My family has been committed to our city for generations, and this is a pivotal moment to further invest in this new legacy institution that Chicagoans have built together. Even in the challenging landscape facing arts organizations now, the Harris is nimble, innovative, and designed to create a rising tide for artists. Carroll and I are delighted to share this gift in service of the Theater’s bold vision.”

“The arts are an essential outlet for human expression, connection, and civic engagement. It is now more important than ever to come together to support the longevity and potential of our cultural spaces,” said **D. Carroll Joynes**. “As the Harris celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we make this gift with an eye toward the future and recognition of the community effort needed to sustain Chicago’s robust creative ecosystem.”

The newly named Deering McCormick Hall is the centerpiece of the Harris Theater. It was designed by award-winning architect Thomas Beeby to fulfill the need for a modern, highly versatile performance venue in downtown Chicago that could serve as a shared home for previously itinerant midsize music and dance companies. As it enters its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, the hall now hosts nearly 200 events and performances each year and has been a home to more than 55 local Resident Companies and thousands of *Harris Theater Presents* guest artists from the city and around the globe.

To learn more about the Deering McCormick family’s legacy of support, please visit <https://www.harristheaterchicago.org/Deering-McCormick-Hall>.

### **About the Joan W. and Irving B. Harris Theater for Music and Dance**

The Harris Theater is Chicago’s home for music and dance, connecting diverse audiences with artists from across the city, the nation, and the world. An anchor institution of Millennium Park and the first multi-use performance venue built in downtown Chicago since 1929, the Harris was established in 2003 to create a much-needed home for the city’s vibrant community of midsize performing arts organizations. Today, the nonprofit Harris Theater features some of the most

diverse arts and culture offerings in the city, from its Chicago-based Resident Companies to the world-renowned visiting artists who perform on its stage through the *Harris Theater Presents* series.

The Harris represents a distinctive model for artistic excellence, collaboration, and creative symbiosis, making the performing arts relevant and accessible to the widest possible audience. Acting as both a home base for and a supportive partner of its Resident Companies, the Harris provides state-of-the-art performance space and ongoing support to nearly 30 Chicago-based performing arts organizations. Its 1,500-seat multi-use theater brings innovative and boundary-pushing productions from more than 32 countries across six continents to Chicago, creating unique opportunities for dialogue between Chicagoans and the world's leading artists, thinkers, and innovators. The organization's signature *Harris Theater Presents* series has featured acclaimed artists and ensembles including Batsheva Dance, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, English National Ballet, Joshua Bell, Joyce DiDonato, Angélique Kidjo, and Paris Opéra Ballet. The Theater's education and community engagement initiatives build bridges between artists and community members, providing master classes, artist talks, and free tickets for more than 30 partner organizations throughout Chicago.

To learn more about the Harris Theater, Chicago's home for music and dance in Millennium Park, visit [harristheaterchicago.org](http://harristheaterchicago.org) and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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