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## **HARRIS THEATER FOR MUSIC AND DANCE ANNOUNCES LEADERSHIP TRANSITION**

Board Appoints Michael McStraw as Interim CEO to Succeed Lori Dimun

CHICAGO, IL — May 8, 2026 – The Harris Theater for Music and Dance today announced that Lori Dimun, the Alexandra C. and John D. Nichols President and Chief Executive Officer, will step down to assume a role at the Chicago-based Richard H. Driehaus Foundation later this year. The Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees for the Harris Theater has unanimously appointed **Michael McStraw**, long-standing Trustee and current Executive Director of Chicago Dance History Project, as Interim President and CEO.

“We are deeply grateful for Lori Dimun’s fifteen years of dedicated service and leadership, including six years as CEO,” said **Peter M. Ellis**, Board Chair of The Harris Theater. “Under her leadership, the Harris Theater deepened its commitment to access, equity, and artistic excellence, presenting landmark performances including the Chicago premiere of Pina Bausch’s *The Rite of Spring* performed by École des Sables; dynamic performances of Akram Khan’s *Jungle Book* and *Creature* with English National Ballet; and the return of New York City Ballet to Chicago after nearly two decades. We wish Lori the absolute best in her next chapter.”

Michael McStraw brings a wealth of experience to the interim CEO role. As a Harris Theater trustee for nearly a decade and having previously served as Executive Director of Giordano Dance Chicago, one of the Harris Theater’s earliest Resident Companies, Michael is intimately familiar with the Harris Theater’s mission and strategic goals. A professional dancer, musician, arts administrator, mentor, dance educator, board member, and arts patron, Michael has been a positive and constant influence in the arts community for more than 40 years.

“I am honored to lead the Harris Theater during this transition,” said Michael McStraw. “Our commitment to being ‘Chicago’s primary residence for music and dance, connecting diverse audiences with outstanding artists from across the city, the nation, and the world’ remains our guiding principle and I look forward to working with our talented team to continue bringing transformative works — that you can’t find anywhere else — to the Harris Theater stage.”

“Michael McStraw is no stranger to the Harris Theater family, and we are thrilled to welcome him into this leadership role,” said **Claire O’Grady**, Vice Chair of Harris Theater. “His impressive catalogue of work and experience makes him the ideal leader to guide us through this transition. We are confident that under his leadership, the Harris Theater will build on the momentum from the phenomenal *Icons & Innovators Gala* and the 2025–26 season.”

On May 2, the Harris Theater hosted its *Icons and Innovators Gala*, honoring co-founder, **Joan Harris**, exceeding its goal, raising nearly \$1.4 million for the theater. The gala culminated in an exhilarating performance curated by **The Juilliard School** and directed by its President, **Damian Woetzel**, that welcomed some of the biggest names in music, dance, and drama — all affiliated with Juilliard — to the Harris stage. Heartfelt video tributes were offered during the performance, including notable messages from **President Barack Obama**, **Governor JB Pritzker**, and **Senator Dick Durbin** acknowledging Joan Harris as one of the performing arts community's most beloved and admired champions.

The Harris Theater Board of Trustees will launch a global search for a permanent successor. A period of transition between Dimun and McStaw is underway to ensure solid and careful continuity.

## [PRESS PHOTOS](#)

### **About the Harris Theater for Music and Dance**

The Harris Theater is Chicago's home for music and dance. 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 more than 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 Joyce DiDonato, Batsheva Dance, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, English National Ballet, Joshua Bell, Monteverdi Choir, Angélique Kidjo, and Paris Opera 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 50 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](#) and [Instagram](#).

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