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## **Mayor Bloomberg Cuts Ribbon Officially Inaugurating Theatre for a New Audience's First Home Polonsky Shakespeare Center**

BROOKLYN, October 22 – Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin, Economic Development Corporation President Kyle Kimball, and Theatre for a New Audience Founding Artistic Director Jeffrey Horowitz and Managing Director Dorothy Ryan today (October 22, 10:30am) cut a ribbon to officially inaugurate Theatre for a New Audience's new building in the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District at 262 Ashland Place between Lafayette Avenue and Fulton Street.

Built on a City-owned former parking lot in partnership with The City of New York and designed by Hugh Hardy and H3 Hardy Collaboration Architecture, **Theatre for a New Audience's** new home is the first classical theatre built in New York City in more than four decades.

The building is named **Polonsky Shakespeare Center** in recognition of a \$10 million gift from The Polonsky Foundation. After 34 years of being itinerant, Theatre for a New Audience now has a permanent home. The City of New York through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President has contributed \$34.4 million to the project.

“The marvelous Polonsky Shakespeare Center is a dream come true for Theatre for a New Audience, which for more than 30 years has won acclaim from critics and audiences alike for its extraordinary productions of the classics,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “We are pleased to be a part of this public private partnership, which gives the institution a permanent home in the heart of one our City's most exciting places for residents and audiences –the Downtown Brooklyn Cultural District.”

“Theatre for a New Audience is a modern classical theatre. We have been itinerant since 1979 and produce Shakespeare alongside other major authors for diverse audiences. Mayor Bloomberg’s Administration, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Marty Markowitz, Brooklyn Borough President, have been extraordinary partners,” said Mr. Horowitz. “The City’s investment of \$34.4 million has been critical in helping Theatre for a New Audience raise over \$30 million in support from individuals and other donors. The Theatre will now be able to support artists and build audiences for all of our programs as part this incredibly dynamic community.”

Theatre for a New Audience’s three to four annual productions, artist developmental initiatives, and programs in the New York City Public Schools are anticipated to draw 30,000 to 40,000 people annually. When not in use by Theatre for a New Audience, performance and rehearsal spaces will be made available at affordable rates to other performing arts and community groups. The project created 175 construction jobs. Theatre for a New Audience will have five full-time and more than 100 part-time and seasonal artists and employees working in the space each year, and plans to eventually move its administrative staff from Manhattan to nearby space in Brooklyn.

At its heart is the 299-seat Samuel H. Scripps Mainstage, named in recognition of a \$5 Million gift from the SHS Foundation. Inspired by the Cottesloe at London’s Royal National Theatre, the Scripps is the first stage to be built in New York for classical repertory since Lincoln Center’s 1965 Vivian Beaumont. Both intimate and epic, the Scripps combines an Elizabethan courtyard theatre and modern technology. It is extraordinarily flexible. Shakespeare can be presented on a thrust stage; another classic in-the-round or a modern drama within a proscenium. Thirty-five feet tall, nearly twice the height of many Off-Broadway spaces, the stage is also trapped, allowing entrances from below, an essential element of classical drama.

Immediately behind the Scripps is the Theodore C. Rogers 50-seat Studio for rehearsals and performances. It is named in honor of a \$2.5 million gift from Ted Rogers, who was Chairman of the Theatre’s Board, 1993 – 2012, and now Chairman of the Theatre’s Capital Campaign.

## The Theatre

The Theatre's \$69.1 Million Capital Campaign has only \$3.6 Million remaining to reach its goal. This final phase of the three-phase Campaign includes the now-completed construction of the Hugh Hardy-designed building, an endowment to support programs and operations, and funds to launch its inaugural season.

Support for Theatre for a New Audience's Polonsky Shakespeare Center has been provided through a public-private partnership. Public support for this project was provided by the City of New York through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York City Council, and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President. Leadership private support has been received from Joan and Robert Arnow, Marène Brody, the family of Elayne P. Bernstein, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Christensen III, The Educational Foundation of America, The Irving Harris Foundation, Audrey Heffernan Meyer and Danny Meyer, The National Endowment for the Humanities, The Polonsky Foundation, Theodore C. Rogers, SHS Foundation, The Starr Foundation, Michael Stranahan, and Monica Gerard-Sharp and Ali E. Wambold.

In addition to the recently-announced naming gift from The Polonsky Foundation, the Theatre recently received a \$1 Million endowment gift from the family of the late Elayne P. Bernstein, to endow the Theatre's education programs in the New York City Public Schools. In addition, individual members of the Board of Trustees of BAM have collectively made a generous gift of \$175,000 to the Theatre for a New Audience in order to welcome TFANA to the Cultural District and honor its opening of the Polonsky Shakespeare Center on November 2. The gift is an unrestricted gift, with the intention of assisting in the funding of the first year's productions.

In rehearsal now is the Theatre for a New Audience's inaugural production, **Julie Taymor's** staging of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare with original music by **Elliot Goldenthal** and a cast of 36 led by **Tina Benko** as Titania, **Max Casella** as Bottom, **David Harewood** as Oberon and **Kathryn Hunter** as Puck. Previews begin October 19 for an opening on November 2.

The season continues with **Arin Arbus**, Associate Artistic Director of Theatre for a New Audience, directing acclaimed British actor **Michael Pennington** in the title role in *King Lear*, beginning previews March 14. The season concludes with Eugène Ionesco's *The Killer* in a new translation by **Michael Feingold**, directed by **Darko Tresnjak** and featuring **Michael Shannon**.

Mr. Horowitz says, "We invited artists with whom we have ongoing relationships to celebrate the opening of our home. Julie Taymor and Elliot Goldenthal first worked at Theatre for a New Audience in 1984. Directors Arin Arbus and Darko Tresnjak have staged multiple productions with us. We produce Shakespeare alongside other major authors, so we are presenting a comedy and a tragedy by Shakespeare and a marvelous but rarely performed modern classic from the "Theatre of the Absurd" by Eugène Ionesco. As the staging of Shakespeare and other major plays is always changing, we have dreamt for decades of having a home with a dynamic space. The Scripps, inspired by the Royal National Theatre's Cottesloe, is uniquely flexible. It combines an intimate Elizabethan courtyard theatre with modern technology. The relationship between the stage and audience can be shaped into different configurations for each production."

In its first home, the Theatre will be launching The Studio under the direction of Arin Arbus, the Theatre's associate artistic director. Artists will be invited to be in residence to further their ongoing professional development through training, individual projects, commissioned plays and translations.

The Theatre created and runs the largest program in the New York City Public Schools to introduce students to Shakespeare, and has served more than 125,000 students since the program began in 1984. In its new home, the Theatre looks forward to building these programs.

Looking toward Theatre for a New Audience's 2014-2015 season, the Theatre will present *The Valley of Astonishment*, a theatrical research directed by **Peter Brook** and **Marie-Hélène Estienne**. It is a production of C.I.C.T./Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord with co-producers Theatre for a New Audience and Les Théâtres de la Ville du Luxembourg and associate

producers Théâtre d'Arras, Warwick Arts Center; Attiki Cultural Society, C.I.R.T., and the Young Vic Theatre.

The 2014-2015 season will continue with *Tamburlaine Parts I and II* by Christopher Marlowe, featuring **John Douglas Thompson** (Theatre for a New Audience's *Macbeth* and *Othello*; Obie Award-winner for *Othello*) and directed by **Michael Boyd**, former artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. *Tamburlaine* will be followed by **Juliet Rylance** in Thornton Wilder's version of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, directed by **Arin Arbus**.

Subscriptions for Theatre for a New Audience's inaugural season are \$147 for a 3-play inaugural season package and \$294 for a 6-play, two-season package, and are available by calling (212) 229-2819, ext. 10. Flex Passes are also available for \$208 and include four tickets to be used in any combination over the inaugural season. Single tickets go on sale in September. For more information or to subscribe online, please visit [www.tfana.org](http://www.tfana.org).

New Deal tickets for ages 30 and under or full-time students of any age are priced at \$20 each and can be purchased when single tickets go on sale.

Founded in 1979 by Jeffrey Horowitz, Theatre for a New Audience's mission is to develop and vitalize the performance and study of Shakespeare and classic drama. It produces Shakespeare alongside other major authors such as Harley Granville Barker, Edward Bond, Adrienne Kennedy and Wallace Shawn. It has played Off- and on Broadway and toured nationally and internationally.

In 2001, Theatre for a New Audience became the first American theatre invited to bring a production of Shakespeare to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), Stratford-upon-Avon. *Cymbeline*, directed by Bartlett Sher, premiered at the RSC; in 2007, Theatre for a New Audience was invited to return to the RSC with *The Merchant of Venice* starring F. Murray Abraham. In 2011, Mr. Abraham reprised his role as Shylock for a national tour.

The Theatre's productions have been honored with Tony, Obie, Drama Desk, Drama League, Callaway, Lortel and Audelco awards and nominations and reach an audience diverse in age, economics and cultural background.

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