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Cowles Center Names New Executive Director

Frank L. Sonntag Appointed to Leadership Post

Minneapolis, Minn., Feb. 10, 2011 – The Cowles Center for Dance and the Performing Arts has named Frank L. Sonntag to the position of Executive Director. Sonntag, former Managing Director of the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts in New York, joins the Cowles team as the new arts center gears up for its grand opening on Sept. 9, 2011.

“We are thrilled that Frank Sonntag has agreed to lead the Cowles Center into its inaugural year of operation,” said Kelley Lindquist, President of Artspace Projects, the Minneapolis nonprofit that is developing the Cowles. “We feel extremely fortunate to have secured an executive director with a comprehensive background in dance and the performing arts.”

Sonntag, who officially takes over on Feb. 21, brings impressive credentials to the Cowles Center. His career has encompassed all aspects of the performing arts, including management, programming, and fundraising. As Managing Director of the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, he reduced that institution’s operating debt by 50% and secured nearly \$1 million in capital funds. Before joining the Brooklyn institution in 2008, he served as Director of Development at the New York Foundation for the Arts and Director of Development at Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

Between 1995 and 2002 he was Executive Director of the Parsons Dance Foundation, the parent organization of Parsons Dance, the internationally renowned modern dance ensemble founded by David Parsons. In that capacity, he managed all business aspects of \$1.5 million organization, increased contributed revenues by 300 percent, increased net assets by 600 percent, and produced the company’s annual New York seasons.

Before joining the Parsons organization, Sonntag served as Executive Director of Dance St. Louis. He began his career as Director of Programs for the Kentucky Center for the Performing Arts in Louisville.

As Executive Director of the Cowles Center, Sonntag will oversee the operations of a new performing arts complex that will be the administrative and performing home of some 20 arts groups, including most of the Twin Cities’ leading professional dance companies, as well as an acclaimed Long Distance Learning program, now in its eighth season, that uses videoconference technology to provide interactive arts education experiences for public school students throughout Minnesota.

“The Twin Cities enjoy a remarkable national reputation, in part because of the extraordinary quality of its arts organizations,” said Sonntag. “To come here and work with the local dance community to create a showcase for dance that will not only be very beneficial for them, but provide a focal point for the art form here is an incredible opportunity.”

The Cowles Center “will strengthen those companies,” Sonntag said, “by providing them with a technically superior theater which will be their home in the Twin Cities. We will support their audience development and managerial efforts while providing a space that will enable the realization of their artistic aspirations at the highest possible level. I am honored and very excited to play such a major role in making the Cowles Center a reality.”

”Frank’s experience with leading dance companies reflects our priorities in directly connecting with and supporting local dance organizations and hosting residencies by some of the finest dance companies in the world,” said Gloria Sewell, Cowles Center Council Chair. “He has just the right combination of skills and engaging personality to launch and lead this institution.”

Running from September 2011 through June 2012, the Cowles Center’s inaugural season will present a diverse cross-section of the Twin Cities dance community as well as music and theater events. Details will be announced in April.

The Cowles Center for Dance and Performing Arts

The Cowles Center for Dance and Performing Arts, the Twin Cities’ newest arts center and the flagship for dance in Minnesota, is a three-building complex containing administrative, rehearsal, education, and performance space.

Centrally located in the heart of downtown Minneapolis, the Cowles Center includes Hennepin Center for the Arts, home to 20 leading dance and performing arts organizations as well as exceptional rehearsal facilities and two of the Twin Cities’ leading dance schools. The Cowles Center will serve the greater Twin Cities by providing a high-profile venue in downtown Minneapolis for showcasing the remarkable depth and breadth of dance that exists in Minnesota.

The comprehensive complex consists of three buildings: two historic structures – the 1910 Shubert Theater and the 1888 Hennepin Center for the Arts – plus a new Great Hall that connects the historic buildings and serves as the complex’s nerve center.

Formerly known as the Minnesota Shubert Performing Arts and Education Center, the facility was renamed last year to honor Minneapolis artists and arts patrons Sage and John Cowles’ lifelong commitment to the arts, philanthropy, and dance.

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