

# PRESS RELEASE

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DATE: February 25, 2020

## STUDIO THEATRE ANNOUNCES \$20 MILLION CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO RENOVATE ITS LOGAN CIRCLE COMPLEX

**Studio Theatre** is embarking on the **\$20 million Open Studio capital campaign**, which includes a **\$14.5 million renovation** of its multi-theatre complex in Washington, DC. The aim of Open Studio is to **enhance artistic innovation at the Theatre, forge more robust community connections, and increase operational efficiency**. The focal point of the renovations will be a completely transformed Metheny Theatre capable of flexible, fully immersive staging environments and outfitted with state-of-the-art production technology. Plans also include more public gathering space throughout the building, including a first floor café with outdoor seating, and Studio's first dedicated rehearsal space. Renovations will occur in phases beginning in July 2020 and will be completed in spring 2021. Studio will continue to operate out of its complex at 1501 14th Street NW during the renovation process.

“When we put down roots in Logan Circle, we couldn't have imagined how drastically our neighborhood would change. For us to continue serving our community and being a home for the best contemporary theatre in Washington, we need to do the same,” said Artistic Director **David Muse**. “We've always thought about renovations in the context of the whole building being an expression of our values. So, while artistically the renewed potential of the Metheny is exciting, we gave the same consideration to our public spaces—to creating a place that everyone, not just patrons, is welcome.”

“We're fortunate to have one of the most unique buildings on one of the busiest streets in Washington, but our physical space doesn't match the energy and creativity that exists here. That will change with Open Studio,” said Managing Director **Rebecca Ende Lichtenberg**. “The project addresses critical needs of an aging building and will serve as a reintroduction to Studio. Once completed, the Metheny will be one the city's most exciting, versatile theatre spaces, and our public amenities will make Studio a place where our neighbors want to gather all day, not just when they're coming to see a show.”

Studio has occupied space at 14th and P Streets NW, now one of Washington, DC's busiest nightlife corridors, since 1978. The complex was last renovated in 2004, when Studio expanded into two adjoining buildings and added two additional theatre spaces.

Partners on the project are architects Hickok Cole, theatrical and acoustic consultants Charcoalblue, builder Forrester Construction, and project managers JM Zell Partners. Papadopoulos Properties is assisting with the search for a food and beverage partner for Studio's planned café space.

Studio has secured \$11.6 million toward the project during a silent round of fundraising. Guiding the project on the Open Studio steering committee are Co-Chairs and Studio board members Susan Butler and Amy Weinberg, as well as Theo Adamstein, Carl and Rise Cole, John Guggenmos, John and Meg

Hauge, Virginia A. McArthur and E.C. Michael Higgins, and Craig Pascal and Victor Shargai (*in memoriam*). The following individuals have made significant contributions to Open Studio and are pillars of the campaign: Esthy and James Adler, Sari Hornstein, Susan and Dixon Butler, Albert Lauber and Craig Hoffman, Teresa and Dan Schwartz, Amy Weinberg and Norbert Hornstein, Marc Albert and Stephen Tschida, The Cafritz Foundation, and Share Fund. The project received early foundational support with a \$3 million gift from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

## **Artistic Innovation**

As the most flexible space capable of a transformation into immersive environments, Stage 4 has been home to some of Studio's most dynamic and groundbreaking projects: a dive bar (*Murder Ballad*, 2015), a church basement (*Hand to God*, 2015), a psychological test lab (*The Effect*, 2017), and a soccer field (*The Wolves*, 2018). A complete renovation of Studio's Metheny Theatre will bring the excitement of Stage 4 and its promise for innovative productions and design down to the first floor in a space that is larger, highly visible, and more easily accessible.

The redesigned Metheny Theatre will be capable of myriad configurations, from thrust to end-stage, in the round, cabaret, and traverse, creating a completely customizable experience tailored to individual productions. This will distinguish the Metheny from the Milton and Mead Theatres, both of which are equipped with fixed, thrust stages. Seating capacity will increase to approximately 215 people, depending on configuration, and more than 300 people standing—nearly double the capacity of Stage 4 and more aligned with Studio's other theatre spaces.

Outdated production technology and theatre infrastructure will be brought up to date, providing a new full tension wire grid to support new lighting, sound, and projection technology; much-needed audiovisual improvements; and improved acoustical separation—both from outside the building and between the theaters themselves.

Open Studio will also create the Theatre's first-ever dedicated rehearsal space, totaling 2,034 square feet and equipped with a fully sprung floor, pipe grid, theatrical lighting capacity, and dedicated storage space, all overlooking 14th Street. Currently, creative teams and production staff share theatre space, rotating between set construction and rehearsals simultaneously; this new rehearsal room will allow creative teams to work uninterrupted, maximizing their time and energy.

Changes made to the building, both in its artistic and public spaces, will showcase and enhance its rich history and materiality. Bare ceilings will show cement slabs and pipes overhead; historical factory windows will be preserved; firebrick will be uncovered; and the building's underpinnings and I-beams will be visible, in a nod to its past.

Additionally, the campaign includes an investment in Studio's fund for artistic innovation, a mechanism that provides annual support for artistic research and development. Created to exist in perpetuity, this long-term fund will bolster the resources needed to regularly commission new plays, extend commissions to ensembles and directors, and take risks on ambitious projects.

## **Community Connections**

While Studio's mission calls out the importance of fostering a more connected community, the Theatre's current fortress-like exterior and rarely activated public spaces present a barrier to deeper engagement. Seeking a more welcoming and inviting visitor experience, Studio will make significant changes to the façade of its building, as well as its public spaces.

The renovation will visually unite the three buildings that comprise Studio's complex and create a branded street presence featuring a revamped entrance on 14th Street, sporting a bright yellow paint treatment and large marquee sign, as well as an 18-foot-high Toblerone sign at the corner of bustling 14th and P Streets NW, new street-level poster windows, and a mural showcasing Studio's history in Logan Circle. The Theatre's original marquee, located on the P Street side of the complex and currently in disrepair, will be removed to enhance wayfinding from the street. The Box Office will relocate to just inside the Theatre's main entrance, allowing guests to locate patron and ticketing services more easily. Also serving as a concierge desk, the new Box Office will ensure that visitors can easily find help, ask questions, and navigate the building.

Lobby spaces will be refreshed, embracing the openness of the building's original industrial architecture. A new, dedicated public lounge will be added to the first floor, gender-inclusive restrooms will be added to the second and third floors, and a terrace will be built overlooking 14th Street. Additionally, the Mead Bar area, which initially served as the primary entrance and lobby space for Studio, will be re-envisioned as a 1,100-square-foot café, featuring a local, ABC-licensed vendor, that spills out onto P Street and operates throughout the day. Studio will work with the selected food and beverage partner on buildout of the space.

The campaign will also enable Studio to invest more robustly in community outreach initiatives through its first full-time Community Engagement Manager. Creating this position allows for new opportunities in program creation, partnership building, and audience engagement alongside Studio's current education, engagement, and workforce development programs.

### **Operational Efficiency**

Open Studio will also address physical, human, and financial resources that will sustain the Theatre's momentum into the future.

The renovation further ensures long-term stability by improving systems and infrastructure throughout the building that have not been sufficiently modernized in over 15 years. Most notably, currently failing HVAC systems will be upgraded, optimizing them to operate silently and efficiently in Studio's intimate theatre spaces. Changes like upgrading the electrical infrastructure to run LED lighting and replacing bathroom fixtures with those that restrict water usage will also improve the operating efficiencies of Studio's historic buildings and reduce both environmental impact and annual expenses.

Studio will also extend building improvements into the spaces that its staff use every day. Despite substantial growth of Studio's staff size, the offices have not expanded in 14 years. This renovation will expand office space to 5,300 square feet, adding additional workstations for interns and Apprentices, future staff, and visiting artists.

Additionally, through the quiet phase of the Open Studio campaign, Studio retired a \$1.25 million mortgage on Apprentice housing, eliminating all pre-existing debt and sending Studio off into the future free of any long-term debt.

### **ABOUT STUDIO THEATRE**

Studio Theatre is Washington's premier venue for contemporary theatre, "where local audiences will find today's edgiest playwrights" (*Variety*). One of the most respected midsized theatres in the country, Studio produces exceptional contemporary drama in deliberately intimate spaces. Drawing inspiration from great ensembles—where people work together with a spirit of generosity and professional rigor—Studio brings characteristic thoughtfulness and daring to its work onstage and off, through its new work incubator and engagement, education, and workforce training initiatives. Studio serves nearly 75,000 people each year,

including more than 1,000 youth and young adults through community engagement initiatives. Founded in 1978, the quality of Studio's work has been recognized by sustained community support, as well as 72 Helen Hayes Awards for excellence in professional theatre.

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