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THE COWLES CENTER:

One chapter concludes for now but hope and support for artists remains

Minneapolis, MN. (January 31, 2024) -- The Cowles Center, a hub for the dance community on Hennepin Avenue since its establishment, announces that it will end operations of its Goodale Theater and discontinue presenting dance as of March 31st, 2024, effectively ending its planned season two months early. All staff will depart the organization by April but are extremely committed to supporting the final performances and making them a positive experience. Despite a persistent commitment over the past 14 years to support local artists and efforts to forge a sustainable operational model, The Cowles Center has more recently faced financial challenges. These challenges were exacerbated by the economic impact of a global pandemic, leading to lower ticket sales, funding. Furthermore, The Cowles Center's largest donor and administrative partner, Artspace is unable to provide the sustaining the support it has given The Cowles Center in the past. Tremendous private fundraising efforts have taken place which have allowed the preservation of the season through March. Furthermore, while there have been discussions with potential partners to step into the operations of the Goodale and Cowles programming, no solid agreements have yet come to fruition. The Cowles Center and Artspace remain dedicated to the communities they serve. The McKnight Fellowships for Dancers and Choreographers will continue, though the administrative home of the program is still being discussed. The Cowles Center's renowned education programs that occur in schools and through distance learning, serving nearly 6,000 students annually will continue through the end of the school year. Our community engagement program serving early career artists in space residencies will run through May. Additionally, the Hennepin Center for the Arts, which is owned by Artspace, will continue to be a home to dance studio rentals, the TEK BOX Theater, an important rental theater for artists to present their own work, and commercial and creative leasing as it has been since 1978.

Impacts to the 2024 Spring Season:

Three dance productions slated for April and May by James Sewell Ballet, BRKFST Dance Company, and Ragamala Dance Company will be affected by the season ending March 31st. While Sewell Ballet and Ragamala face cancellations at the Goodale Theater, BRKFST Dance Company was set to be co-presented with Northrop. The Cowles Center, Northrop, and BRKFST are working together to determine if the production could be postponed or presented in a different format by Northrop alone. Ticket purchasers to the affected productions will be contacted with their options. In all three cases, Artspace and The Cowles Center remain committed to mitigating financial impacts to the artists and plan to still pay out the artist fees and box office splits as if the artists had completed their performances.

"This is a heartbreaking convergence of all circumstances, but our goal is to support these artists as equitably as possible. Nothing replaces their ability to showcase their live performance, but we hope that lessening the financial burden will help them look towards the future" said Cowles Center Co-Directors Joseph Bingham and Jessi Fett in a mutual statement.

The Goodale Theater will still operate in February and March and will celebrate the final four performances of the shortened spring season, including three dance productions and a community rental.

- **Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theatre I** February 10th and 11th In an enchanting performance brought to the stage, flamenco and hip hop unite to adapt the 12th century Persian poem of the same name. This dark, moving, and humorous story will bring together hip hop artist Darrius Strong along with original music performed by international flamenco composer and guitarist Juanito Pascual.

- **Final Goodale Rental: Sound of Gospel I** February 17th and 18th Directed by Javeeta Steele and presented by 2nd Chance Outreach, the performance is an Anthology depicting the rich history and evolution of Gospel music.
- **Crash Dance Productions I** March 2nd and 3rd Growing tension stacks onto high drama as the visceral ensemble blindly selects who among them undertakes the role of The Con. When identities collide, the 13 unique personalities clash as a story of hierarchy, vulnerability, and influence develops in real-time. Anyone could be the villain. No one knows who it will be. And every performance will be different.
- **MERGE In March: Mathew Janczewski's ARENA DANCES & Taja Will I** March 23rd and 24th A club-like atmosphere of daring ecstasy, collective revolt, and personal reclamations. This year's MERGE pairs Mathew Janczewski's high-intensity, super-charged movements with Taja Will's nuanced, emotive, and improvisational boldness. Their collaboration will culminate in an evening of performance which includes ARENA repertory favorite, Judged House, and the premiere of a haunting new solo by Will. The commission for the new work created for this program is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

Background: The Cowles Center's Role and Partnership

The Cowles Center has played a pivotal role by:

- Providing supportive programs and spaces for dancers, including free or below-market-rate offices, studios, and stages.
- Fostering new work with programs like Generating Room and MERGE.
- Subsidizing marketing and production support for performances.
- Offering practical guidance on health care, tax filing, and work samples.
- Serving as the administrative home for the McKnight Fellowships for Choreographers & Dancers.

In recent years, the Goodale Theater has hosted **11-14** dance productions annually, carefully curated to reflect artistic innovation and diversity. Since 2020, at least 50% of programming has featured BIPOC artists or BIPOC-led companies.

The Cowles Center's legacy is built upon a decades-long partnership with Artspace, which originally developed the organization when it moved the historic Shubert Theater and connected it to the Hennepin Center for the Arts. In addition to raising millions of dollars for the move and renovation of the Shubert, and starting an impactful distance learning program, Artspace has invested on average \$500,000 annually from its general operating funds to support The Cowles Center, along with staff and other in-kind support.

"Throughout the years, Artspace's investment in the arts on Hennepin Avenue has been an example of our commitment to the enduring power of creative community. Although The Cowles Center's current chapter on this historic avenue is drawing to a close earlier than we hoped, our belief in the arts as a cornerstone of our society remains unwavering. Artspace is prepared to assist in this transition and continues to be dedicated to nurturing the arts on Hennepin Avenue as operator of Hennepin Center for the Arts." said Kelley Lindquist, President of Artspace.

The pandemic's onset in 2020 was a catalyst for unprecedented challenges for the performing arts, an industry reliant on live, physical interaction. The Cowles Center, alongside many arts organizations, faced a critical loss in earned revenue and philanthropic support. A Dance/USA survey highlighted this sector-wide plight, noting a more than 75% loss in ticket revenues relative to pre-COVID seasons.

The Cowles Center encourages the community to join in celebrating the arts during this time of change by attending February and March performances in the Goodale Theater, supporting artists whose performances have been canceled, and continuing to attend performances in the TEK BOX in the Hennepin Center for the Arts.

ABOUT THE COWLES CENTER

The Cowles Center is a dance and performing arts hub that promotes movement and growth for artists through supportive programs and spaces; engages audiences through dynamic performances; and educates learners of all ages through robust and inclusive education initiatives. For more information visit www.thecowlescenter.org

ABOUT ARTSPACE

Artspace is America's leading nonprofit real estate developer for the arts. We deliver critical infrastructure for the creative workforce: affordable artist housing, workforce housing, artist studios, arts centers, and commercial space for arts-friendly businesses. For more information visit www.artspace.org.

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