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For Immediate Release

CENTER THEATRE GROUP MOURNS THE LOSS OF GORDON DAVIDSON

Center Theatre Group mourns the loss of its Founding Artistic Director, Gordon Davidson, who passed away Sunday, October 2, 2016. Plans for a memorial event will be announced in the coming days.

“Gordon Davidson was one of the most renowned and respected artistic directors in regional theatre, in large part because he was one of the original founders of the entire concept,” said Center Theatre Group Artistic Director, Michael Ritchie. “He led Center Theatre Group for 38 years and produced one of the broadest arrays of plays, particularly new plays, of any theatre in the country. Without his prolific vision for Center Theatre Group 50 years ago, the theatrical landscape in Los Angeles, and the country, would be very different. He remains one of theatre’s great leaders and I was proud to call him a mentor, friend and colleague.”

From 1967 to 2005 Gordon Davidson was the Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum at the Music Center of Los Angeles. In addition to his role at the Taper, Davidson was the Producing Director of the Center Theatre Group/Ahmanson Theatre for 15 years, and the Artistic Director of the inaugural season (2004-2005) at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. In addition to redefining theatre in Southern California, he was one of the founders of the regional theatre movement and had a permanent impact on theatre throughout the country and the world.

Gordon guided hundreds of productions to the Taper stage while overseeing numerous special projects sponsored by the Taper. This work and his direction of many of the Taper plays were acclaimed both in Los Angeles and New York, garnering the Taper a Tony Award for theatrical excellence in 1977.

Under Gordon, the Taper was distinguished by having two of its plays “The Kentucky Cycle” and “Angels in America” (Part One – “Millennium Approaches”) receive in consecutive years the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, the first time for plays produced outside of New York. “Angels in America,” when subsequently produced on Broadway, also received in consecutive years two Tony Awards for Best Play, for Part One and Part Two – “Perestroika,” respectively. In fact, in 1994 when “Perestroika” won the Tony

Award, three of the four plays nominated for Best Play were Taper plays (with "The Kentucky Cycle" and "Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992" joining "Perestroika").

Davidson's direction of "Children of a Lesser God" (which received two Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Awards, including Distinguished Production) brought him a Tony Award nomination (one of four nominations for the play) and a New York Drama Desk Award nomination (one of five). "Children of a Lesser God" won three 1980 Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Actor and Best Actress.

In 1977, Davidson won a Tony Award for his direction of "The Shadow Box," which also won the Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award for Best Play for its author, Michael Cristofer. In that same season, Davidson was the recipient of an Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Director for "The Shadow Box" at the Morosco Theatre and "Savages" at the Hudson Guild Theatre, and an Obie for his direction of "Savages." Earlier he had received two Margo Jones Awards for his work in encouraging new plays and playwrights.

Davidson also staged The Phoenix Theatre productions of "Murderous Angels" and "The Trial of the Catonsville Nine," winning an Obie Award and a Tony Award nomination for the latter play, and he was honored with a New York Drama Desk Award for "In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer," staged at Lincoln Center. "The Shadow Box," "Savages," "Murderous Angels," "Oppenheimer" and "Catonsville" premiered at the Taper under Davidson's direction, whose other credits there include "The Devils," "Who's Happy Now?," "Rosebloom," "Henry IV, Part I," "Mass," "Hamlet," "Too Much Johnson," "And Where She Stops Nobody Knows," "Getting Out," "Black Angels," "Terra Nova," "Children of a Lesser God," "The Lady and the Clarinet," "Chekhov in Yalta," "Tales From Hollywood," "The Hands of Its Enemy," "Traveler in the Dark," "The Real Thing," "Ghetto," "Dutch Landscape," "Unfinished Stories," "Nine Armenians," "QED" and "Stuff Happens."

For the Ahmanson Theatre, he directed a revival of Stephen Sondheim's "A Little Night Music" at the Doolittle Theatre, and after supervising the remodeling of the Ahmanson Theatre at the Music Center, he staged the 30th anniversary production of "Candide" in November 1995 as the first production in the new Ahmanson.

He directed the first play presented in the new Kirk Douglas Theatre – the world premiere of "A Perfect Wedding."

The Taper was the co-producer of the theatre portion of the Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles in the summer of 1984. Davidson directed the West Coast premiere of Arthur Miller's "The American Clock" for the Taper's 1984 Repertory Festival, which was a participant in the Olympic Arts Festival.

For television, he directed "It's the Willingness" by Marsha Norman for the PBS Visions series. He also directed the feature film version of "Catonsville" and the television version of "Who's Happy Now?" for the NET Theatre in America series. In 1976 he directed "Otello" for the Israel Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting. In

1985, Davidson directed the world premiere of Thea Musgrave's "Harriet, The Woman Called Moses" for the Virginia Opera Association. His staging of Leonard Bernstein's "Mass" opened the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and he directed "A Midsummer's Night's Dream" for the LA Opera.

In Los Angeles, Davidson was honored by the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle with a Special Award for his outstanding contributions to American playwrights and three Distinguished Direction Awards. He also received a LADCC Award for the Taper's New Theatre For Now In the Works festival. He was given The Governor's Award for the Arts in 1990 honoring his contributions to the performing arts in California, and in 1997 the Founders League of the Music Center of Los Angeles County honored him for 30 years of artistic leadership. He was also awarded the 1993 Casting Society of America's Lifetime Achievement Award, the Honorary Gold Card membership into IATSE, Local 33, and the "Mr. Abbott" Award for Lifetime Achievement, among many other awards.

In January 2000 Davidson was inducted in to the Theater Hall of Fame on Broadway.

Davidson was appointed to the National Council on the Arts by President Clinton and was a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He served as president of Theatre Communications Group and the League of Resident Theatres, and was a board member of several arts organizations including the Non-Traditional Casting Project. He received honorary doctorates from Brooklyn College, California Institute of the Arts and Claremont University Center.

He regularly served on panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, as an artistic advisor for the Fund for New American Plays, and he was a member of the advisory boards for the Cornell Center for the Performing Arts and the Jewish Theatre Association.

Gordon was born on May 7, 1933, and is survived by his wife, Judi; their children, Adam and Rachel; and five granddaughters.

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October 3, 2016