

For immediate release

**MICHAEL RITCHIE TO RETIRE AS ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF
CENTER THEATRE GROUP ON DECEMBER 31, 2021**

**Ritchie's Tenure as Only the Second Artistic Director of Los Angeles'
Largest Nonprofit Theatre Organization Will Have Spanned 17 Years**

Michael Ritchie has announced that he will retire as Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group on December 31, 2021. Having taken over the position from Founding Artistic Director Gordon Davidson in January, 2005, for more than 16 years, Ritchie has led one of the country's largest nonprofit regional theatres, producing and presenting 266 productions—which included 49 world premieres, four Pulitzer Prize finalists and led to 59 Tony Award nominations—while programming the Ahmanson Theatre and Mark Taper Forum in downtown Los Angeles at The Music Center and the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City.

"It has been an honor working at Center Theatre Group over the past 16 years and I'm extremely proud of what our organization has accomplished during that time," said Ritchie. "Especially over the past 15 months, when we were forced to shut down due to COVID-19, our staff, Board of Directors, and entire community have rallied around the organization in a collective desire to continue our educational programming, deliver artistic work through the Digital Stage and bring groundbreaking theatre back to our stages in Los Angeles. This critical period also gave me time to contemplate my future as the leader of this extraordinary theatre company.

"After some reflection, I feel it best that I retire as Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group at the end of this year, following our celebratory reopening of the Ahmanson Theatre. I want to give the organization an opportunity to seek out a future vision and make space for new leadership to be successful. When our industry fully reopens, it will certainly be time for a rebirth as arts leaders dream up a new era of American theatre. Those responsible to carry out that new vision should be in position as soon as possible.

"With so much vital attention and focus being placed on the future of theatre leadership across our field, I recognize the need for new and diverse voices. I've had the incredible opportunity to run major regional theatres for the past 25 years and have always believed that our art form has the power to transform society. I'm absolutely certain that Center Theatre Group's next Artistic Director will expand that vision in ways that will enrich Los Angeles and the American canon of theatre."

Throughout his time as Artistic Director, Ritchie produced celebrated world premieres including the musicals "Soft Power" (Pulitzer finalist), "13" and "Sleeping Beauty Wakes," and

the plays “Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo” (a Pulitzer Prize finalist which moved to Broadway), “Water & Power,” “Yellow Face” (Pulitzer finalist) and “Marjorie Prime” (Pulitzer finalist). He also produced many notable productions, including “Black Rider,” “Clybourne Park” (which moved to Broadway), “Red,” the revival of “Zoot Suit” (which also had its world premiere with Center Theatre Group) and most recently “What the Constitution Means to Me.”

Under Ritchie’s leadership, Center Theatre Group also premiered such celebrated musicals as “The Drowsy Chaperone” and “Curtains” (both of which moved to Broadway and received a total of 21 Tony Award nominations, more nominations at the time for any other theatre company outside of New York), a reimagined production of “Pippin” with Deaf West Theatre, as well as “Leap of Faith,” “Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson” and “9 to 5: The Musical,” all of which moved to Broadway.

In addition, Ritchie inaugurated Center Theatre Group’s Artistic Development program designed to foster the creation of new works and to nurture the field’s existing and next generation of theatre artists. Through this program, Center Theatre Group formed many long-standing relationships with leading artists. Recent Associate Artists include Sir Matthew Bourne, Danai Gurira, Casey Nicholaw, Phylicia Rashad, Anna D. Shapiro and Paula Vogel. More recently, Ritchie formed the CTG Creative Collective, which includes Luis Alfaro, Culture Clash, Elephant Room, Lars Jan, Daniel Alexander Jones, Miwa Matreyek, Dominique Morisseau and Kristina Wong. Ritchie also launched the Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative in 2017, establishing individual co-commissioning partnerships with Chicago’s Goodman Theatre and New York’s Second Stage Theater as well as London’s Royal Court Theatre and National Theatre to develop multiple works over the next decade from artists including Jon Robin Baitz, Will Eno, Young Jean Lee, Lynn Nottage, and Paula Vogel.

Center Theatre Group recently announced that the Ahmanson Theatre will resume in-person productions on November 30, 2021 after its unprecedented closure since March of 2020 due to COVID-19. Ritchie’s final Ahmanson season will open with Jack Thorne and Matthew Warchus’ acclaimed “A Christmas Carol” and includes “Everybody’s Talking About Jamie,” “The Lehman Trilogy,” “The Prom,” “Hadestown,” “Dear Evan Hansen,” “Rodger’s and Hammerstein’s Oklahoma!” and “Come From Away.” He is also working with the artistic team to complete programming for his final seasons at the Mark Taper Forum and Kirk Douglas Theatre, which will be announced in the coming months.

“I’ve had the distinct pleasure of working closely with Michael through many pivotal moments in Center Theatre Group’s rich history,” said Kiki Ramos Gindler, President of the Board of Directors since 2015. “Michael has been instrumental in keeping Center Theatre Group thriving for nearly two decades—from his stewardship of the Kirk Douglas Theatre—which he has led for nearly its entire existence—to the expansion of our education and community partnerships programming, and of course leading our sensational 50th anniversary celebration a few years ago. I have been moved by his devotion to Center Theatre Group’s artists and creating a home for them in Los Angeles as well as his focus on supporting the next generation of artists. On behalf of the Board, I wish to thank Michael for his dedication to creating an enriching home for playwrights, pushing us to take bold and exciting risks on the stage and caring for one of Los Angeles’ vital cultural organizations. He will leave Center Theatre Group in a strong position as we begin to plan for a new defining era.”

Last year, Ritchie joined with leaders from across the organization and its Board of Directors in issuing a series of commitments to change as a direct response to calls for the theatre industry, including Center Theatre Group, to hold itself accountable for long-standing systemic inequities, specifically for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color) colleagues and artists. This ongoing work has included approving a dedicated budget for equity, diversity and inclusion programming, establishing a staff-led accountability team and related working groups, undertaking staff and Board workshops as well as creating a standing Board committee dedicated to equity, diversity, inclusion, access and anti-racism.

“While my time working alongside Michael has been brief and marked by this unforeseen global pandemic, I’m so grateful for his partnership, especially over the past 15 months as we navigated such a difficult time,” said Meghan Pressman, Managing Director/CEO. “Center Theatre Group has a long and significant history as one of this country’s leading regional theatres. I look forward to working with Michael and our remarkable staff in bringing theatre back to Los Angeles audiences as we build the foundation for the city’s next visionary artistic leader.”

Center Theatre Group expects to launch an international search for its next Artistic Director later this summer. The organization is committed to ensuring this search process aligns with its core values and commitment to equity, diversity, access and inclusion. An announcement on the search firm and timeline will be made shortly.

Ritchie’s professional career in the theatre began in 1979 when he ran a follow spot at New York’s Village Gate for a production of “One Mo’ Time.” The following season, he became a production stage manager on the off-Broadway production of “Forty-Deuce” at the Perry Street Theatre before moving to Broadway in 1981 for “Candida” starring Joanne Woodward in the title role at Circle in the Square Theatre. Over the next 15 years, he worked as a stage manager for more than 50 shows on and off-Broadway, including productions at Lincoln Center Theater, Circle in the Square, Circle Rep, the New York Shakespeare Festival, Playwrights Horizons, City Center and the National Actors’ Theatre.

In 1996, Ritchie became Producer of the Williamstown Theatre Festival. Under his leadership, the theatre’s mission successfully evolved toward a diverse repertory of new plays, American premieres, major revivals and rediscoveries of American classics, and the development and presentation of new works by Eric Bogosian, Alfred Uhry, Cheryl West, Donald Margulies, Albert Innaurato and Eduardo Machado. Among the many accolades during Ritchie’s tenure, Williamstown Theatre Festival received the 2002 Regional Theatre Tony Award.

Ritchie was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, on October 17, 1957, and attended Assumption College. He has been married to actress Kate Burton since 1985 and they have two children, a son and daughter, Morgan and Charlotte.

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