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**JOAN W. AND IRVING B. HARRIS COMMIT \$39 MILLION
TO MUSIC AND DANCE THEATER CHICAGO**

CHICAGO — In what is believed to be the largest single monetary commitment ever to a performing arts organization in Chicago, Joan W. and Irving B. Harris are making a \$15 million gift and a \$24 million construction loan to the Music and Dance Theater Chicago. Of the \$15 million gift, \$11 million is a challenge grant, requiring the theater to raise one and one-half times that amount, or \$16.5 million, within two years.

The construction loan will ensure that construction of the 1,500-seat theater in downtown Millennium Park will begin on February 1. With a February 1 construction start, the Music and Dance Theater is scheduled to open in November 2003.

“It has long been my dream to create a really great performance space for Chicago’s wonderfully diverse small- and mid-size music, dance and performing arts companies because that is where the creative energy is most palpable,” said Joan W. Harris, president of the Music and Dance Theater board of trustees. “We are pleased that both our gift and the construction loan will be the catalyst for construction to start,” she said.

“Everyone associated with the Music and Dance Theater is thrilled that construction is beginning,” said Sandra P. Guthman, chair of the Music and Dance Theater board of trustees. “While our fund-raising efforts have reached another crescendo, we still must raise \$18 million more. We are confident that many other donors who love the performing arts will respond generously to that challenge.”

To date, the Music and Dance Theater Chicago has raised \$44.5 million of the \$62.7 million combined cost of the project and an endowment fund, leaving \$18 million yet to be raised. “Meeting the challenge will obviously be the key to our fundraising over the next two years,” Guthman said.

The lakefront theater will be the new, state-of-the-art home for 12 of Chicago’s finest music and dance companies who joined the Music and Dance Theater effort in 1994 and 1995 and have helped with its planning. Performance dates will also be available in the theater for other companies.

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Music and Dance Theater Chicago

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“One mission for the new theater is to be inclusive, so we welcome other performance companies who would like to perform in the theater,” said Joyce A. Moffatt, general manager of the Music and Dance Theater. “By making the theater available to a wide range of groups, we will create a national model for the use of a shared performance venue,” she said.

The 12 companies that represent a special range of diversity and will call the Music and Dance Theater Chicago home are:

- Ballet Chicago
- Chicago Opera Theater
- Chicago Sinfonietta
- Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
- Hubbard Street Dance Chicago
- Joffrey Ballet of Chicago
- Lyric Opera Center for American Artists
- Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum
- Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago
- Music of the Baroque
- Old Town School of Folk Music
- Performing Arts Chicago

The theater’s design, by the architectural firm of Hammond Beeby Rupert Ainge, Inc., features a simple, elegant glass and steel lobby on upper Randolph Drive east of Michigan Avenue. The heart of the theater, including its 1,500-seat auditorium, will be built underground. A lower lobby will give patrons direct access to the adjoining underground Millennium Park garage.

The Music and Dance Theater will be a showpiece at the north end of Millennium Park, and will extend Chicago’s vibrant performing arts district east to Lake Michigan, and link it with the museum campus and many other cultural institutions along Michigan Avenue. While located in Millennium Park, the theater is privately funded through contributions and grants from individuals, foundations and corporations. It will be built on land leased from the City of Chicago.

The theater represents years of planning by Chicago’s philanthropic, arts, business and government leaders. The Chicago Community Trust has played a leading role in making the Music and Dance Theater a reality. In the early 1990s, The Trust brought members of Chicago’s philanthropic and business communities to the project. “This has been a long and winding road. Yet the need for the theater remains because there are always mid-size, local groups who need affordable, accessible and consistently available performance space to grow. The Trust still believes deeply in this mission,” said Sarah Solotaroff, vice president of programs at The Trust.

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Others who have committed \$1 million or more to support this civic project include:

- Anonymous
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Ann Lurie
- The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Family Foundation
- The Elizabeth Morse Charitable and Genius Charitable Trusts
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- Sara Lee Foundation
- Harrison I. and Lois Steans

The Harrises were among the first to identify the need and to begin planning 20 years ago for a performance space for mid-size companies. “It’s time to do this. The companies are real, and they need a good venue. My belief is that with a good place to perform, the audiences for these groups will grow. This is a great boon for the city,” said Irving B. Harris. Of the long planning process, Harris said, “Now I know how Moses felt. I hope that I get to see the actual theater and don’t have to look at it as the promised land forever.”

The Harris family is well known nationally for its philanthropy. The Harrises have founded, and/or support, many organizations. Among them: The Irving B. Harris School for Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago; Yale Child Study Center at Yale University; the Ounce of Prevention Fund in Chicago; the Erikson Institute for Child Development in Chicago; and the Aspen Music Festival and School in Aspen, Colo.