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Jill Evans La Penna
James Juliano
SHOUT Marketing & Media Relations
jill@shoutchicago.com
312.533.9119
james@shoutchicago.com
773.852.0506

**AUDITORIUM THEATRE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BRETT BATTERSON ACCEPTS
POSITION AT MEMPHIS DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

Batterson Assumes the Position of President and Chief Executive Officer of Memphis' Historic
Orpheum Theatre and the new Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education.
He has served as Executive Director of the Auditorium Theatre since 2004

CHICAGO – The **Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University** announces Executive Director **Brett Batterson** has accepted the role of president and chief executive officer of the Memphis Development Foundation (MDF). The foundation operates The Orpheum, consisting of the Orpheum Theatre and the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education. The Orpheum has been the long time host for Broadway touring productions in Memphis (Tennessee), as well as concerts and other performances. Batterson will continue with the Auditorium Theatre until the conclusion of the theatre's Billy Strayhorn Festival in November. The Executive Committee of the Auditorium Theatre Board of Directors will be announcing a transition plan in the near future.

"It is with a very heavy heart that I leave the Auditorium and the city of Chicago. During my time as executive director, I have had so many 'once in a lifetime experiences' both in the theatre and in the time I have spent with the patrons and donors who support the theatre. These precious memories made this decision very difficult to make," said Batterson. "I move to Memphis knowing there is much I can do there for the Foundation, and I look forward to utilizing my knowledge and experiences gained here to lead them into their future."

One of the first tasks Batterson assumed when arriving at the Auditorium Theatre in 2004 was to reestablish the Auditorium as a leader in the Chicago arts community following the resolution of the conflict between the Auditorium Theatre Council and Roosevelt University. Batterson, during his tenure as executive director, oversaw a 13-fold increase in annual development income, expanded annual programming in terms of number of events, variety of events and size and diversity of audience - culminating with the Auditorium hosting 414 events with a total audience of 299,000 in its recent 125th Anniversary Season. He also dedicated much of his time to the development of relationships on a local and national scale leading to the Auditorium's current position as one of the most respected theatres and performing arts organizations in the country. The "Made in Chicago" Series, which enables local arts organizations an opportunity to perform on the historic stage, also strengthened its reputation as the theatre played host to River North Dance Chicago, Giordano Dance Chicago, Thodos Dance Chicago and the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, among others.

Additional accomplishments during Batterson's term include the Auditorium hosting the 2015 National Football League Draft, seen by more than 50 million television viewers; the introduction and production of the now Chicago tradition, *Too Hot to Handel: The Jazz-Gospel Messiah*, celebrating its 11th year this January; the 125th anniversary celebration during the 2014-15 Season; accepting, on behalf of the Auditorium, the inaugural Fifth Star Award presented by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events; the creation of *Hands Together, Heart to Art*, an award-winning, one-of-a-kind arts camp for children who have experienced the death of a parent ; the successful staging of the first grand opera performances at the Auditorium in decades with 2008's co-production of *Margaret Garner*; the creation of three successful city-wide festivals: The Miles Davis Festival, The MUSIC+MOVEMENT Festival, and this year's Billy Strayhorn Festival and overseeing the founding of an affiliated for-profit company (Chicago's Landmark Stage Ventures) that invests in Broadway theatrical productions.

Executive Director Brett Batterson to be leaving the Auditorium Theatre in November, as he assumes new role at Memphis Development Foundation, page 2 of 2

Numerous capital improvements have been completed while Batterson was executive director including construction of new wash rooms, creation of a donor lounge, new concessions sales areas, restoration of two lobbies, installation of the facility's first elevator and opening the Katten/Landau Studio, a rehearsal space and black box theatre.

"We wish Brett all the best in his new role and are very grateful for his dedication as a tireless advocate of the Auditorium and its mission for the last 11 years," added Charles R. Gardner, chairman of the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University Board of Directors. "The Auditorium is in a better place than it was a decade ago due to Brett's leadership. We will miss him and know he will do great things in Memphis."

"I am very pleased that Brett Batterson has been selected to become the new leader of the Memphis Development Foundation," stated Andy Taylor, chair of the MDF Board. "The selection of Brett comes after a lengthy, in-depth local and nationwide search and extensive interview process. Brett meets or exceeds every job description requirement and has the personality to inspire all that meet him. I believe that he is clearly the right leader for the MDF as it looks to continue the Orpheum's success and the beginning of the impact on arts and education of the newly opened Halloran Centre."

About Brett Batterson

Immediately prior to joining the Auditorium, Batterson spent ten years at Michigan Opera Theatre in Detroit, serving as that company's chief operating officer. In his first career as a scenic designer/technical director, he spent 15 years working at such theatres as The Guthrie Theatre, Minnesota Opera Company, Chattanooga Theatre Centre, Theatre Midland, Chattanooga Symphony and Opera Association, Chattanooga Ballet, Minnesota Jazz Dance Company, Utah Shakespearean Festival, Idaho Summer Repertory Theatre, The Nashville Network, The Grand Ole Opry, Beverly Dinner Playhouse and Tulane Center Stage.

Batterson is active in numerous civic and trade organizations and serves on the boards of The League of Chicago Theatres and Illinois Presenter's Network. He also serves on the advisory boards of Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theatre, Kalapryia Center for Indian Performing Arts, Chicago Jazz Philharmonic and Giordano Dance Chicago. The state of Michigan, as well as the Detroit City Council and Mayor's Office have recognized him for his contributions to Michigan's cultural life and in 2009, he received a State Farm Insurance Company "Embrace Life" Award as the creator of *Hands Together*, *Heart to Art*. Chicago's *NewCity* recognized him in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015 as one of the 50 most influential people in Chicago theatre.

A self-described "Midwestern raised New Yorker with strong Southern influences," he holds a B.A. from Augsburg College and a M.F.A. from Tulane University. He is married to author Veronica Randolph Batterson. They have two grown daughters.

About Memphis Development Foundation

The Orpheum, consisting of the Orpheum Theatre and the Halloran Centre for Performing Arts & Education, is operated by the Memphis Development Foundation, a non-profit organization that seeks to provide quality, diverse entertainment and education programming to the Memphis region while preserving and improving the historic Orpheum Theatre and the Orpheum's role in downtown Memphis development.

About Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University

The Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, located at 50 E. Congress Pkwy, is an Illinois, not-for-profit organization committed to presenting the finest in international, cultural, community and educational programming to Chicago, and to the continued restoration and preservation of the National Historic Landmark Auditorium Theatre. In September of 2014, the Auditorium Theatre was awarded the inaugural Fifth Star Award by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. On December 9, 2014, the Auditorium Theatre celebrated its 125th Birthday with a proclamation from the City of Chicago declaring it "Auditorium Theatre Day."

The Auditorium Theatre is generously supported by the MacArthur Foundation, the Illinois Arts Council, the Sage Foundation, and the Palmer House Hilton. For more information about programming, volunteer and donor opportunities or theatre tours, call (312) 341-2310 or visit AuditoriumTheatre.org.