



## Statement

# NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE AND LUMINATO FESTIVAL TORONTO MOURN THE LOSS OF PETER HERRNDORF (1940-2023)

**FEBRUARY 18, 2023 – OTTAWA (Canada)** – Canada’s National Arts Centre (NAC) and Luminato Festival Toronto are mourning the loss of Peter A. Herrndorf, C.C., O. Ont., one of Canada’s greatest cultural leaders. He was 82 years-old. Peter Herrndorf was the NAC’s visionary former President and CEO who served from 1999 to 2018, and was a founding Board Director of Luminato Festival Toronto from 2006, and Chair from 2018 to the present.

For nearly 19 years, Peter led the National Arts Centre, Canada’s largest performing arts centre, during a period of extraordinary growth and the expansion of the NAC’s national role. Under his leadership, the NAC created many significant initiatives to help the NAC become a catalyst for performance, creation and learning across Canada. Among the many accomplishments during his tenure, he was instrumental in establishing the National Arts Centre Foundation, NAC Indigenous Theatre, leading the architectural and production renewal project that modernized the NAC building, and founding the *National Creation Fund*, which has enabled dozens of ambitious new Canadian creations to succeed on the national and international stage.

The NAC’s flags will fly at half-mast all of February in honour of Peter Herrndorf.

“It is an understatement to say that Peter Herrndorf’s tenure was transformative,” said Guy Pratte, Chair of the NAC’s Board of Trustees. “He was a visionary who had his feet firmly planted on Canadian soil. And that explains why his dreams of making the NAC a more national and more inclusive centre for the performing arts became a reality: his magical human touch transformed aspiration into realisation.”

“Peter Herrndorf had an enormous impact on the performing arts in Canada,” said NAC President and CEO Christopher Deacon. “He fundamentally believed that the National Arts Centre belongs to all Canadians, and that it must reach out beyond its home on Elgin Street to Canadian artists, arts organizations, and communities in every part of the country. For nearly 19 years, that belief informed his vision. He was also unfailingly kind and interested in each and every person – artists, staff and audience. It was an honour and a privilege to work for him, and his NAC family will miss him profoundly. We send our deepest condolences to Peter’s wife Eva Czigler, his children Katherine and Matthew, and the entire Herrndorf family.”

Peter’s contributions to the National Arts Centre and arts in Canada were both enormous and longstanding. With Brian Robertson, he created the Governor General Performing Arts Awards in 1992. He served as Chair of Canadian Stage and the Stratford Festival.

For more details about Peter Herrndorf’s extraordinary career in journalism and broadcasting, and his extensive voluntary work in arts and culture, [click here](#) to read his full biography.

## LUMINATO FESTIVAL TORONTO

Peter Herrndorf joined the Board of Luminato Festival Toronto as a founding Director in November 2006, and assumed the role of Chair in September 2018. Peter was an advocate and ardent supporter of the festival, believing strongly in Luminato’s role as a major international arts festival for Toronto, and a convenor and catalyst for big, bold contemporary works of art. As an impassioned Canadian arts leader, Peter was committed to bringing the best of the global stage to

Toronto, and to sharing Canadian artistry with the world. During his tenure as Board Director then Chair, the organization grew from strength to strength: hosting 83 world premieres, 47 Canadian premieres, commissioned 117 works of art – 84 of which were Canadian.

Peter's leadership allowed the organization to reach nearly 11 million audience members across 16 Festivals, and showcased over 17,000 artists. To everyone at Luminato, and so many in Canada's arts community, Peter was a leader, mentor, advisor, and friend; his counsel cannot be replaced, and he will be dearly missed every day.

"As Chair of Luminato, Peter Herrndorf saw the potential of a truly national and international multi-disciplinary arts festival based in Toronto, but playing on the world stage," said Celia Smith, CEO, Luminato Festival Toronto. "He was an extraordinarily brilliant, persuasive, generous and relentless champion of artists and arts leaders in this country. I had the great good fortune to work closely with Peter, both early in my career and most recently during our time together at Luminato. He has been instrumental in the careers of so many of us across this country; a great Canadian of his generation. We will honour his legacy as we step forward into this new world without him."

"I have had the privilege of knowing Peter most of my adult life and he was simply one of the finest Canadians I ever knew," said Tony Gagliano, Co-Founder of Luminato Festival Toronto. "Peter touched the lives of many through his passion and love for the arts and artists and he will be remembered forever for his unmatched contribution to creativity in this country."

"We are deeply saddened to mourn the loss of a great Canadian, a champion of the arts and an unparalleled creative force," said Douglas Knight C.M., Chair & CEO of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards.

## **PETER HERRNDORF AT THE NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE**

A highly respected and influential executive in journalism and broadcasting, Peter Herrndorf arrived at the NAC in 1999, taking the reins after a prolonged period of turmoil. He quickly established a clear sense of direction for the organization. He led the NAC to re-embrace its national role, made youth and education a key pillar of the organization, put excitement back on its stages by committing to artistic excellence, and dramatically increased its earned revenues. He re-energized the staff, hired superb new leaders to senior management, and recruited exceptional artistic leadership teams that were among the finest in North America, giving them the freedom to produce great work on the NAC's stage, and on stages across the country. The NAC Orchestra resumed national and international tours, the theatre and dance departments re-engaged with companies across Canada, the NAC supported the creation of new work, and more work by Indigenous artists appeared on the stage.

In 2003, Herrndorf created the national, biennial Scene festivals, which showcased thousands of artists from every region of Canada. They culminated with Canada Scene (2017), which featured more than 1,000 artists from across the country. In 2011, he created NAC Presents, a concert series that showcased hundreds of emerging and established Canadian singer-songwriters. Herrndorf created the NAC Foundation, which has since raised more than \$170 million from the private sector to fund major national and international initiatives for Canadian artists. Under his leadership, the NAC also established the National Creation Fund, which has now invested \$11.7 million in 77 ambitious and compelling new works in music, theatre, dance, and interdisciplinary arts. Fuelled entirely by donors, the Fund provides Canadian artists with the additional time, space, and resources they need to create great work.

Herrndorf led Canada's largest performing arts organization through a architectural and production renewal project that modernized the NAC building, re-orienting the NAC to the city with a magnificent new entrance on Elgin Street, adding accessible new public spaces, and bringing the NAC's performance halls and production facilities back to international standards. It was unveiled by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales on July 1, 2017.

One of Herrndorf's most significant achievements was the creation of NAC Indigenous Theatre, widely recognized as a watershed moment for Indigenous performing arts and the country and celebrated by Indigenous artists as an important step towards reconciliation.

During his tenure, he recruited exceptional artistic leaders to the NAC, including French Theatre Artistic Directors Denis Marleau, Wajdi Mouawad and Brigitte Haentjens; English Theatre Artistic Directors Peter Hinton and Jillian Keiley; Indigenous Theatre Artistic Director Kevin Loring; Music Director Alexander Shelley; Executive Dance Producer Cathy Levy; NAC Presents Producer Simone Deneau and Heather Gibson, Executive Producer of Popular Music and Variety; Scene festival Producers Kari Cullen and Heather Moore; and Governor General's Performing Arts Producers Brian Robertson, Kari Cullen, and Virginia Thompson.

Peter Herrndorf served on more than 60 boards. His many awards and honours include 10 honorary degrees. In 2017, he was promoted to Companion of the Order of Canada, in recognition of his extraordinary service to the country.

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