

Steppenwolf Names Brooke Flanagan as New Executive Director

Flanagan to be First Woman Executive Director in Steppenwolf's 45-Year History

CHICAGO (May 22, 2020) – Steppenwolf Theatre Company announced today that **Brooke Flanagan**, who previously worked at Steppenwolf for seven years, will return to the organization in the role of Executive Director and will become the first woman to hold the title in Steppenwolf's 45-year history. Current Executive Director **David Schmitz**, who has worked at Steppenwolf since 2005 and been Executive Director since 2015, is stepping down to serve Oregon Shakespeare Festival as Executive Director. Schmitz will stay on at Steppenwolf through mid-July 2020 allowing for a seamless transition.

Steppenwolf Board Chair **Eric Lefkofsky** shares, "We are truly fortunate to have Brooke Flanagan return to lead the Steppenwolf family in partnership with Anna into Steppenwolf's new era. Her unparalleled experience in the cultural sector and strong ties to our company make her without question the best person for the job."

"Brooke is an extraordinary leader whose impact on Chicago's arts ecosystem continues to be tremendous," shares Artistic Director **Anna D. Shapiro**. "We are grateful to be able to continue to commit to our city and community by inviting a leader who has a deep love and understanding of Steppenwolf, its mission and its values. Brooke will only fortify our ability to stay connected, active and innovative during this unprecedented time of social distancing, enabling us to be stronger than ever when live theater resumes. I can't wait to work alongside her."

Brooke Flanagan shares, "What an honor to return to Steppenwolf as the company's first female Executive Director. There is certainly a weight of responsibility in following in the footsteps of many wise souls before me who created this national treasure, and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to partner with Anna Shapiro as we work to realize the long-held vision of the Building on Excellence expansion campaign."

As I look ahead to my partnership with Anna, I recognize both the responsibility and privilege of serving as a steward for the artistic home of Steppenwolf's prolific ensemble; torch bearer for the company's capacity to innovate through a theatrical lens; advocate for the institution's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion;

and champion for service as a cultural citizen to the City of Chicago during this unprecedented time of pandemic.

The vision for our expanded campus on Halsted Street—one that will add a new platform for intimate storytelling that reflects the diversity of Chicago and expands our capacity to connect with young adults and teachers through our education programs—is needed now, more than ever. On the other side of this time of social distancing, neighborhood theaters like Steppenwolf will play a pivotal role in uniting our communities through art.” Flanagan continues on to say, “Congratulations to David on his exciting next step at OSF.”

On her partnership with David Schmitz, **Anna D. Shapiro** shares, “Steppenwolf has been the true beneficiary of David’s commitment and care. He has strongly positioned us for the future, and we wish him all the best with this next chapter.”

During David Schmitz’s tenure as Executive Director, he and Anna D. Shapiro increased Steppenwolf’s artistic programming, expanded education outreach and co-produced with Center Theatre Group and The National Theatre of Great Britain. Schmitz negotiated the acquisition and led the remodel of 1700 N Halsted; and with Shapiro opened Front Bar: Coffee and Drinks and the 1700 Theatre as part of the company’s multi-year expansion campaign. He led Steppenwolf’s role as founder of Enrich Chicago and was an initial participant in the Theatre Communications Group’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Institute.

Steppenwolf Executive Director **David Schmitz** comments, “It’s impossible to put into words how much Steppenwolf means to me—I am deeply proud of what we have achieved at Steppenwolf over the past 15 years. It has been my honor to have served Steppenwolf’s ensemble of artists in support of their vision as well as Chicago’s arts community. With my decision to start the next chapter of my career at OSF, I couldn’t think of a better person to take the reins than Brooke Flanagan, who is a good friend and colleague.”

About Brooke Flanagan

Brooke Flanagan currently serves as Managing Director at Chicago Shakespeare Theater (CST), leading fundraising and external affairs programs and serving as a strategic partner to the Board of Directors, Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson. Since joining the leadership team in late 2010, she has increased the Tony Award-winning Theater’s annual contributed income by 50%. In 2012, she launched the historic Our City, Our Shakespeare endowment and capital campaign, which successfully closed above goal in 2018 after raising \$61.6

million. Key programs developed in partnership with theater leadership during her tenure include: a rebranding and positioning campaign; Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks; Shakespeare 400 Chicago; and The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare.

Prior to joining Chicago Shakespeare, Brooke Flanagan spent seven seasons at Steppenwolf Theatre as Director of Major Gifts. She was the Associate Director of Development for Ravinia Festival from 2000-2004, and also held key positions at League of Chicago Theatres and Santa Fe Opera.

During Brooke Flanagan's time as Board Chair for Arts Alliance Illinois (2016 - present), the organization successfully advocated for a 30% increase in state funding for the Illinois Arts Council, won a historic \$50 million capital arts infrastructure bill, and most recently launched the Arts for Illinois Relief Fund in response to the impact of Covid-19 on the arts sector. Prior to Chairing the Board, she led the Membership and Sustainability Committee and Annual Luncheon (2015, 2016). Brooke is a former board member of the Chicago Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. She frequently serves as a featured panelist at national conferences and workshops, co-chaired the AFP Chicago (2006, 2007) and National Alliance for Musical Theatre (2012) Conferences. She received the Nashville Mayor's Acts of Excellence Award (1994) for direction of *The Holocaust—a Gathering of Stones*. She holds her BFA in Theatre from the College of Santa Fe and resides in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood with her husband and three children, who proudly attend a Chicago Public School.

Virtual Programming at Steppenwolf

During the past several weeks, Steppenwolf has kept the 'virtual lights' on with several creative initiatives including launching its ensemble-led, interview-style candid **podcast, *Half Hour***, featuring ensemble members Audrey Francis, Caroline Neff, Cliff Chamberlain and Glenn Davis as the hosts. **Steppenwolf Education** moved its work online with free virtual teen and educator workshops each week since March welcoming thousands of participants from across the globe. **Members have received exclusive and unique virtual content** featuring the acclaimed ensemble and the company hosted a successful virtual soirée on May 9, 2020. For more information, visit [steppenwolf.org](https://www.steppenwolf.org).

Steppenwolf Theatre Company is the nation's premier ensemble theatre. Formed by a collective of actors in 1976, the ensemble members are among the top actors, directors and playwrights in the field. Powerful productions from *Balm in Gilead* and *August: Osage County to Downstate*—and accolades that include the National Medal

of Arts and 12 Tony Awards—have made the theatre legendary. Steppenwolf produces hundreds of performances and events annually in its three spaces: the 515-seat Downstairs Theatre, the 299-seat Upstairs Theatre and the 80-seat 1700 Theatre. Artistic programming includes a main stage season; a two-play Steppenwolf for Young Adults season; Visiting Company engagements; and LookOut, a multi-genre performances series. Education initiatives include the nationally recognized work of Steppenwolf for Young Adults, which engages 20,000 participants annually from Chicago’s diverse communities; the esteemed School at Steppenwolf; and Professional Leadership Programs for arts administration training. While firmly grounded in the Chicago community, more than 40 original Steppenwolf productions have enjoyed success both nationally and internationally, including Broadway, Off Broadway, London, Sydney, Galway and Dublin. Anna D. Shapiro is the Artistic Director and David Schmitz is the Executive Director. Eric Lefkofsky is Chair of Steppenwolf’s Board of Trustees.

Steppenwolf’s Mission: Steppenwolf strives to create thrilling, courageous and provocative art in a thoughtful and inclusive environment. We succeed when we disrupt your routine with experiences that spark curiosity, empathy and joy. We invite you to join our ensemble as we navigate, together, our complex world. For additional information, visit steppenwolf.org, facebook.com/steppenwolftheatre, twitter.com/steppenwolfthtr and instagram.com/steppenwolfthtr.

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