



# League of Historic American Theatres

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Mayo Performing Arts Center and San Diego's Telford honored at League of Historic American Theatres Annual Conference**

**(July 20, 2016) CHICAGO** – The 1937 **Mayo Performing Arts Center (MPAC)** of Morristown, NJ took home the *2016 Outstanding Historic Theatre Award* during the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, the largest gathering of historic theatre professionals in the nation. The conference took place in Chicago and was attended by nearly 300 historic theatre operators and service providers from across the country. Retired San Diego Theatres CEO, **Don Telford**, was honored with the 2016 Outstanding Individual Contribution Award, honoring his near 40-year career in the field of venue management.

*“The Mayo Performing Arts Center beat out an impressive list of nominations to claim the award this year,”* said **Ken Stein**, LHAT President and CEO, as he presented the award to MPAC President and CEO, **Allison Larena**. The Outstanding Historic Theatre Award is given each year by LHAT to a historic theatre that has demonstrated excellence in community impact, quality of programs and services, and quality of physical restoration.

MPAC first opened in 1937 as The Community Theatre and was considered the crown jewel of movie mogul Walter Reade's chain of movie theatres. By the 1980's, however, it had fallen into disrepair and sat idle for nearly a decade before being rescued in 1994 by the efforts of over 300 community volunteers who managed to get it operational again. *“There are a great number of historic theatres doing amazing work every day across the county,”* Stein continued. *“The community of Morristown should be very proud of MPAC's accomplishments.”* Former winners include the Fabulous Fox in Atlanta, New York City Center and Playhouse Square in Cleveland to name a few.

Founding President & CEO of San Diego Theatres Inc. (SDT), Don Telford, received the 2016 Outstanding Individual Contribution Award. This award annually recognizes an individual who

demonstrates vision, dedication, selflessness and excellence through his or her contribution to historic theatres and their communities.

SDT is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation responsible for the stewardship of publicly-owned performing arts venues, the San Diego Civic Theatre and the historic Balboa Theatre. Telford was an advocate and strategic partner in the City Redevelopment Agency's planning, design and execution of the 1924 Balboa Theatre's restoration and renovation. He led SDT's launch of the Balboa's management, marketing, and operation upon its reopening in 2008, after being shuttered for over twenty years. That project received numerous local, regional and national awards, and continues to garner national media coverage.

Earlier in his career, Telford assisted in the transition of San Diego's historic 1928 Fox Theatre from a movie palace to a performing arts venue to host touring Broadway productions, national ballet companies, comedians and concerts. The Fox Theatre is now Copley Symphony Hall, and touring Broadway productions and most dance and concerts are now hosted at the SDT-managed San Diego Civic Theatre.

Telford served on the LHAT Board for eight years, including two years as Board President. He gave a moving acceptance speech recounting his four-decade career in the performing arts industry, his LHAT service, and the inspirational professionals he met along the way. *"As part of the Balboa restoration project, our joining the League was one of the best investments we made,"* remarked Telford, *"and it has paid off immeasurably in the years since."*

The awards were presented at the League's 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, which took place in Chicago, July 17-20, with more than 280 people attending, including representatives from nearly 150 historic theatres throughout the country and 70 service providers and supplier firms, as well as invited guests.

The League of Historic American Theatres was founded in 1976 by 42 theatres and has more than 900 theatre and service provider members across the United States and Canada. A nonprofit organization, the League's mission is to champion the preservation, restoration and operation of historic theatres.

Information is at [www.lhat.org](http://www.lhat.org) or contact Ken Stein, President and CEO, [kstein@lhat.org](mailto:kstein@lhat.org).

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