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Press Release

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LEAGUE OF HISTORIC AMERICAN THEATRES RECOGNIZES RESTORATION OF FULTON OPERA HOUSE AND THEATRE CHAMPION MAUREEN PATTON IN 2003 AWARDS CEREMONY

MIAMI, FLORIDA (July 26, 2003) – The reclamation and restoration of the 150-year old **Fulton Opera House** in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and the life-long contributions of theatre champion and community activist **Maureen Patton** of Galveston, Texas, were honored in the **2003 Awards Program** of **The League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT)**. Celebrating excellence in the rescue, restoration, and operations of historic theatres, the awards were presented at a reception at the 27th Annual Conference of LHAT in Miami, Florida.

The **Fulton Opera House** received the **Award for Outstanding Restoration Project**, demonstrating the highest standards of excellence in its vision, execution of the physical restoration, and community service. **Deidre Simmons**, a former member of the LHAT Board of Directors, accepted the award on behalf of the Fulton Opera House. Ms. Simmons was the guiding force behind the restoration of the landmark theatre and the director of its capital campaign.

Presenting the award to Ms. Simmons at the ceremony, LHAT Board of Director Larry Capo, Ford Farewell Mills & Gatsch, Architects, LLC (Princeton, NJ) noted that the Fulton Opera House survived through the years because it is “not just here, but here as a vibrant and vital part of its community,” and attributed the lasting value of the Fulton Opera House to, “vision, and dedication to a strong unwavering mission of quality. This project is a shining example for all of us. It is about the physical restoration but more importantly it is about the people, the performers, the community and their exposure to experiences that enrich their souls.”

Maureen Patton received the **Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution**, recognizing the remarkable efforts, generosity, meritorious service, and professional expertise of an individual, and the commitment and passion brought to bear on a historic theatre project. A consummate professional and charter member and former president of the Board of Directors of LHAT, Ms. Patton was the first executive director of the Grand 1894 Opera House, dedicated to its successful restoration and operation, a savvy presenter who brought cultural vitality to her Houston-Galveston, Texas area.

In her presentation of the award to Ms. Patton, Fellow former LHAT Board member and close colleague, Dr. Rosa F. Stolz, RFS Management Strategies, Ltd. (Columbus, OH), noted, “ Commitment...passion...professional expertise...charity and generosity ...In recognizing Maureen Patton with the League’s first Outstanding Individual Contribution Award, the jury has selected someone whose work exemplifies these qualities in great measure,” and concluded, “Her integrity, creativity, ability to listen, sense of humor, and familial warmth have endeared her to us all – and by extension, she has made The Grand and Galveston a treasured part of our lives. It is altogether fitting and appropriate that we – as members of the community of national historic theatre professionals, whom Maureen has inspired with her leadership and enhanced with her service – honor her achievements and contributions with the Outstanding Individual Contribution Award.”

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The Fulton Opera House: A Shining Example of Revitalization

Designed by architect Samuel Sloan in 1852, the Fulton Opera House has been called “the most beautiful little temple of art in the United States” and the “Queen of the Roadhouses.” Originally the gift of a local merchant to serve as a theatre, lecture hall, and meeting place for the community, the theatre has remained the pride of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, surviving 150 years of vaudeville and film, abolitionism and economics reflective of the colorful history of American theatre.

A designated National Historic Landmark and charter theatre member of LHAT, the Fulton Opera House exemplifies how the restoration of our historic theatres can make a positive and lasting impact on their communities and enrich the lives of the people in them.

In 1963, the Fulton Opera House was purchased by a not-for-profit organization in order to create a major cultural organization in the theatre. It produces seven main stage professional productions a year that challenge and enthrall its diverse audience. In addition, it is the stage for the community’s Youtheatre Program, Young Audiences Touring Program, and Academy of Theatre and ranks as one of the leading Regional Theatres in the country.

The most recent renovation, the fourth in the theatre’s history, began in 1988 and was completed in 1994. The \$9.5 million project provided upgrades for contemporary technology and accessibility, improved seating and backstage support, created a new addition and expanded wing and front of house space, and restored the historic finishes of the beautiful Italianate décor. The design team included Edward Francis, architect of William Kessler and Associates of Detroit (now Kessler | Francis | Cardoza Architects), Roger Morgan, theatre consultant of Sachs Morgan Studios of New York City, acoustical consultant Klepper Marshall King, and restoration of decorative painting by Jeff Greene of EverGreene Painting Studios of New York City, seating by Irwin Seating Company and draperies by I. Weiss and Sons of Long Island City, NY.

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**MAUREEN PATTON:
THE “GRANDEST” OF
INDIVIDUALS**

Maureen Patton began her work with the Grand 1894 Opera House in 1973, when she served as a volunteer board member on the Galveston Arts Council, leading the programming and education committees. In 1973, the Arts Council purchased the then derelict historic opera house on Galveston Island, and Ms. Patton began to play a key role in restoring the theatre, raising funds, programming special events, and sparking community interest through her passionate lobbying and networking efforts. In 1981, Maureen became the theatre’s first Executive Director, coordinating the work of the restoration, successfully completed in 1986.

Under Maureen Patton’s exceptional leadership, the Grand has continued to flourish and impact its community. She created a top management and operations team and dedicated staff, and cultivated an inspired community volunteer corps.

Maureen Patton has been an indefatigable volunteer, fund-raiser and community activist for education and collaboration. Her broad contributions include serving as a board member of the Galveston Rotary Club, the Railroad Museum, the island’s Outdoor Musicals, and the Historic Downtown/Strand Partnership. She has held numerous leadership positions including Chairman of the Galveston Independent School District’s Fine Arts Advisory Task Force and Chairman of the city’s Commission for the Arts.

She has been honored with prestigious awards from the Historic Downtown Strand Partnership, the Rotary Club of Galveston, and the Galveston Historic Society. In 2002, she was elected to the Downtown Renaissance Hall of Fame, and in March 2003, received the 2003 Community Enrichment Award with her husband Larry Patton.

Contributing to the theatre industry on the regional and national level, she is a member of the governing board of the Southwest Presenters, and has been a member of the Arts Review Panels for both the Texas Commission on the Arts and the Mid-America Arts Alliance. She served on the Board Trustees of the League of Historic American Theatres from 1986 to 2000, was a former President of LHAT, Chairperson of the Conference Committee. She has participated on restoration, operations, and presenting panels and in strategic planning initiatives; planned national conferences; consulted to other theatre groups; and spoken with scores of regional and national media about the issues facing the industry and American communities.

As a member of the International Society of Arts Presenters and the Association of Arts Presenters, Maureen has represented the views of historic theatre operators and rehabilitation professionals to these organizations. She has served as a management and programming consultant on fifteen theatre projects in four states.

The 2003 LHAT Awards Program Jury and Award

The distinguished 2003 Awards Jury was chosen by the League of Historic American Theatres and included chairperson and prominent architect **Graham Gund, FAIA**, President of Graham Gund Architects; **Robert Orchard**, co-founder of the prestigious American Repertory Theatre with Robert Brustein and Director of the Loeb Drama Center at Harvard University; and **Thomas J. Martin**, founder and President of ConsultEcon, Inc., economic development consultants for the recreation, entertainment and visitor attraction industries.

The LHAT Award takes the form of a statuette designed by EverGreene Painting Studios, Inc. of New York, New York and cast in --[more info].

The League of Historic American Theatres is a non-profit membership organization devoted to the rescue, restoration, and reuse of historic theatres. LHAT is located in Baltimore, Maryland, with web site www.lhat.org. Founded in 1976, the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) is an international not-for-profit membership association, whose mission is to advocate, support, promote and facilitate the rescue, restoration, reuse and sustainability of historic theatres and other heritage buildings used for cultural assembly and endeavors. LHAT is a network of people who appreciate the cultural and architectural heritage of historic theatres and who work locally and nationally to rehabilitate them to serve communities throughout North America and abroad. Members of the League collaborate with one another, share their expertise and provide inspiration, information and a broad perspective to those working in the field of historic preservation.

Members of the League include theatre operators and managers, preservation activists, architects, structural engineers, design and acoustical consultants, urban planners, restorationists (painters, plasterers, metalworkers), vendors (seats, marquees, stage equipment), booking and artist management firms, fund raising consultants, and many other types of service providers and members of the general public who serve or are interested in historic theatres.

LHAT is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Membership in LHAT is open to all organizations, businesses and individuals interested in historic theatres. The League is 100% supported by membership dues, revenues generated from its programs and services and the generous support of private donors and sponsors.

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