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Press Release

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***LEAGUE OF HISTORIC AMERICAN THEATRES RECOGNIZES RESTORATION OF HAWAII
THEATRE CENTER AND THEATRE ADVOCATE TONY RIVENBARK
IN 2005 AWARDS CEREMONY***

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI (July 23, 2005) – The reclamation and restoration of the 83-year old **Hawaii Theatre Center** in Honolulu, Hawaii, and the life-long contributions of theatre advocate, actor and director **Tony Rivenbark**, Executive Director of the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. in Wilmington, North Carolina, were honored in the *2005 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 29th Annual Conference of LHAT in Kansas City, Missouri.

The **Hawaii Theatre Center** received the *Award for Outstanding Historic Theatre*, demonstrating the highest standards of excellence in its vision, execution, and community service. **Sarah M. Richards**, President of Hawaii Theatre Center, accepted the award on behalf of the theatre. Ms. Richards was the first staff member of Hawaii Theatre Center and instrumental in the restoration of the landmark theatre and the public/private partnership that made it possible. **Dr. Rosa Stolz**, RFS Management Strategies, Ltd., of Columbus, Ohio, presented the award to the Hawaii Theatre Center.

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The jury selected the Hawaii Theatre Center for its “impressive strength in all criteria categories,” the impact of program service, diversity of engagement, its economic benefit to its community and artists, excellence of management and governance, and the quality of its planning and execution of the physical restoration of the theatre.”

The jury “applauds the theatre’s public/private partnership for fiscal support of the preservation effort,” and the theatre’s “engagement with the community for fund-raising, sweat equity to clean out the theatre, educational programming, and diversity of entertainment.” The jury also noted the impact of the partnership in stimulating the economic and cultural revitalization of its area, and in saving the last remaining movie palace of its kind in Hawaii.

Tony Rivenbark 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. Executive director of the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. in Wilmington, North Carolina, Tony has led the growth and expansion of Thalian Hall from a little-used facility into Wilmington’s successful center for the arts. Author and frequent lecturer on historic theatre renovation, Tony also served on the Board of Directors of the League of Historic American Theatres for a number of years. **Maureen M. Patton**, Executive Director of The Grand 1894 Opera House in Galveston, Texas and the first recipient of the LHAT Individual Award, presented the award.

In presenting Tony Rivenbark with the League’s *Outstanding Individual Contribution Award*, Maureen Patton noted that Tony “remains the heart and driving passion of all that Thalian Hall does and means to the community and the state of North Carolina.” She commented on Tony Rivenbark’s “meritorious service,” his “commitment to the field of historic theatres and their dynamic use,” his role on the board of LHAT that “showcased his commitment to history,” and his “example of what our histories must mean to us as the context within which we continue to do our work.” She concluded, “This award speaks to commitment, passion, professional expertise, charity and generosity. Tony has an abundance of each.”

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Hawaii Theatre Center: “The Pride of the Pacific” for Everyone

Located between Honolulu’s financial and civic district and the century-old Chinatown, the Hawaii Theatre Center is the last remaining movie palace of its kind in Hawaii. Listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 1978, the theatre opened in September 1922 as a flagship of Consolidated Amusement Company. Its monumental neo-classic design was unique in the Territory of Hawaii, and its spectacular interiors, with Corinthian columns, allegorical mural and delicate artwork, placed it among the best of America’s movie palaces.

Following its renovation in 1936 for “talking films” and its heyday as an entertainment mecca for the island, the Hawaii Theatre Center fell into disrepair during the 1960s and 1970s as downtown declined with the shift to Waikiki destinations and the suburban movie theatres. The theatre was closed in 1984 and demolition seemed imminent. Two groups of concerned citizens, the Hawaii Chapter of the American Theatre Organ Society determined to save the theatre’s majestic Robert Morton unified orchestra pipe organ, and private leaders came forward to save the theatre from the wrecking ball with a vision for its potential as an attractive performing arts center and catalyst for downtown economic revitalization.

The Hawaii Theatre, dubbed “The Pride of the Pacific” when it opened in 1922, has been restored to its former grandeur following a \$32 million restoration. It is a showcase for public/private partnership that included \$13.7 million from the Hawaii State Legislature, as well as individual donations and support from corporations, local and national foundations, and the efforts of countless volunteers. The project restored the theatre as a modern, state-of-the-art performance facility that both presents and produces shows.

The restoration team included: restoration project coordinator Mary L. Bishop; restoration project architect Malcolm Holzman, FAIA, formerly of **Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates** of New York, and **M. A. Mortenson Company** of Honolulu and Minneapolis as general contractor. Leading restoration and theatre specialists from around the country included **Conrad Schmitt Studios** of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, art conservation; **Tiffin Scenic Studios** for rigging and fire curtain; **Norman Russell Design**, theatrical lighting consultant; **Peter George Associates**, acoustician/theatrical consultant; **Harger and Jackson**, organ restoration; and seating by **Country Roads, Inc.** The exterior restoration team included **Ferraro Choi and Associates** of Honolulu and **Young Electric Sound Company** for the marquee and vertical “Hawaii” sign.

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The project restored the theatre as a modern, state-of-the-art performance facility including structural improvements, expansion of the orchestra pit, modern production improvements, renovation of the Robert Morgan organ, audience amenities, historic restoration of surfaces and decorative elements, repair of the exterior façade and replacement of the marquee, and the restoration of the Lionel Walden proscenium mural by art conservationists Conrad Schmitt Studios, including the recreation of a missing portion of the artwork.

The 1,400 seat Hawaii Theatre is the second largest proscenium performance facility in the state, recognized for its technical capacity, ambiance and historic setting, and serving as the venue for about 75 not-for-profit arts organizations with a diversity of programming and educational activities. Through widespread support and effective fiscal management, the Hawaii Theatre Center has operated in the black every year since its grand reopening in 1996, and is serving as the centerpiece of downtown Honolulu's growing culture and arts district. The theatre has had a significant impact on its community, helping to reverse urban decay, attracting new business investment, and drawing residents and tourists to its once struggling neighborhood. The investment has created jobs, added state tax revenues, and preserved a significant part of Honolulu's history for all to enjoy.

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TONY RIVENBARK:

Historic theatre advocate Tony Rivenbark exemplifies the contributions and qualities of the League of Historic American Theatres' *Outstanding Individual Contribution Award*. Through his life long commitment to the rescue and revitalization of his theatre and community, Tony is recognized as well spoken and passionate leader in the historic theatre movement. As actor, director, manager, historian, author, speaker, fundraiser, producer, and visionary, Tony has been instrumental in the arts and inspired countless others in the field.

Native of Duplin County, North Carolina, Tony Rivenbark attended the University of North Carolina at Wilmington where he received his Bachelor of Arts on history with a minor in drama in 1970. His graduate work at Chapel Hill specialized in 19th century American Theatre. Tony made his theatrical debut in Thalian Hall in 1966 in the Wilmington College/Thalian Association production of *Good News*. Since then he has worked in university, community, and professional theatre and had appeared in over 150 productions.

In 1970, Tony moved to New York City where he appeared in several off-Broadway productions including *Holy Ghost* and *The Passionate Men*, and served as stage manager and assistant to painter and sculptor Dorothy Gillespie. He returned to Wilmington in 1977 and helped develop the Historic Wilmington Tour and served as first tour manager for Thalian Hall.

In 1979, he became the first Executive Director for the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. Under his direction, the little-used facility grew to serve Wilmington and the region as a successful arts center. In 1983 he produced the 125th anniversary celebration of Thalian Hall and served as executive producer of *Remembered Nights*, an original musical comedy about historic theatres featuring Broadway and film actor Lou Criscuolo. From that association, Tony helped form the Opera House Theatre Company which has become Thalian Hall's major rental client.

Tony Rivenbark was instrumental in the \$5 million expansion and renovation of Thalian Hall/City Hall completed in 1990. The facility is now used over 340 days a year with over 300 performances annually and rentals by over 30 educational, community arts and civic organizations. He frequently lectures throughout the country on Thalian Hall and historic theatre renovation, and is author of *Time, Talent, and Tradition* on the history of theatre and cultural arts in Wilmington. In 1966, he was awarded the *Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Cup* in recognition for outstanding contributions to the history of Wilmington, and in 2005 the *Lifetime Achievement Award in the Arts* from Celebrate Wilmington, a partnership of the community and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

His participation with the League of Historic American Theatres began in 1982, and he served on the Board of Directors for a number of years, attending and participating in numerous conferences, a most deserving recipient of its most distinguished individual award.

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The 2005 LHAT Awards Program Jury and Award

The distinguished 2005 Awards Jury for the Outstanding Theatre Project included chairperson Ellen Lipsey, Executive Director of the Boston Landmarks Commission, Boston, MA; Robert Silverman, Vice President of Administration and Finance at Emerson College, Boston, MA, and William Rawn, FAIA, Principal, William Rawn Associates, Architects, Inc., Boston, MA.

The 2005 jury for the Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution was comprised of four Past Presidents of the League's Board of Directors.

The design and crafting of the 2005 awards statues were generously donated by **EverGreene Painting Studios**.

About LHAT

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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(Additional Photos available upon request)

PHOTOGRAPHY

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Digital Images of Awards Ceremony:

103 2005 AWARDS_Douglas Abbatiello, photography

Sarah M. Richards, President of Hawaii Theatre Center, and Tony Rivenbark, Executive Director of the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. receive awards in the 2005 Award Program of the League of Historic American Theatres.

102 2005 AWARDS_Douglas Abbatiello, photography

Left to right: *Sarah M. Richards, President of Hawaii Theatre Center, award recipient; Dr. Rosa Stolz, RFS Management Strategies, Ltd., awards presenter; Tony Rivenbark, Executive Director of the Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. award recipient; and Maureen M. Patton, Executive Director of The Grand 1894 Opera House in Galveston, awards presenter, at the 2005 Award Ceremony of the League of Historic American Theatres.*

Statue_Lance Olson, photography

2005 LHAT awards statue designed and crafted by EverGreene Painting Studios.