



MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: AUGUST 14, 2023

CONTACT: Joanna Penalva
Director of Marketing + Communications
315.443.2636 (o) | 315.440.0996 (c)
jlpenalv@syr.edu

SYRACUSE STAGE RECEIVES \$1 MILLION GIFT EXPANDING ORGANIZATION'S COMMITMENT TO NEW WORK AND LAUNCHING \$2.5 MILLION 50th ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN

Transformative gift establishes the Julie Lutz New Play Development Fund



Julie Lutz

Syracuse, New York — [Syracuse Stage](#) today announced a gift of \$1 million from the estate of the late George Wallerstein. The gift honors Wallerstein's late wife, Julie Haynes Lutz, by establishing the **Julie Lutz New Play Development Fund**. This transformational gift launches the organization's 50th Anniversary fundraising campaign, raising \$2.5 million to ensure the vitality, innovation and sustainability of Syracuse Stage for the next 50 years.

Dr. Lutz was a ground-breaking astronomer and professor who also loved traveling, the outdoors, music, food and theatre. She was a champion of the arts and was deeply committed to issues around diversity and inclusion. The Julie Lutz New Play Development Fund recognizes these interests and will specifically support new play activity, developing and producing exciting new work for the theatre.

"This gift marks a leap forward in Syracuse Stage's continuing commitment to foster and develop relationships with the most exciting artists working in the American theatre today, with a particular focus on sharing stories from underrepresented communities," said Jill A. Anderson, managing

director. "Dr. Lutz's love of theatre and commitment to social justice is forever memorialized by this remarkably generous gift."

The first production under the umbrella of the Julie Lutz New Play Development Fund was the 2023 world premiere of "Tender Rain" by Kyle Bass, Syracuse Stage playwright in residence. Bass' original work has long been a cornerstone of Syracuse Stage, with shows like "Possessing Harriet" and "salt/city/blues" offering patrons the opportunity to see brand new plays and engage with stories that put their own community front and center.

"New plays and new voices are the lifeblood of a relevant theater," said Bass. "In this regard, Julie Lutz's extraordinary gift to Syracuse Stage and the new play development fund it endows will touch artists and audiences beyond our walls. It allows us to develop, launch and grow new and exciting works into the world."

The transformational nature of the Lutz Fund will continue to support the development of work in the vein of past Stage world premieres, like the 19/20 season production of Keenan Scott II's "Thoughts of a Colored Man" which later opened at the John Golden Theatre in New York City, the joyful, Broadway-bound musical "How to Dance in Ohio," and last season's powerful East Coast premiere of "Espejos: Clean," directed by associate artistic director Melissa Crespo.

The Julie Lutz New Play Development Fund grew from Dr. Lutz's love of theatre. She had a particular fondness for new work, which was heightened during the pandemic when Lutz experienced the work of Syracuse Stage by streaming productions at her home in Seattle, Washington. It was during this online-only season, when professional theaters across the nation were shuttered, that the idea of establishing a new works fund was born to help support the playwrights and artists—especially those from communities whose stories are underrepresented in American theatre—who create that new work, now and for years to come.

In addition to supporting new play development and production, Syracuse Stage's 50th Anniversary campaign prioritizes two primary areas: programming sustainability and capital investments, as well as providing resources for Stage's ongoing operational needs post-COVID. Stage seeks to create a permanent Education and Community Engagement Fund, ensuring the continuation of vital programming essential to our community. Capital investments will be used to update equipment and technical tools available to the Stage production teams, including new accessibility, lighting, projection and sound equipment, as well as production communication systems. To learn more about the 50th Anniversary Campaign, visit www.SyracuseStage.org/50Years.

"Some of my earliest childhood memories involve my parents getting dressed up to go to Daggy Theater to see a show," said Melissa Lutz Blouin, Dr. Lutz's daughter. "When we lived in London for a year on sabbatical, she took us to shows in the West End. We went to see plays when we visited her in Seattle. Her love of performance continued throughout her lifetime."

Julie Haynes Lutz died Tuesday, May 3, 2022, at the age of 77. She was one of the country's first female astronomers, receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Illinois in 1972. Her research focused on planetary nebulae, gas clouds formed by expiring stars. From 1971-96, she worked at Washington State University, serving first as the director of the planetarium and later as the Boeing Distinguished Professor of Mathematics and Science Education and director of the astronomy program. She chaired the Department of Pure and Applied Mathematics from 1992-96 and was active in improving primary and secondary school science education. She also served as the director

of the Division of Astronomical Sciences for the National Science Foundation from 1990-92 and as president of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific from 1991-93.

In 2000, she began working at the University of Washington as a NASA educator and was a professor emeritus. She was a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. In 2004, the United Negro College Fund gave Julie and her second husband, George Wallerstein, the President's Award for their long-term fundraising activities for the organization.

About Syracuse Stage:

Founded in 1974 and celebrating its 50th Anniversary Season, Syracuse Stage is the non-profit, professional theatre company in residence at Syracuse University. It is nationally recognized for creating stimulating theatrical work that engages Central New York audiences and significantly contributes to the artistic life of Syracuse University, where it is a vital partner in achieving the educational mission of the University's Department of Drama. Stage's mission is to tell stories that engage, entertain, and inspire people to see life beyond their own experience. Each season, 70,000 patrons enjoy an adventurous mix of new plays, and bold interpretations of classics and musicals, featuring the finest theatre artists. In addition, Stage maintains a vital educational outreach program that annually serves more than 15,000 students from 14 counties. Nationally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for American theatre; The League of Resident Theatres (LORT), the largest professional theatre association in the country; the Professional Non-Profit Theatre Coalition (PNTC), independent venues, promoters, and festivals representing every state, Washington, D.C., and Guam. Regionally, Syracuse Stage is a member of the Arts and Cultural Leadership Alliance (ACLA), Center State CEO, the University Hill Corporation, and the East Genesee Regent Association.

###

Syracuse Stage | Artistic Director: Robert M. Hupp | Managing Director: Jill A. Anderson
820 E. Genesee St. | Main: [315-443-4008](tel:315-443-4008) | Box Office: [315-443-3275](tel:315-443-3275) | www.SyracuseStage.org