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# *Press Release*

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For Immediate Release

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## ***LEAGUE OF HISTORIC AMERICAN THEATRES RECOGNIZES RESTORATION OF CUTLER MAJESTIC THEATRE AT EMERSON COLLEGE IN 2004 AWARDS CEREMONY***

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND (July 24, 2004) – The restoration of the magnificent, 100-year old **Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College** in the downtown neighborhood and Theatre District of Boston, Massachusetts is honored in the *2004 Awards Program* of **The League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT)**. Celebrating excellence in the rescue, restoration, and operations of historic theatres, the LHAT award was presented at a reception at the 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of LHAT in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on July 24, 2004.

The **Cutler Majestic Theatre** received the *Award for Outstanding Theatre Restoration Project* for its demonstration of the highest standards of excellence in its vision, positive impact on its community, and execution of its physical restoration. **Robert A. Silverman**, Emerson College's Vice President for Administration and Finance, accepted the award on behalf of Emerson College, owner of the Cutler Majestic Theatre.

Also present at the award ceremony were **Lance Olson**, Manager, Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College; **Robert M. Koup**, AIA, Project Manager, **Elkus/Manfredi Architects**; **Steven Friedlander**, **Auerbach Pollock Friedlander**, theatre consultants; **Jeff Greene**, **Evergreene Painting Studios**; and **Paul Winter**, **Irwin Seating Company**. LHAT members involved in the Majestic but not present at the ceremony were **Mark Penz**, **Kirkegaard & Associates**, acousticians; **Lee Kennedy Company, Inc.**, general contractor; **I. Weiss and Sons, Inc.**, theatrical draperies; and **Wenger Corporation**, pit infill staging.

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Presenting the award, LHAT Board member and Immediate Past-President **Andrew Tiffin, AIA**, Principal with the firm of Daniel P. Coffey & Associates, Ltd., (Chicago, IL) noted that the Cutler Majestic Theatre represents more than a successfully restored building, but a collaborative project that has “transformed community life in Boston” and “breathed new life and vitality into a nearly dark district as one of the city’s most vibrant and prosperous neighborhoods.”

The unanimous decision of the jury to honor the Majestic recognized the College’s “strong vision for the theater that drove the restoration process over an extended period of time...” to “redevelop an historic theater in a challenging urban neighborhood, far removed from the image of the typical campus-based facility.”

The jury also cited the “excellence of the restoration itself which returned this Beaux Arts building to its original splendor and made it fully functional for contemporary forms of performance.” Commenting on the outstanding service to its community, the jury elevated the “significant accomplishment of re-activating the theater with a balanced mix of College-based programs, rentals by a diverse group of community arts organizations, and an innovative program of presented events, all of which has had a significant impact on the neighborhood” -- a program that is “breathtaking in its range, artistic quality, and importance.”

Recognizing Emerson College for its vision and role as one of the City’s “most active and imaginative performing arts programmer,” the jury noted, “While many university-owned theatres are notorious for being inaccessible to the local community, the Cutler Majestic has opened its doors to organizations from every branch of the performing arts, non-profit and commercial, and to the local business community, while still serving university needs. The project not only anchors a theatre district comprised of larger theatres, it has become a sort of community center for Boston’s performing arts organizations.”

Commended for the excellence of the restoration are the project team members that worked with Emerson College: **Elkus/Manfredi Architects**, Boston, MA, architect; **Lee Kennedy Company Inc.**, Boston, MA, general contractor; **Auerbach Pollock Friedlander**, New York, NY, theatre consultant; **Evergreene Painting Studios**, New York, NY, interior restoration; **LeMessurier Consultants**, Cambridge, MA, structural engineer; **Cosentini Associates**, Cambridge, MA, mechanical/electrical/plumbing engineer; **Kirkegaard & Associates**, Chicago, IL, acoustical consultant; **Norton S. Remmer, P.E.**, Worcester, MA, fire and safety consultant; **Ripman Lighting Consultants**, Belmont, MA, lighting consultant; **Lyn Hovey Studio**, Boston, MA, stained glass restoration; **Irwin Seating Company**, Grand Rapids, MI, theatrical seating and seating restoration.

***The Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College:  
More Than a Restored Building -- The Rebirth of a Neighborhood***

Lance Olson, Manager of the Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College since 1993 and long-time LHAT member, remarks, “The Majestic rescue and restoration fueled the rebirth of a neighborhood, not just a building.” Spanning over twenty years, the revitalization project that features a historic theatre – listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, has transformed a depressed inner-city neighborhood into a thriving community.

As private developer, Emerson College, with no public sector investment or funding, restored, rehabilitated, and adaptively reused two landmark buildings and three other mid-twentieth-century buildings, and constructed a new multi-theatre facility. In addition, the project leveraged the restoration or remodeling of three more landmark theatres and two c.1910 theatres, the construction of a new multi-screen cinema, the restoration of a historic hotel, renovation and remodeling of two additional hotels, construction of a new Ritz-Carleton and numerous housing units and new restaurants and the upgrading of the city’s oldest continuously operating restaurant dating back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. As a result, Boston’s historic Theatre District makes an important contribution to the city’s economy. Emerson College is continuing its commitment to enhance the neighborhood with new construction and the restoration of another landmark property.

Making its debut in 1903 as, described by the *Boston Globe*, “the most beautiful playhouse Boston has seen yet,” the original Majestic Theatre was designed by John Galen Howard, an architect trained at L’Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris and M.I.T. Working with Boston designer James M. Woods, Howard designed the theatre as a Beaux Arts opera house in the grand European tradition, a visually and acoustically magnificent 1,700-seat hall with handsome terra cotta façade, decorative gold leaf ornament and lavish décor, ornate Italian mosaic floor, *scagliola* faux marble finishes, velvet drapery, stained glass windows, and murals by renowned painter William de Leftwich Dodge in its two-story lobby. Located on Tremont Street in Boston’s new theatre district south of Boston Common, the Majestic was funded by arts financier Eben Dyer Jordan, and stood as the first Boston playhouse to be engineered without obstructions and with innovations in electrical lighting.

The year after its opening, the Majestic was leased to its first managers, Albert L. Wilbur and Edward D. Stair, and converted to a “dollar house,” followed by its use for theatre and films for the Shuberts. In 1956, ownership transferred to Sack Cinemas, and the Majestic was renamed the Saxon as a movie house until it closed in 1977 in disrepair and danger of demolition, victim along with most of Boston’s once glorious theatre district.

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Emerson College purchased the Majestic in 1983, restoring it in phases and integrating it in the life of the College for theatre arts instruction, and in the life of the city as a venue for performances by student groups and professional arts organizations. In 2002, the theatre went dark for the extensive restoration that restored the venue to its original grandeur, reopening in 2003 as the Cutler Majestic Theatre. In addition to the restoration of the stunning décor, façade, stained glass and murals of the theatre building, the project also included upgrades to modern standards of comfort, safety, accessibility, and functionality. The twenty-year project, accompanying rezoning and Emerson's centralization of college facilities in the Theatre District, has transformed community life in Boston and breathed new life and vitality into a nearly dark district as one of the city's most vibrant and prosperous neighborhoods. The project also received the *Buildings Magazine* Modernization Grand Prize Award 2004 and the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America Section Award 2004.

### ***The 2004 LHAT Awards Program Jury and Award***

The distinguished 2004 Awards Jury was chosen by the League of Historic American Theatres and included chairperson: prominent architect and performing arts specialist **Charles T. Young, AIA**, Principal of Charles T. Young PC Architects; theatre consultant **Martin Vinik**, Principal of Martin Vinik Planning for the Arts LLC; and performing arts management consultant **Duncan M. Webb**, President of Webb Management Services, Inc.

The design and crafting of the 2004 awards statues were generously donated by **EverGreene Painting Studios** and **Allen & Company**.

### ***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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#### **PHOTO CREDITS:**

##### **Photos of Cutler Majestic Theatre:**

- **Majestic\_House 1, Photographer Bruce T. Martin, Cambridge, MA**
- **Maj\_Cover, Photographer Frank Monkiewicz**

##### **Photos of LHAT Awards Ceremony Available:**

###### **DSC00161:**

(left to right) **Robert A. Silverman**, Emerson College's Vice President for Administration and Finance, accepting the award on behalf of Emerson College, owner of the Cutler Majestic Theatre; and LHAT Board member and Immediate Past-President **Andrew Tiffin, AIA**, Principal with the firm of Daniel P. Coffey & Associates, Ltd., presenting the award.

###### **DSC00163:**

(left to right) **Joan Weil**, President, LHAT Board of Directors; **Lance Olson**, Manager, Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College; **Robert A. Silverman**, Emerson College's Vice President for Administration and Finance; LHAT Board member and Immediate Past-President **Andrew Tiffin, AIA**, Principal with the firm of Daniel P. Coffey & Associates, Ltd..

###### **DSC00164:**

(left to right) **Lance Olson**, Manager, Cutler Majestic Theatre at Emerson College; and **Robert A. Silverman**, Emerson College's Vice President for Administration and Finance.