



**Media Contact:**  
Melissa Boyack  
Director of Marketing  
(585) 749-4249  
[mboyack@gevatheatre.org](mailto:mboyack@gevatheatre.org)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

# Longtime Geva Theatre Center Artistic Director, Mark Cuddy, to Retire in July 2022

## National Search for Successor to Begin in September

**Thursday, June 24, 2021. Rochester, N.Y.** – Geva Theatre Center’s longtime leader, Mark Cuddy, has announced that he will retire as Artistic Director in July 2022 after 27 years at New York State’s largest regional theatre. Maggie Symington, Chair of Geva’s Board of Trustees, stated that a search committee is currently being formed and an outside firm will be hired this summer to assist in a national search for Cuddy’s successor. Geva Trustee Faheem Masood, CEO of ESL Federal Credit Union, will chair the search committee, which will be comprised of select trustees and Geva’s Executive Director, Chris Mannelli.

“It is hard to imagine Geva without Mark,” Symington acknowledged. “However, he is leaving us in a strong position. We are confident we will find a qualified successor by the end of this year to help plan the following season. Mark has already begun working collaboratively with the board to ensure a seamless transition.”

Cuddy arrived in September 1995 from the Sacramento Theatre Company in California with his wife, costume designer Christina Selian, and their two sons, Maximilian and Augustus. For more than a quarter century, Cuddy has advanced the regional theatre, solidifying his distinguished reputation as a local cultural leader and national innovator. During Cuddy’s tenure, Geva has premiered over 25 plays and musicals, established nationally recognized education and literary programs, and developed a loyal Rochester audience that consistently ranks in the Top 25 of regional theatre attendance, nationally – quite a feat, given that Rochester is only the 50<sup>th</sup> largest metropolitan area.

“I have been so fortunate to partner with Mark for the last five years, especially through this past year with all of its challenges,” said Mannelli. “He is a remarkable leader who has cared for this organization for so long, always striving to ensure that Geva enjoys a prosperous future. I am thrilled that, together, we will soon be opening the theater’s doors once again.”

In August, Cuddy is set to direct the first live production in its extended 48<sup>th</sup> Season, an outdoor staging of *Ring of Fire: The Music of Johnny Cash*. In October, the season will conclude indoors on the Wilson Stage with *Vietgone*, directed by Associate Artistic Director Pirronne Yousefzadeh. *A Christmas Carol*, adapted and directed by Cuddy, will return for the holidays.

Geva's 49<sup>th</sup> Season, Cuddy's last as Artistic Director, will run from January – July 2022. Full details will be announced next month. The Theatre's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season will begin in September 2022, under the helm of the new artistic director.

"As we come out of this extraordinary pandemic shutdown, I've been thinking a lot about the next era at Geva and how best to position a new Artistic Director to lead that charge," said Cuddy. "I knew that I'd be retiring soon, and it became clear to me that it made sense to mark the milestone of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary not just by celebrating our first half century but by inaugurating a new leader into a new artistic tenure. The time to plan the transition is now, and I look forward to supporting the next era of Geva wholeheartedly."

During his 26 seasons at Geva Theatre Center, Cuddy has directed over 55 productions, including premieres and revivals, plays and musicals. In 2018, Cuddy returned to the stage after an 18-year absence to act in the world premiere of *Heartland* by Gabriel Jason Dean. This original Geva production is now scheduled to debut Off-Broadway in March 2022. Institutionally, he has championed two capital campaigns that have funded a second stage, retired the theatre's mortgage, developed and purchased 14 nearby artist apartments, and recently underwritten the renovation of the entire Geva facility (which originally opened in 1868 to house the New York State militia).

Born and raised in Boston, Mark Cuddy began his professional career 50 years ago as a full-time technical apprentice at the Falmouth Playhouse on Cape Cod – when he was just 16. He received his BA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he was a Commonwealth Scholar. Upon graduation, he began leading theatres. In the intervening 43 years, Cuddy has led houses across the country, from California to Massachusetts. In 2017, he launched a counseling & coaching service called TheaterLeader.com, which he intends to continue along with evaluating other artistic opportunities.

"The board is extremely grateful to Mark for his leadership and dedication," Symington added. "We congratulate him on his retirement, and we look forward to celebrating him in many ways over the coming months."

## About Geva Theatre Center

**Geva Theatre Center** is a nonprofit, professional theatre company in downtown Rochester, New York, offering world-class productions and extensive additional programming. Founded in 1972, Geva is the most well-attended regional theatre in New York State with one of the 25 largest subscription bases among regional theatres in the country. Geva serves as many as 160,000 patrons annually, including more than 20,000 students.

Geva's 517-seat Wilson Stage and 180-seat Fielding Stage each offer a wide-ranging collection of drama, comedy and musical theatre, from classics to world premieres. The company also offers a broad slate of educational, outreach and literary programming to enrich audiences, students and artists of all ages and disciplines. Since 1995, Geva has been under the artistic direction of Mark Cuddy.

Geva Theatre Center sits on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Onöndowa'ga, or "the people of the Great Hill." In English, they are known as the Seneca people, "the keeper of the western door." They have stewarded this land through generations, and we pay respect and give thanks to their elders, past and present.

**Find out more about Geva Theatre Center** at [GevaTheatre.org](http://GevaTheatre.org) or by connecting with us on social media. Facebook: [facebook.com/gevatheatrecenter](https://facebook.com/gevatheatrecenter), Twitter: [@gevatheatre](https://twitter.com/gevatheatre), Instagram: [@gevatheatre](https://instagram.com/gevatheatre), LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/geva-theatre-center](https://linkedin.com/company/geva-theatre-center).

**### END ###**