

James S. Copley Foundation pledged \$500,000 to La Jolla Playhouse and UCSD as first major gift toward construction of a studio/theatre complex

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LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE RECEIVES COPLEY FOUNDATION GIFT

The James S. Copley Foundation has pledged \$500,000 to the La Jolla Playhouse and the University of California, San Diego as the first major gift toward the construction of a studio/theatre complex adjacent to the Mandell Weiss Center for the Performing Arts on the UCSD campus.

The state-of-the-art Weiss Center, built on a hill overlooking the Pacific Ocean in 1982, is the permanent home of the Playhouse for its nationally acclaimed summer festival and the UCSD Department of Theatre for student training and productions during the academic year.

The new \$4 million studio and theatre space promises to provide support facilities that are sorely needed by the Playhouse and the theatre department.

The Copley Foundation gift, to be dispensed over the next five years, is contingent on the collection of matching donations from the community.

"This is a splendid contribution to our overall twenty-fifth anniversary campaign," UCSD Chancellor Richard C. Atkinson said. "It continues the tradition of support for the La Jolla Playhouse by the Copley Foundation and Copley family."

The foundation gave \$150,000 toward the completion of the Weiss Center in 1981, and the late James S. Copley, chairman of the Copley Press, was an active member of the Playhouse board for many years.

"We see our gift to the Playhouse and UCSD as an investment in San Diego's future as a major West Coast center for the arts," David C. Copley, president of the foundation, said.

"In three years, the La Jolla Playhouse has grown into one of the country's leading regional theatres and has received international attention for its bold and innovative productions. At the same time, it has become a vital part of the UCSD Department of Theatre's excellent professional theatre training program," Copley said.

Plans for "Stage 2" call for a 300-seat "flexible space" theatre, a large rehearsal hall, a design studio, an acting studio, administrative offices for the Playhouse, and additional dressing room space.

"The gift from the Copley Foundation is a critical step for us," said Des McAnuff, Tony Award-winning director of the La Jolla Playhouse. "The new theatre will allow us to expand our season to up to eight productions, so that we can truly become a national theatre festival, and will help our long term financial security through increased ticket sales."

"At the Playhouse, we bring together adventurous theatre artists who are at the forefront of their genre and encourage them to collaborate, but we haven't yet been able to provide them with an adequate work environment, which this complex will provide."

A lack of adequate rehearsal space has forced the company to rehearse in UCSD classrooms and rented space in Sorrento Valley. The new complex will bring the cast, management, design shop, and other production groups together under one roof, facilitating communications.

When the new facility complementing the magnificent Weiss Center is built, McAnuff says the Playhouse "will be in a position to fulfill our dream of becoming a major research and development center for theatre in America and a major summer festival that celebrates American work."

Alan Levey, managing director of the Playhouse, said he anticipates that the new building will be ready in time for the theatre's 1988 season.

"The Copley contribution is the gift we have been waiting for," Richard Riddell, chairman of the Department of Theatre and Tony Award recipient, said. "We especially look forward to using the studio theatre. It will be a good space for student productions. It is designed as a large black box, a space that can be transformed for special productions; our design, directing and playwriting students will have a more flexible space to work in."

Since the Weiss Center was built, the Playhouse and the Theatre Department have enjoyed a mutually nourishing relationship. McAnuff and Riddell expect the new facility to help cement this relationship.

"There is a definite link between education and research and production. The building gives us a laboratory where we can work together to explore and create theatre. The complex will allow us to work with UCSD in training America's future artists and to provide a home for some of the leading theatre artists in the country," McAnuff said.

Television producer Quinn Martin, who serves as both president of the La Jolla Playhouse board of trustees and adjunct professor for the UCSD Department of Theatre, has made a personal commitment to the new studio theatre facility. "The continued growth and development of these two nationally prominent organizations is of vital importance to me for what they bring to the development of American theatre and San Diego. This building is essential to this growth," he said.

The Playhouse's first three seasons, under the direction of McAnuff, have drawn enthusiastic reviews from critics on a national level and earned it more than sixty awards. Last year, "Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" opened on Broadway and received seven Tony Awards.

This season, the La Jolla Playhouse will be part of an unprecedented theatrical exchange. In mid-July "Shout Up a Morning," which made its world premiere at the Playhouse last week, will move to the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., home of the American National Theatre, and ANT's production of "Ajax" will travel to La Jolla in late August. AT&T will underwrite the exchange.

At the press conference where the swap was announced, AT&T vice president William Clossey said, "The La Jolla Playhouse was chosen (for the exchange) because it is one of our nation's finest performing arts companies, and it deserves national recognition."

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