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**CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE AND NAVY PIER BUILD
AN INNOVATIVE, BOLD THEATER SPACE ON CHICAGO'S LAKEFRONT:
THE YARD AT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE**

**Chicago Shakespeare also announces "Our City, Our Shakespeare" fundraising initiative
for capital, artistic and endowment funds has reached 73% of goal**

March 2, 2016 – **Chicago Shakespeare** Artistic Director Barbara Gaines, Executive Director Criss Henderson and Board Chair Sheli Z. Rosenberg were joined by **Navy Pier, Inc.** CEO Marilyn Gardner and Board Chair William J. Brodsky as well as Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel today to announce the creation of an innovative performance venue, **The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare**. Construction on the theater begins this spring; Chicago Shakespeare plans to stage its first production in The Yard in the 2017-18 Season.

Introducing a global trend in theater architecture to Chicago, the vision for the new theater focuses on resourceful, sustainable and adaptive design. At a cost of \$35 million, the project repurposes components of the venue formerly known as Skyline Stage, located adjacent to Chicago Shakespeare. The Yard is connected to the existing facility, which currently houses two theaters, through expanded lobbies. The year-round, flexible venue can be configured in a variety of shapes and sizes with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850, defining the audience–artist relationship to best serve each production.

The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare is integral to Navy Pier's Centennial Vision, a reimagining of the Midwest's most visited leisure destination celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. The new and renovated features are designed to expand Navy Pier's impact and audience, showcasing a vibrant cultural, environmental, educational and recreational landscape. Building on the Theater's 16-year partnership in residence on Navy Pier, The Yard will be funded through a \$15 million investment by Navy Pier, Inc. along with \$20 million in capital funding raised through Chicago Shakespeare's **Our City, Our Shakespeare Campaign**.

To realize Chicago Shakespeare's plan for what a next-generation performance venue should be, the Theater has assembled world-class partners including award-winning, UK-based theater and acoustics consultancy firm **Charcoalblue**—whose recent pioneering projects include venues for the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre of Great Britain and the newly opened St. Ann's Warehouse in Brooklyn, New York—and Chicago-based **Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture**. Together, they have designed a space that is forward-thinking, surprising, raw and provocative—reflective of

the dynamic work of Chicago Shakespeare’s multi-faceted artistic vision and the variety of audiences engaged across the Theater’s programming.

The design smartly repurposes the existing Skyline Stage by constructing a fully enclosed, indoor theater chamber beneath the landmark white dome, utilizing the existing stagehouse and backstage support spaces. A movable set of structural audience “towers” creates a radically new performance arena, which can be reimagined and adapted to the widest range of artistic visions by designers and directors—from an intimate theater in the round to an 850-seat proscenium house [[Hyper-link to site diagram](#)]. Each mobile tower—the size of a city bus stood on its end—contains three levels of seating. These complex structures, pioneered for this design, house extensive theatrical technology, and connect into a network of HVAC components and sprinkler systems to accommodate audience comfort and safety. The iconic white tent becomes a canvas for projection and lighting design that will animate the exterior shell of the facility.

“Creating this state-of-the-art performance venue is another step in the redevelopment of Navy Pier to ensure that it remains one of Chicago’s premier centers for commerce but also for culture and I want to thank Chicago Shakespeare for their tremendous contribution to that effort,” said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. “There is no better time to announce this new performance space than in the year when we will bring local and international artists together for Shakespeare 400 Chicago, which will keep the spirit of Shakespeare alive in our schools and on our stages. I look forward to watching The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare become one of Chicago’s next great cultural jewels for years to come.”

The Yard will be Chicago Shakespeare’s third stage and, together with the two existing performances spaces, positions the Theater to amplify its artistic vision and community impact—expanding audiences and its service to Chicago schools through its nationally recognized arts-in-education programs. Chicago Shakespeare is an internationally award-winning theater—annually producing as many as 650 performances of 19 productions, including audacious imaginings of Shakespeare’s plays; acclaimed new works and musicals; engaging productions for young audiences; extensive education programs; and vibrant productions from internationally renowned artists that connect Chicago to the world.

“We’ve long needed a third theater, but we knew that a fixed theatrical space would not serve next-generation theater makers or the artistic ambition of our company” shared Chicago Shakespeare’s Artistic Director and founder Barbara Gaines. “The Yard will offer a new kind of venue, one that allows us the freedom to reconfigure and recalibrate a playing space each time we approach it. The Yard has been designed as a fun, responsive theater that will adapt to artistic impulses. It offers the volume for us to dream bigger, engaging future audiences in surprising and provocative ways.”

“The Yard demonstrates that a creative, yet economical approach can revitalize an existing facility and transform it into a world-class resource for education and entertainment,” noted Executive Director Criss Henderson. “By adding The Yard, Chicago Shakespeare’s home will feature three diverse theatrical platforms: an Elizabethan-style courtyard theater; an intimate studio theater; and a flexible ‘state of the imagination’ theatrical venue. Thanks to our partnership with Navy Pier and the generosity of a community of donors, this expanded campus will allow us to foster the work of the leading theater artists of our time; produce and present theater that breaks traditional boundaries of expression; extend popular productions; and double our service to students and teachers.”

The development of The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare marks a significant milestone in James Corner Field Operation’s Pierscape redesign project as part of Navy Pier’s Centennial celebration. The multiyear effort, which began in Fall 2013, is transforming the Pier’s 50 acres of premier urban waterfront into a spectacular, global destination and treasure for Chicago and its guests.

The redevelopment builds on the strengths of the Pier—its singular location along the edge of Lake Michigan and downtown Chicago, its size and scale and its programmatic richness. It seeks to enhance the experience for current guests while drawing new audiences with evening and year-round entertainment and cultural attractions. Also, through the generous legacy gift from the Polk family, legendary Chicago retailers and longstanding benefactors to Chicago and its neighborhoods, Navy Pier is reimagining its arts and discovery programming, as well as its 13-acre entrance, now known as Polk Bros Park, with new multi-stage performance lawns, public fountain and expansive promenade.

Navy Pier’s Centennial Celebration will kick off with the opening of the new Ferris wheel on May 27, followed by the unveiling of the Polk Bros Fountain and Plaza, Louis Vuitton America’s Cup World Series Chicago from June 10 through 12, 4th of July celebration, Tall Ships Chicago from July 27 through 31, and the opening of The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare in Fall 2017.

“Chicago Shakespeare and Navy Pier have had a visionary partnership since the forward-thinking decision to bring the Theater to our venerable civic space in 1999,” explained Marilynn Gardner, President and CEO of Navy Pier, Inc. “With the Theater’s proven track record for serving the community and creating award-winning performances, we are confident that this investment will lead to a successful second act. This expansion, new dining options and the completion of the Pierscape plan will not only enhance the theater-going experience for guests, it will continue to elevate Navy Pier as a major cultural destination and growing draw for worldwide visitors to Chicago.”

“The development of The Yard comes at a momentous time in the history of Navy Pier,” added William J. Brodsky, Chairman of Navy Pier, Inc. “As our Centennial Vision rapidly comes to life with more dramatic public spaces, expanded year-round programming and new entertainment options, this redevelopment of what is already a Chicago and Navy Pier treasure will enable us to bring even more theatrical prestige to our city. Such an ambitious and progressive plan could only come about with the pitch perfect collaboration of two forward-thinking governing boards, both in synch with the goal of providing Chicago with a world-class theater housed at one of the most dynamic, culturally-rich destinations in the world.”

Chicago Shakespeare’s Board Chair Sheli Z. Rosenberg shared that, in total, the Theater has secured \$40.4 million of the \$55 million initiative that will provide: \$20 million for the construction of The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare; \$15 million for theatrical equipment, including The Yard’s “towers;” and \$20 million for artistic and endowment funds—supporting Chicago Shakespeare’s artistic, educational and international programming.

The campaign has received 14 gifts over \$1 million, with the lead individual gift pledged by Carl and Marilynn Thoma to establish the Carl and Marilynn Thoma Artistic Director Chair, held by the Theater’s founder Barbara Gaines. The Ray and Judy McCaskey Education Director Chair held by Marilyn J. Halperin is also established. In addition, seven-figure gifts have been pledged by: Best Portion Foundation, Doris Conant in memory of Howard Conant, Virginia and Gary Gerst, Jentes Family Foundation, Anna and Robert Livingston – the Dover Foundation, The Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Pritzker Foundation, Burton X. and Sheli Z. Rosenberg, John W. and Jeanne M. Rowe, Donna Van Eekeren Foundation and two anonymous donors.

ABOUT CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is a global theatrical force, known for vibrant productions that reflect Shakespeare's genius for storytelling, language and empathy for the human condition. Throughout 2016, CST is spearheading the international arts and culture festival, Shakespeare 400 Chicago, a citywide celebration of the playwright's 400-year legacy. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Barbara Gaines and Executive Director Criss Henderson, CST is dedicated to creating extraordinary production of classics, new works and family programming; to unlocking Shakespeare's work for educators and students; and to serving as Chicago's cultural ambassador through its World's Stage Series. CST serves as a partner in literacy to Chicago Public Schools, working alongside English teachers to help struggling readers connect with Shakespeare in the classroom, and bringing his text to life on stage for 40,000 students every year. And each summer, 30,000 families and audience members of all ages welcome the free Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks tour into their neighborhoods across the far north, west and south sides of the city. Reflecting the global city it calls home, CST is the leading producer of international work in Chicago, and has toured its plays abroad to Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Canada/North America and the Middle East.

CST is proud to take an active role in empowering the next generation of literate, engaged cultural champions and creative minds. The Theater's tradition of excellence and civic leadership has been honored with numerous national and international awards, including the Regional Theatre Tony Award, three Laurence Olivier Awards, and eighty total Joseph Jefferson Awards. CST's work with Chicago Public School students and teachers was recognized by the White House in 2014 with the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award. Among its many international engagements, CST participated in the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2006 Complete Works Festival and was selected to represent North America at the Globe to Globe festival as part of London's 2012 Cultural Olympiad. www.chicagoshakes.com

ABOUT NAVY PIER, INC.

Located on Lake Michigan, Navy Pier is the top-attended leisure destination in the Midwest, stretching more than six city blocks and welcoming more than 8 million guests annually. Originally opened in 1916 as a shipping and recreation facility, this Chicago landmark showcases more than 50 acres of parks, restaurants, attractions, retail shops, sightseeing and dining cruise boats, exposition facilities and more. In 2016, Navy Pier celebrates its 100th anniversary with a series of special events and programs, the grand opening of its new Ferris wheel and Polk Bros Park, and ongoing pier-wide redevelopment efforts as part of the Centennial Vision. Navy Pier, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization, maintains and oversees Navy Pier and its redevelopment into a bolder, greener and more contemporary urban space. www.navypier.com

ABOUT CHARCOALBLUE

Charcoalblue is broadly acknowledged as the most exciting and innovative theatre and acoustics consultancy in the UK. Their team of over 40 designers are rooted in theatre practice and are based across four studios in London, Bristol, New York and Melbourne. The portfolio ranges from world-famous companies like the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company and of course Chicago Shakespeare Theatre; to cutting-edge outfits such as The Young Vic and St Ann's Warehouse. It is their unique collaborative approach and relentless attention to detail that has won awards, ecstatic reviews from the theatrical and architectural press and, most importantly, praise from our performers, technicians and audiences across the planet. The partnership with Chicago Shakespeare is a source of immense pride to its owners who remain deeply involved in the project. www.charcoalblue.com

ABOUT ADRIAN SMITH + GORDON GILL ARCHITECTURE

Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture (AS+GG) is dedicated to the design of high-performance, energy-efficient, and sustainable architecture. AS+GG approaches each project with an understanding that architecture has the unique power to influence civic life. The firm strives to create designs that aid society, advance modern technology, sustain the environment, and inspire those around us to improve our world. In addition to several Cultural and Mixed-use projects in the United States, AS+GG is currently designing projects for Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Kazakhstan, China, and Canada. The firm was founded in 2006 by partners Adrian Smith, Gordon Gill, and Robert Forest. www.smithgill.com

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