



Media contacts:

Amanda Mott, associate director for news, ammott@upenn.edu, 267.216.5819

Katherine Blodgett, PLA communication consultant, katherineblodgett@gmail.com, 215.431.1230

Penn announces new Stuart Weitzman Theatre to be constructed for Penn Live Arts at the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts

The multi-purpose space will adjoin the existing building in the heart of the University of Pennsylvania campus.

Sept. 12, 2022

The University of Pennsylvania today announced that it will build a new theatre adjoining the current Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, to be named for Stuart Weitzman, Wharton Class of 1963, award-winning designer, and footwear icon, in honor of his leadership gift to the project.

“This is a pivotal project for the performing arts,” said Penn President Liz Magill. “Stuart Weitzman’s gift comes at the perfect time, just as the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, headquarters for Penn Live Arts, embarks on a year-long 50th anniversary celebration. Naming the theatre for Stuart honors his enduring commitment to Penn students, his love of the performing arts, and our shared desire to make the performing arts even more visible and widely accessible on campus and throughout the greater Philadelphia region.”

“It’s no exaggeration to say that this gift will change everything,” said Christopher Gruits, executive and artistic director of Penn Live Arts. “This modern jewel of a space right in the center of campus will be put to immediate use by students—for everything from “table reads” with visiting playwrights, dance troupe rehearsals and student cabaret nights, to film screenings, improv performances and chamber music concerts. The Stuart Weitzman Theatre also will provide a new venue for some of the Penn Live Arts professional performances for which this flexible, indoor-outdoor space will be ideal. I envision the theater in constant use from the moment its doors open, serving students, faculty, Philadelphia area residents, and Penn alumni, families, and friends.”

The Stuart Weitzman Theatre will be connected to the south side of the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, using a portion of the plaza between Locust Walk and

Walnut Street. Preliminary plans call for a 3,100 square foot theatre constructed of glass, steel, and concrete. It is anticipated to have an audience capacity of 300-350 people, with flexibility for multiple stage configurations and will feature a soaring ceiling, a glass wall that opens to the plaza for indoor/outdoor performances, a combination of natural light sources and state-of-the-art theatre lighting, and an immersive quadraphonic audio system.

The new Weitzman Theatre will be added to the existing Annenberg Center, an iconic example of mid-century modern, “brutalist” architecture constructed in 1971. In the intervening decades, as interest and participation in the performing arts have blossomed at Penn, the Center has been the venue of choice for innovative and transformative performing arts experiences in the Philadelphia region and has served as a vital campus resource.

This project is the first significant expansion to the Annenberg Center since its opening half a century ago. It is the anchor project in Phase One of an ambitious, [multi-year capital plan](#) that will include renovation of the existing Montgomery Theatre into a state-of-the-art art film screening center, and the renovation and expansion of a new campus gateway entrance from the Annenberg Center Outdoor Plaza.

Stuart Weitzman is one of the most recognizable names in luxury designer footwear, who founded his eponymous company in 1986. In the ensuing decades, he built Stuart Weitzman into one of the world's most renowned fashion footwear brands. In 2015, he orchestrated the sale of Stuart Weitzman, LLC to Coach (renamed Tapestry in October 2017). He stayed on as a shoe designer and creative director for the company through May 2017 and remained chairman emeritus through 2018.

Since stepping down from an active role in business, Weitzman has pursued myriad interests. Notably, he co-produced the Tony® Award-winning Broadway musical, *Ain't Too Proud – The Life and Times of the Temptations*. He is a sought-after lecturer at universities around the world, and he also mentors the many students who seek his counsel on starting their own businesses. He is currently supporting the development of a museum in Madrid, Spain, dedicated to Spanish-Jewish history. As a member of the board of the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Foundation, he also contributes to the success of aspiring Olympic athletes, and recently medaled in table tennis at the Maccabiah Olympic Games.

“I am thrilled on so many levels to be supporting this new project,” said Stuart Weitzman. “The performing arts have always been an essential element of the Penn experience. So many high-profile alumni have gotten their start at Penn: John Legend,

Marc Platt, Harold Prince, Candace Bergen...the list goes on. This new theatre will convey, in a very tangible way, to student and professional performers alike, that their craft is valued, supported, and nurtured by Penn.”

At the University of Pennsylvania, Stuart Weitzman’s philanthropy is further reflected in the Weitzman School of Design, Weitzman Hall, and The Weitzman Speaker Series on High Impact Philanthropy. Elsewhere in Philadelphia, he has also supported The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History.

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*For over 50 years, **The Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts** has been a leading presenter of innovative and transformative performing arts experiences in the Philadelphia region and a vital resource for the performing arts at the University of Pennsylvania. In June 2021, the Annenberg Center launched a new brand identity, **Penn Live Arts**, to reflect a deeper integration with the University and an expanded canvas for presenting performances. Penn Live Arts, headquartered at the Annenberg Center, is an artistic crossroads joining Penn and the greater Philadelphia region through world-class music, dance, theatre, and film on campus and at venues throughout the city.*

***The University of Pennsylvania**, founded in 1740, is an Ivy League institution with a distinctive past. Its 12 undergraduate, graduate, and professional schools are located in Philadelphia on an attractive urban campus that serves a diverse community of more than 20,000 students from throughout the nation and around the world. Ranked consistently among the top universities in the nation, Penn has a longstanding reputation for excellence in graduate and professional education.*