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PHOTO CAPTION: Matt Cook, Artistic and Executive Director of Sierra Madre Playhouse

PHOTO CREDIT: Stagetime

**SIERRA MADRE PLAYHOUSE
NAMES HIGHLY REGARDED ARTS ADMINISTRATOR
MATT COOK ARTISTIC AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**Cook, a Grammy Award-Winning Percussionist,
Previously Served as Executive Director of
LA's Blue 13 Dance Company and Pacific Opera Project,
Held Development and Production Positions with Wild Up,
and Served as Managing Director of the Los Angeles Percussion Quartet**

(Sierra Madre, CA, October 25, 2023) Highly regarded arts administrator **Matthew Cook** has been named Artistic and Executive director of the award-winning **Sierra Madre Playhouse**, a dynamic Southern California cultural hub with a rich history spanning nearly a century that energizes audiences and the community with distinctive theatrical productions and captivating live performances. His appointment was announced by Board President **David Gordon**. Cook, who has extensive experience as both an innovative arts leader and Grammy Award-winning performer, began his tenure on September 1, 2023. The Playhouse next year celebrates its 100th anniversary since opening as a movie theater in 1924.

Cook, recognized for successfully managing a range of small to mid-sized performing arts organizations with a goal to create conversations and connections with the communities they serve, most recently served as executive director of the Los Angeles-based Blue 13 Dance Company. Previously, he was executive director of the noted Pacific Opera Project and held development and production positions with the critically acclaimed Wild Up new music ensemble. In the dance field as a producer and artist, he has collaborated with Martha Graham Dance Company, Akram Khan Company, Heidi Duckler Dance, among others.

"Matt Cook has the talent, knowledge, and experience to succeed brilliantly in the dual role of artistic and executive director of the Playhouse as he leads our transition into becoming the leading small space performing arts and cultural center in the region," says Gordon. "The board looks forward with excitement and anticipation to partnering with him on this journey."

"I am stepping into the role of Artistic and Executive Director at the Sierra Madre Playhouse to expand the playhouse into a full performing arts center as it heads into its 100th year anniversary. I am truly thrilled to lead this remarkable space that weaves together art, culture, and community," Cook states. "My passion for connecting communities through the timeless art of storytelling has found a perfect home here. I am excited to collaborate with our talented team and engage with diverse voices, fostering an environment where stories unfold, conversations ignite, and the magic of the performing arts binds us all."

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About Matt Cook

Throughout his multifaceted career in the performing arts field, Matt Cook has consistently demonstrated innovative, distinguished and effective leadership. Before coming to the Playhouse, Cook served as executive director of the Los Angeles-based Blue 13 Dance Company. Previously, he was executive director of the noted Pacific Opera Project, and held development and production positions with the critically acclaimed Wild Up new music ensemble. In the dance field as a producer and artist, he has collaborated with Martha Graham Dance Company, Akram Khan Company, Heidi Duckler Dance, among others.

During his tenure as Executive Director of the Pacific Opera Project, Cook nearly tripled the operating budget of the non-profit organization through creative and impactful fundraising efforts and marketing strategies. He also established the company's first community engagement department, which is now a resident in 15 Title-1 classrooms throughout the Los Angeles region. Cook has produced meaningful social justice work, including the West Coast premiere of "I Can't Breathe," which highlights stories from black voices speaking out against police violence. He produced more opera during the global pandemic (2020-2021) than any other opera company in the country. Serving in development and production positions with Wild Up New Music ensemble, Cook was responsible for overseeing operations for all performances, events and fundraising activities. He produced performances at the Los Angeles Philharmonic's Fluxus Festival, the Ecstatic Music Festival in New York City, and led partnerships with organizations such as the Martha Graham Dance Company. Cook also worked with the Los Angeles Percussion Quartet from 2008-2016 in various roles.

Cook is a Grammy Award-winning percussionist and five-time nominee who has toured extensively and whose work is heard on studio and film recordings, such as *Aquaman* and various Netflix series. He is on the faculty of Fullerton College. Cook has been a featured clinician at Stanford University, Colburn School, and The San Francisco Conservatory of Music, among other institutions. A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Cook holds a BA from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts, and a certificate in Marketing Strategy from Cornell University. He is married and has two children.

About Sierra Madre Playhouse

Sierra Madre Playhouse, a vibrant Southern California cultural hub with a rich history spanning nearly a century, energizes audiences and the community with distinctive theatrical productions and captivating live performances. Hailed as a "jewel" (*Pasadena Weekly*) and "a landmark theater" (*ABC7 Los Angeles*), it has garnered tremendous accolades for its varied repertoire and thought-provoking education and outreach programs curated with social impact in mind. The *Los Angeles Times* proclaims, "This is theater from the heart." As one of San Gabriel Valley's only performing arts center presenting a broad spectrum of performance genres, including theater, music, dance, film, comedy, and family-friendly productions featuring eminent local and national professional artists, the treasured artistic beacon draws audiences from across the Southland. The intimate 99-seat Sierra Madre Playhouse offers an up-close and personal connection to performances that resonate deeply,

earning multiple Ovation Awards, NAACP Awards, and LA Times Critics' Choice honors. It is nestled into a historic building on the inviting Main Street of Sierra Madre, a charming village in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. Retaining its distinctive movie theater façade and instantly recognizable marquee, the structure has undergone numerous transformations since opening in 1910, from furniture emporium to silent movie theatre to the artistic institution that now stands as a vibrant embodiment of the region's rich cultural legacy. The Sierra Madre Playhouse fosters creativity that aspires to bridge divides and spark dialogue, all while celebrating the rich tapestry of the American experience and the enduring pursuit of shared understanding.

www.sierramadeplayhouse.org

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