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Please Embargo Until: Thursday, October 29 at 1pm EST:

**Berkshire Theatre Group
Awarded A Gift of Just Over \$1 Million Dollars
In Honor of Mary Anne Gross**

Pittsfield, MA – Berkshire Theatre Group and Artistic Director/CEO Kate Maguire are pleased to announce a generous gift of just over \$1 million dollars from the family of the late Mary Anne Gross in honor of her lifetime love of both theatre and the Berkshires. This award also recognizes the heroic and tireless efforts of Berkshire Theatre Group in producing the first live Actors' Equity approved musical in the United States in summer 2020, following the shutdown of live performing arts due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March. The Gross Family will also award just over \$1 million to Pittsfield's Barrington Stage Company.

The Gross Family gift will support payroll and basic operating costs for the next six months in order to ensure that there are no furloughs or layoffs while the theatre continues to raise funds in support of future artistic programming. A portion of the gift is structured as a matching grant to leverage additional donations for 2021. "The idea," said Phill Gross, "is to keep the infrastructure in place so that when the world is ready, they are ready to get back to as close to normal operations as soon as possible." Mr. Gross is Co-Founder and Managing Director of Adage Capital Management.

In July 2020, Berkshire Theatre Group's musical, *Godspell*, by Stephen Schwartz, the first Actors' Equity Association (AEA) approved musical in the United States following the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, opened a five-week run under a tent outside of The Colonial Theatre. Due to popular demand and critical acclaim, the run was extended for two weeks. The musical ran from August 6 - September 20. Berkshire

Theatre Group has just been approved once again by AEA and will present Truman Capote's *Holiday Memories* outdoors at its Stockbridge Campus from November 20 - December 20.

The gift came by way of Mary Chris and Alan Bassman, who were seeking a way to honor the recent passing of her mother in December 2019. "We wanted to do something in my mother's memory that could make a difference in the community and be meaningful to Alan and me," said Mrs. Bassman. "My mom loved the theater and she exposed me to theater at a young age, which fostered a love for the performing arts in me. My brother, Phill and his wife Liz have been involved with many non-profits and offered to help with a charitable endeavor that would be meaningful to us. We thought this would be a wonderful and fitting tribute to our mother."

Mr. Bassman added, "Mary Chris and I have been coming to the Berkshires for 15 years. Two years ago, we bought a condo in Pittsfield. In June we moved here full time. We both love theater and last year were volunteer ushers for the summer. We saw the outdoor performances of both Harry Clarke and Godspell this summer and were moved by the courage, imagination and determination that it took to put on these shows. We felt that it would be a huge loss if these theater companies did not remain viable."

Kate Maguire acknowledges, "The arts are critical to the vitality and quality of life. This gift recognizes the economic, educational and cultural importance of all that theatre brings to our community. Berkshire Theatre Group will celebrate 100 years of activity in the coming decade, this support will lead us to our future."

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY MARY CHRIS BASSMAN

"As this summer progressed we were worried about the survival of the theaters here in Pittsfield given the cost of putting on outdoor shows for so few people and the lack of revenue in general. Last December my mother, Mary Anne Gross passed away. We wanted to do something in her memory that could make a difference in the community and be meaningful to my husband Alan and I and thought helping keep the theaters going in these difficult times might be a good choice. My mom had visited us a number of times in the Berkshires including the summer before she died. She loved the theater in Milwaukee where I grew up and where she lived and she also loved the theaters in the Berkshires. When I was young, my mother signed me up for children's theater where I played Pooh-bah in the Mikado. This exposure to theater at a young age fostered a love of theater in me. So, theater seemed like an appropriate place to try to make a difference. My brother, Phill and his wife Liz have been involved with many charities and nonprofits for quite some time. They have helped my sister, Anne,

establish an art center in New Ulm, Minnesota and have offered to help with a charitable endeavor that would be meaningful to Alan and I.”

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY ALAN BASSMAN

“Mary Chris and I have been coming to the Berkshires for 15 years. Two years ago, we bought a condo in Pittsfield and became part time residents. In June we sold our condo in New Jersey and moved here full time. We both love theater and last year were volunteer ushers for the summer. We saw the outdoor performances of both Harry Clarke and Godspell this summer and were moved by the courage, imagination and determination that it took to put on these shows. We felt that it would be a huge loss if these theater companies did not remain viable.”

COMPLETE TEXT OF STATEMENT BY PHILL GROSS

“My wife Liz and I have been focused on doing our best to make sure organizations we care about make it through the pandemic without having to dramatically shrink their services or their ability to survive and thrive after this is all over. The arts in particular, have been impacted dramatically by the social distancing and crowd restrictions and they are so very, very important to the fabric of our lives and the livelihood of the artists themselves. For sure, we will need them more than ever when we come out the other side of this.

We have been involved in supporting many valuable arts organizations from the Gerry Marshall Theater in California, to the Grand Center for Arts and Culture in New Ulm, Minnesota to the Umbrella Center for the Arts in Concord MA and, in honor of my mother and to support something my sisters and our family all care about, Berkshire Theatre Group and Barrington Stage Company. The idea is to keep the infrastructure of all these organizations in place so that when the world is ready, they are ready to get back to as close to normal operations as soon as possible. The danger is that, without aggressive philanthropic support, this infrastructure will be eviscerated at so many important organizations out of a need to simply survive through COVID. Like I said, we are going to be starving to have these outlets for our creative energy...watching, performing, participating...more than ever after this ends. And it will.”

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About Berkshire Theatre Group

The Colonial Theatre, founded in 1903, and Berkshire Theatre Festival, founded in 1928, are two of the oldest cultural organizations in the Berkshires. In 2010, under the leadership of Artistic Director and CEO Kate Maguire, the two organizations merged to

form Berkshire Theatre Group (BTG). Berkshire Theatre Group's mission is to support wide ranging artistic exploration and acclaimed performances in theatre, dance, music and entertainment. Every year, BTG produces and presents performances to over 68,000 attendees and, through our Educational Program, serves over 13,000 Berkshire County school children annually. In July 2020, Berkshire Theatre was the first company in the United States to earn approval from Actors' Equity Association to produce a musical (*Godspell*) in the wake of the COVID-19 Pandemic.