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## **THREE OF MILWAUKEE'S LARGEST ARTS GROUPS RECEIVE \$5 MILLION CHALLENGE GIFTS**

**MILWAUKEE** – The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Repertory Theater and Milwaukee Art Museum will each receive \$5 million challenge gifts from Ellen and Joe Checota.

The three major arts organizations jointly announced the gifts with the goal of growing their endowment funds and increasing intergenerational giving to all arts organizations.

The three \$5 million challenge gifts offered by the Checotas are planned gifts to the endowment funds of the Symphony, Repertory Theater, and Milwaukee Art Museum. All three gifts require one-for-one planned or cash-matching gifts to the endowment funds of the three organizations.

Matching gift donors are able to pick the endowment fund that will receive their matching gift. The deadline date for the receipt of matching cash gifts, multi-year pledges and planned gifts from matching donors is December 31, 2026.

With the goal of growing the base of donors who will support the arts in Milwaukee, matching gifts to the three endowment funds will be limited to gifts that do not exceed \$350,000.

Ellen Checota is an artist, and Joe Checota is the founder and executive chairman of Landmark Healthcare Facilities LLC, a national developer of outpatient buildings that is headquartered in Milwaukee.

Commenting on the gifts, Chad Bauman, executive director of the Milwaukee Repertory Theater said, "When fully funded with matching gifts from matching donors, the three \$5 million challenge gifts from the Checotas will produce \$30 million for the arts: \$10 million each for the endowment funds of the Symphony, Repertory Theater and Milwaukee Art Museum. The unique challenge gifts of Ellen and Joe Checota will help secure the future of the visual and performing arts in Milwaukee for generations."

"Arts organizations in Milwaukee struggle each year to raise the funds that are required to keep their doors open," Joe Checota said. "Ellen and I are pleased that

we are in a position to provide financial support to three special arts organizations that have enriched our lives for more than 50 years.”

Mark Niehaus, president and executive director of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra said, “Endowments are the lifeblood of non-profit organizations that seek to balance their budgets year after year. The generous gifts of Ellen and Joe Checota will help secure the financial future of the Symphony for years to come.”

“These three challenge gifts are unprecedented in Milwaukee and promise to be transformational in our fundraising efforts,” said Bauman. “This method of giving will be appealing to donors who wish to leave a family legacy that will inspire future generations to support and enjoy the arts in Milwaukee.”

“These challenge gifts could be an opportunity of a lifetime to create a lasting legacy for our arts organizations and inspire a whole new generation of donors who love and support the arts,” said Marcelle Polednik, PhD, Donna and Donald Baumgartner Director of the Milwaukee Art Museum. “To the extent we succeed in growing the number of new donors, all arts organizations will benefit, and a rising tide will lift all boats.”

The Checota’s \$5 million challenge gift to the endowment fund of the Repertory Theater, coupled with their \$6 million gift to the Repertory Theater in 2023, is the largest gift in the 71-year history of the Repertory Theater.

The Checota’s \$5 million challenge gift to the endowment fund of the Symphony, coupled with their \$5 million gift to the Symphony in 2022, is one of the five largest gifts in the 67-year history of the Symphony.

The endowment funds of the Symphony, Repertory Theater, and Milwaukee Art Museum are held in investment accounts, and the three organizations utilize the earnings from those accounts to support their operating budgets. The stable source of annual income from their endowment accounts will maintain the financial stability of their organizations and help them grow. While Milwaukee has consistently been ranked as “one of the most generous cities in the United States,” its support of endowment funding for the arts has lagged behind other cities.

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