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YVONNE BELL
NAMED CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF
MCCALLUM THEATRE



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Palm Desert, CA (May 29, 2025) – **The McCallum Theatre** (73000 Fred Waring Dr, Palm Desert, CA), the desert's premier performing arts center, announces today **Yvonne Bell** will serve as its new Chief Executive Officer. The Executive Committee and Board of Trustees unanimously approved the appointment of the seasoned arts veteran – already a key figure in the organization's success having previously held the position as its Senior Vice President of Development since May 2021.

"Yvonne's experience in the arts – from the Los Angeles Music Center to the Kirk Douglas Theatre – is the gift that keeps on giving", says McCallum Theatre Board Chairman, **Garry Kief**. "Her enthusiasm and wealth of knowledge are infectious. All of us on the Board welcome the energy and excitement she brings to the theatre."

Deeply rooted in the cultural community of California, Bell's immense dedication and her belief in the power of the arts to transform communities has motivated her entire career since the beginning. Her commitment to The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles meant starting in the mailroom handling \$35 membership checks as well as customer service. She went on to hold leadership positions with the California Science Center, SoCal Institute of Architecture Foundation all in Los Angeles.

It was in 1999 when Bell began her long illustrious tenure as Director of Institutional Advancement for The Center Theatre Group (CTG) which is home to three theaters:

the Ahmanson Theatre, the Mark Taper Forum, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre. In her leadership capacity at CTG, Bell directed all fundraising, board development, and institutional positioning and planning, along with being responsible for the content, design, and implementation of a multi-year strategy for all philanthropic revenue. Among her many achievements at CTG, Bell raised money to build and open the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City in 2004; to produce and present more than 300 productions at all three of CTG's venues; to increase the Center's annual fund by 400%; and to significantly grow the endowment through cash and planned gifts.

Bell has long been active in a variety of community and industry activities including serving as a Trustee for the Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation in Seattle, WA (2006 to 2004); Executive Committee and Board Member of the Ojai Playwrights Conference (2005 to present); and on the Board of Directors for Theatre Forward in New York (2015 to 2021). Previously, she served as an Executive Board Member, Development and Membership Committee for the American Association of Museums, and Executive Board Member for the Western Museums Association. She holds a B.A. in Fine Arts from Southern Methodist University and was the Inaugural Recipient of the *Theatre Angel Award* from the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle in 2019.

In her capacity as McCallum Theatre, Senior Vice President of Development, Bell has utilized her signature creative and strategic skills to introduce and expand programs that benefit the organization and build community. She's invigorated The Muses & Patroness Circle, Annual Memberships, Founders Circle & Benefactors Circle and Leadership Circle – comprised of philanthropists who ensure that the McCallum Theatre continues to thrive and remain the cultural jewel of the Coachella Valley.

"With the formidable foundation established by **Harold Matzner** and **Ted Gaitas** among others, it is my honor to carry the mantle and ensure the mission of the McCallum Theatre to entertain, educate and enrich the Coachella Valley community," says McCallum Theatre CEO, Yvonne Bell. "The arts have the unique ability to unite, empower and transform us all. I'm looking forward to welcoming audiences from all walks to take this journey with us next season and beyond."

The McCallum Theatre will announce the exciting 2025/2026 season on June 2, 2025

ABOUT THE MCCALLUM THEATRE

In May 1973, a group of business, education and cultural leaders organized as Friends of the Cultural Center, Inc. and committed themselves to the creation of a state-of-the-art performing arts center. Their vision was to enhance and enrich the lives of Palm Springs & Palm Desert residents by making the performing arts available to as many people as possible. Fundraising began in earnest with thirteen sold-out performances by Fred Waring. By 1984, local developer Terry Hahn contributed \$1 million to the project and Gerald Ford became part of the board of directors. Ford, in turn, convinced Bob Hope to contribute to the project.

Vision became reality in January 1988, with the opening of McCallum Theatre. Opening night was an all-star tribute to Hope. According to Palm Springs Life, Van Cliburn inaugurated the Steinway piano. Lucille Ball had guests teary-eyed from laughing. Alvin Ailey dancers put their best feet forward and Sarah Brightman sang a tune from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* a month before it opened on Broadway. In the audience that night were Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Gerald and Betty Ford, Walter and Leonore Annenberg, and many other notable VIPs.

Named for a pioneering desert family, the McCallum has gained acclaim as one of the country's finest presenting theaters by audiences, entertainers and peers alike. Ticket sales consistently place the McCallum in the top 50 theaters in the world. Education programs have served more than one million local schoolchildren, educators and community members, while top entertainers praise the venue and its audiences.

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