



**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL  
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## **History Theatre announces new Artistic Director, Richard D. Thompson**

SAINT PAUL, MN - After a nationwide search History Theatre has named Richard D. Thompson as the fourth Artistic Director in its 44-year history.

“On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to announce that Richard D. Thompson has been selected to lead History Theatre as the next Artistic Director,” said Board President John Sebastian. “Richard is a visionary theatre professional, an advocate for inclusivity in the arts, and a respected member of the Minnesota theatre community. He brings a depth of experience to this critical role for our theatre and the Board was most impressed with his passion for our mission and vision for our theatre’s future. I look forward to History Theatre’s growth under his artistic leadership.”

Thompson has more than 30 years of experience as a director, administrator, choreographer, dramaturg, educator, and performer. Thompson’s vision seeks to build on History Theatre’s important legacy of creating new and existing work while exploring the history of Minnesota, the Midwest, and the diverse American experience. He will continue telling well-known and untold stories while amplifying unheard voices and welcoming everyone to the audience.

“I am honored and humbled to be chosen to lead History Theatre into its next chapter by building on the theatre’s legacy of success to continue to make it a vital and celebrated part of the lives of the people of Minnesota. History Theatre’s mission speaks directly to my heart and my talents. I appreciate the company’s passion for bringing historical events and iconic figures to life in ways that touch our hearts and move us to action. History at its essence is about our shared stories, ideas, hopes and dreams and creating theatre that draws on our collective past allows us to reflect our world and illuminate our present in ways that enlighten, educate, and entertain our audiences,” said Thompson.

Thompson is familiar with History Theatre, having worked on various projects over the past 25 years, and has been the Producing and Directing Associate for the past year. His History Theatre director credits include *The Meeting* (1991-92), *The Brotherhood* (1995-96), *Summer in the Shadows* (2001-02), *Joe* (2003-04), *Nellie* (2012-13), and *Not in our Neighborhood!* (2021-22).

“In the time I’ve been associated with History Theatre, I’ve truly come to treasure the amazing work and the spectacular community of theatre professionals who have built and sustained it. I look forward to working in my new role with the talented staff and artists who have worked

with History Theatre in the past, as well as engaging new and emerging artists from the theatre community.” Thompson added.

Thompson brings a wealth of experience from the Twin Cities community and beyond. He worked as the Managing Director and Associate Producer for Penumbra Theatre, where he directed *The Last Minstrel Show*; he directed, a national tour of *Treemonisha* for the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra; directed *Into the Woods, Jr.* and *Sundiata: The Lion King* for The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. In addition, he has worked for Children’s Theatre Company, Illusion Theater, Jon Hassler Theater, Virginia Opera, Playwrights’ Center, and Mixed Blood Theatre Company.

Thompson will work in partnership with Managing Director Karen Mueller to build on a solid foundation of artistic and organizational health. “Navigating the future of a performing arts organization in our world today is a challenge. I look forward to collaborating with Rick in his new role as Artistic Director. His understanding and passion for history, his commitment to artistic excellence and his dedication to equity at all levels will be invaluable as we move ahead into our next chapter,” Mueller said.

Earlier this year Artistic Director Ron Peluso announced his plan to step down at the end of December 2022. Per the Board of Directors’ succession plan, History Theatre formed a Search Committee comprised of Board members, key staff, and input from artists from the Twin Cities theater community and began a national search for his replacement. Hiring Orion Search Group to lead the search process, the committee met with several candidates, focused not only on their artistic experience but also their passion for the mission and their artistic vision for the theatre before recommending a candidate to the full Board. The Board was unanimous in its support of the Search Committee’s recommendation.

“History Theatre is an unparalleled community treasure and serving as its Artistic Director will be a pleasure and an honor. The hours I’ve spent within its walls have deepened a conviction I’ve held since I first started reading history as a kid: that a sense of the past is essential to all storytelling – and, ultimately, to all human thriving,” Thompson said.

Thompson will start Jan 10, 2023, continuing his work of producing the RAW STAGES: New Works Festival January 18-22, 2023, and will direct the final production of the 2022-23 Season, *The Defeat of Jesse James*, a new musical by Jeffrey Hatcher and Chan Poling this spring.

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## **Our Mission**

History Theatre entertains, educates, and engages audiences through creating, developing, and producing new and existing works that explore Minnesota's past and the diverse American experience. Its work provides a unique lens that links our past to the present, explores our common heritage, and illuminates our understanding of what it means to be American.