

ROYAL MTC BOARD OF TRUSTEES APPOINTS EVAN KLASSEN AS NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WINNIPEG, April 30, 2024 – Following a national search, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre’s (Royal MTC) Board of Trustees is pleased to announce Evan Klassen as the theatre’s new Executive Director.

Currently the Executive Director of the Grand Theatre in London, Ontario, Evan has a rich history with Manitoba cultural institutions, including Royal MTC and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and a significant leadership tenure at Western Canada Theatre in Kamloops, British Columbia.

“The Board of Trustees is thrilled to welcome Evan to Royal MTC, to join Kelly Thornton in an exciting new chapter for our beloved institution. With deep roots in our city, Evan brings a wealth of theatre experience and an unwavering passion for enriching the arts community. After a rigorous search, Evan stood out for his warmth, collaborative and visionary leadership style, and his genuine and proven commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Together, Evan and Kelly will continue to grow Royal MTC by cultivating local talent, engaging new audiences, and ensuring our theatre flourishes for generations to come.” – Laurie Speers, Search Committee Chair and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

“The co-executive model in theatre is like a marriage, and it quickly became obvious that Evan and I have a natural rapport. I am thrilled to have found such a smart, compassionate and effective leader in Evan, and to welcome him as my new partner to help enact our vision for Royal MTC’s future. Evan’s deep love of Winnipeg and Royal MTC permeates from him, and we are so fortunate to be bringing him home.” – Kelly Thornton, Artistic Director.

“It’s my great honour and I am profoundly excited to step into my dream role as Royal MTC’s Executive Director,” said Evan Klassen. “Born and raised in Winnipeg, I’m delighted to be returning to my hometown and my home theatre. Having started my career decades ago in the MTC Box Office, this truly is a homecoming to a theatre that holds a special place in my heart and is so highly respected in both the Winnipeg community and within the national theatre sector. I’m delighted for the opportunity to partner with the Board of Trustees, Kelly and the leadership team to steward this remarkable theatre well into the future.”

Prior to taking on cultural leadership roles, Evan Klassen enjoyed a 15-year career in Stage Management, including many significant Royal MTC productions. Evan embarked on a path towards arts leadership with roles of increasing responsibility, including Director, Artistic

Operations and Production at Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and Managing Director of Western Canada Theatre. Evan is currently the Executive Director at the Grand Theatre, an important regional theatre and valued partner with Royal MTC on many acclaimed co-productions, including this season's *Clue*.

A steadfast advocate for the arts, Evan believes in building the sector through volunteerism and currently serves as Treasurer for the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and is on the Board of Directors for the London Chamber of Commerce. Prior board roles include the Winnipeg Arts Council, Manitobans for the Arts, Seven Oaks House Museum, BC Arts Council, BC Interior Community Foundation and the Kamloops Centre for the Arts Society.

Evan is a member of Canadian Actors' Equity Association and has worked coast-to-coast as a Stage Manager, including at most of Winnipeg's theatres and at Manitoba Opera. Evan studied Cultural Leadership at the Banff Centre and is a graduate of the Arts & Cultural Management program at MacEwan University, Theatre Production at the University of Winnipeg and Concord College (now Canadian Mennonite University).

In 2019, when current Executive Director Camilla Holland won the Mallory Gilbert Leadership Award from the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, she named Evan as the winner of the Protégé Award.

Evan Klassen will officially join Royal MTC in mid-August 2024.

Royal MTC thanks Searchlight Partners Group and the dedicated search committee members: Ed Acuna, Spencer Duncanson, Loren Remillard, Laurie Speers, Jennifer Tesoro and Geeta Tucker who worked tirelessly and diligently through the process of making this important decision.

A selection of photos is available for download on our website. To access these photos, visit the MEDIA CENTRE at royalmtc.ca/mediacentre.

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For more information, please contact:
Micah Parkinson, Communications and Social Media Manager
204 934 0302 | mparkinson@royalmtc.ca | royalmtc.ca