



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CATCO Announces New Artistic Director After Nationwide Search**

*Leda Hoffmann, artistic director of Chicago-based Strawdog Theatre Company,  
to join theatre Aug. 3, 2020*

Leda Hoffmann, a leading Midwestern theatre artist and director, today has been named the artistic director at CATCO and CATCO is Kids, CATCO's board announced today.

Hoffmann, who was selected after a nationwide search, most recently served as the artistic director of Chicago-based Strawdog Theatre Company, a 32-year-old Chicago storefront theatre, which produces a mainstage season, as well as an annual production for young audiences.

Since beginning her theatre career, Hoffmann has worked as a director, artistic director, senior staff member of a major regional theatre, community engagement practitioner, producer and theatre educator. Before working at Strawdog, Hoffmann served as director of community engagement, literary coordinator and education coordinator at Milwaukee Repertory Theater. She also was the founding artistic director of Luminous Theatre, where she created theatrical productions in non-traditional spaces.

"It goes without saying that I am thrilled about coming to CATCO, and I look forward to continuing CATCO and CATCO is Kids' commitment to creating quality theatre for both young people and adults," Hoffmann said. "I also am excited to build upon the theatre's reputation to bring bold, progressive and exciting work to Columbus audiences, ensuring our theatre is a place for all members of our community."

Despite the enduring closure of theatres locally and nationwide, Hoffmann says the current situation provides uncharted opportunities for CATCO and theatres everywhere. "Although we are not producing theatre in its familiar form, we can be innovative and adapt performances that still delight, challenge and transport," she said. That might include an outdoor theater presentation or innovations with online performance. "Such ventures would present CATCO and CATCO is Kids to current patrons and subscribers in a new format, and also serve as a gateway to connect with other members of the community," she said.

"Leda's broad experience as the artistic director of a small theatre company and as a senior staff member at a large regional theatre, combined with her inclusive vision for CATCO's role in engaging the community through innovative artistic programming and engaging educational

initiatives, made her an unsurpassed choice to lead CATCO into an exciting new future,” said Liz Riley, search committee chair.

In her new role, Hoffmann will be responsible for setting strategic goals and directing the artistic vision for CATCO and CATCO is Kids programming. She joins Christy Farnbauch, who joined the organization as executive director in April, overseeing administration, budgeting, fund-raising and financial operations.

“Throughout her career, Leda has demonstrated creative and innovative strategies to advance the theatres where she has worked. Her national perspective, coupled with my experience in the local arts and cultural sector, will position CATCO to thrive after the pandemic, while being responsive to the cultural and social changes in our community and the world. Leda and I will be collaborative partners as we create the conditions for people to experience meaning through theatre,” said Christy Farnbauch, Executive Director.

Farnbauch and Hoffmann take over the leadership of CATCO and CATCO is Kids following the July 31, 2020, retirement of Steven C. Anderson, one of central Ohio’s longtime and most revered arts leaders, and CATCO’s and CATCO is Kids’ producing director since 2010. In October 2019, CATCO’s board announced it would reorganize the leadership structure of the theatre organization to take effect in 2020 to include two equal executive positions – an executive director and an artistic director. The theatre’s leadership team previously consisted of a producing director and associate producing director.

“This type of dual leadership structure is the standard working model in the theatre world, and the CATCO board decided in late 2019, after Steven announced his retirement, that this would be the leadership path CATCO should adopt for the future,” said Krista Hazen, CATCO Board president.

### **About CATCO**

CATCO is central Ohio’s leading professional Equity theatre company, providing quality mainstage experiences and educational programs for all ages. CATCO is Kids is the organization’s educational arm, producing imaginative, captivating theatre programs for central Ohio’s young theatre lovers and their families.

### **CATCO Mission Statement**

Theatre is a shared experience that illuminates the mysteries of our humanity. Its magic has the power to transform us whether on stage, in the classroom or in diverse communities. CATCO creates experiences through theatre that delight, challenge, and transport.

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