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**TEMPLE UNIVERSITY BECOMES BENEFICIARY
TO BROADWAY LEGEND'S ARTISTRY**

George Abbott was a legend of the American stage; his work spanned over seven decades and earned him the moniker, "Mr. Broadway." Throughout his career, he worked to bring the highest level of artistry and creativity to musical theater, at the same time he took great pleasure in nurturing young talent. The list of musical theater legends that were directly influenced by him is unparalleled: Hal Prince, Carol Burnett, Bob Fosse, Liza Minnelli, Gene Kelly and Shirley MacLaine. In an interview with *Time* magazine, Abbott remarked that, "young people are excited and eager [to learn]. They make me feel young again."

Joy Valderrama, a graduate of Temple University, first met the Broadway legend in New York in 1959 at a dinner party at his Fifth Avenue apartment. "I rang the doorbell at 7:00," recalls Joy. "George answered, gave me the once over and said, 'Good, you're on time.' I looked at his handsome, smiling face and steel blue eyes and thought to myself, 'In my dreams.'"

They dated for 25 years. "It was an exciting time -- going to opening nights, dinner parties, meeting his friends and some of the biggest stars on Broadway." In 1983, he proposed. "My lawyer tells me that I have enough money for two to live on," he said. "It's time we got married."

Today, during a cocktail reception at Sardi's in the heart of the Theater District, with guests on hand that included Hal Prince, Tommy Tune, Tova Feldshuh, Arlene Dahl, and Heather Randall, that **Joy Abbott has made a provision in her estate to bequeath her ownership share of rights and future royalties earned by theater productions authored by George Abbott** —which includes famous titles such as *The Pajama Game*, *Damn Yankees*, *On Your Toes* and *The Boys From Syracuse*, — **as well as other selected memorabilia to: the Boyer College of Music and Dance at Temple University, Philadelphia. The bequest, which is currently valued at a minimum of \$6 million, will serve as the lead gift in establishing the new "George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater" at the Boyer College.** "I always wanted to ensure George's legacy was preserved in a way

that would benefit future generations,” Mrs. Abbott said prior to the announcement, “and this is a way to tribute his legacy and dedication to mentoring young artists.”

“The **Abbott Center** will attract some of the most accomplished professionals in the field,” said Robert T. Stroker, Dean of the Boyer College. “This historic gift will allow us to continue Mr. Abbott’s legacy and teach the craft of musical theater in much the same way he did throughout his extraordinary career -- as a mentor to scores of young people.”

Mrs. Abbott’s gift will also allow Boyer College to launch a campaign to raise funds for the **Abbott Center** and create a BFA program in musical theater. The Center will not only draw performers, guest artists, scholars, technicians and teachers, providing an interdisciplinary approach to training students, but will also house Abbott’s treasure trove of historical memorabilia. Students who graduate from the BFA program will do so with working knowledge of staging, lighting, production, performance and other aspects of professional musical theater -- taught by the best the musical theater world has to offer.

“We are honored and privileged that Joy Abbott has designated her alma mater as the beneficiary to George Abbott’s unparalleled legacy,” said Temple University’s President, Ann Weaver Hart. “Her unprecedented gift to the Boyer College will permanently alter the performing arts landscape at Temple, helping to shape future careers in musical theater for decades to come.”

Temple University is a comprehensive public research university with more than 34,000 students, and a distinguished faculty in 17 schools and colleges including The Boyer College of Music and Dance.

About George Abbott

George Abbott was an important director, author, and producer, whose distinguished career in the American theater spanned more than seven decades and gained him the title of "Mr. Broadway." Abbott wrote his first play, a comedy-farce entitled "Perfectly Harmless," while studying at the University of Rochester in 1910. Three years later he made his Broadway debut playing a drunken college boy in "The Misleading Lady." In 1925 he launched his writing career with "The Fall Guy." Abbott subsequently was involved in well over 100 Broadway productions including: *On Your Toes*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, *Pal Joey*, *On the Town*, *Call Me Madam* and *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. He received seven Tony Awards including a lifetime achievement award in 1976, the 1959 Pulitzer Prize

for Drama for "Fiorello" and many other theater awards. He introduced the fast-paced, tightly integrated style that influenced the genre and fellow directors such as Jerome Robbins, Bob Fosse and Hal Prince. George Abbott remained active up until his death in 1995 at the age of 107. As a memorial, the lights on Broadway were dimmed in tribute to one of the district's legendary and much-loved figures.

(*biography adapted from http://www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/stars/abbott_g.html)

About Boyer College

The Boyer College of Music and Dance offers a diverse curriculum, wide array of degree programs and exemplary faculty, preparing students for careers as educators, performers, composers and scholars. In addition to 300 concerts each year, the student ensembles perform at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and Jazz at Lincoln Center. Alumni include Broadway performer Hugh Panaro, pianist Marc-André Hamelin and NPR host, Bill McGlaughlin.

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