

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Laura Peete

Tel: 646-524-2226

lpeete@sdcfoundation.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President

Leigh Silverman

Vice President/Secretary

Ellenore Scott

Treasurer

Sharon Ott

Trustees

Maggie Burrows

Justin Emeka

Jonathan Parker

Laura Penn

Maria Torres

Victoria Traube

Barbara Whitman

Foundation Director

Laura Peete

**JOANNE AKALAITIS TO BE HONORED WITH THE
STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS FOUNDATION (SDCF) GORDON
DAVIDSON AWARD FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AND DISTINGUISHED
SERVICE IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE**

**THE AWARD WILL BE PRESENTED AT A CEREMONY AT LA MAMA ON
WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026**

(New York, April 17, 2026) Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF), the not-for-profit foundation of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), announced today that director **JoAnne Akalaitis** has received its 2025 Gordon Davidson Award. Named in honor of the founding artistic director of Los Angeles's Center Theatre Group and one of the visionary leaders of the resident theatre movement, **Gordon Davidson**, the award recognizes a director or choreographer for lifetime achievement and distinguished service in the national not-for-profit theatre. The award will be presented to Akalaitis at a ceremony at La MaMa on May 20, 2026 at 5:30pm.

The selection committee was chaired by **Neel Keller**, former Associate Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles. He said in a statement:

“JoAnne Akalaitis is a remarkable artist who has expanded and redefined the boundaries of theatrical experience. For over six decades Joanne has been a curious and fearless examiner of the human condition. Her explorations wended through the disciplines of medicine and Philosophy and finally, the theater, where she studied with many of the most influential avant garde theater artists of the '60s. Along with four remarkable colleagues, she brought the breadth of her experience and creativity to the founding of Mabou Mines, one of America's most impactful theater companies. She has directed acclaimed, controversial, moving, and powerful productions at theaters and opera houses across the country and around the globe. As a teacher, mentor, and creative force she has nurtured and influenced the work of hundreds of artists, while encouraging audiences, students, and colleagues to think and create in bold, brave, new ways. Gordon Davidson was very fond of JoAnne. He was excited by her work and connected deeply with her belief in the power of theater to ignite passionate civic debate. Like Gordon, JoAnne is a north star in our field, always showing us a way forward.”

Keller was joined on the selection committee by directors **Peter Brosius, Michael John Garcés, Marcela Lorca, and Warner Shook**, along with SDC Executive Director **Laura Penn. Rachel Davidson**, daughter to Gordon Davidson, served as an advisor.

The Gordon Davidson Award has previously been presented to **Oskar Eustis (2018), Lisa Peterson (2019), Seret Scott (2020), Emily Mann (2021), Donald Byrd (2022), Anne Bogart (2023), and José Luis Valenzuela (2024)**.

BIOGRAPHIES

JoAnne Akalaitis is a theatre director, writer, and founding member of Mabou Mines with Lee Breuer, Philip Glass, Ruth Maleczek, and David Warrilow. For her body of work, she has been awarded six Obie Awards for Direction and Sustained Achievement. She is the former Artistic Director of The Public Theater; was a Pew Charitable Trusts artist-in-residence at Court Theatre; and served as a Rockefeller Foundation playwright-in-residence at the Mark Taper Forum in 1984-85 under the leadership of Gordon Davidson, where she developed and directed the play *Green Card*, her piece about immigration, for which she won a Drama-Logue Award. The play subsequently ran in New York as part of the New York Festival of the Arts.

Akalaitis has staged works by Shakespeare, Euripides, Seneca, Schiller, Heiner Müller, Beckett, Genet, Williams, Janacek, and Harold Pinter at American Repertory Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Humana Festival, Guthrie Theater, Lincoln Center Theater, and The Public Theater. Her many seminal productions include *Cascando*, *Dressed Like an Egg*, *Dead End Kids*, *Request Concert*, *Through the Leaves*, *Endgame*, *Leon & Lena (and Lenz)*, *The Screens*, *Cymbeline*, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*, *The Iphigenia Cycle*, Philip Glass's opera *In the Penal Colony*, Beckett's story *First Love* (on Zoom during the pandemic), and *Mud/Drowning* by María Irene Fornés. In 2019 she conceived and produced the María Irene Fornés Marathon at The Public Theater.

Akalaitis served with Garland Wright as the Andrew Mellon Co-Chair of the first directing program at The Juilliard School, Chair of the Theater program at Bard College, and the Denzel Washington Endowed Chair in Theatre at Fordham University. Among other honors, she is also the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a Drama Desk Award, the NEA Award for Sustained Artistic Achievement, the Edwin Booth Award, and a Rosamund Gilder Award for Outstanding Achievement in Theatre. She was inducted into the Theater Hall of Fame in 2023.

Gordon Davidson (1933-2016) was the founding artistic director of Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum, which he led from 1967 to 2005, as well as artistic director of the Ahmanson Theatre from 1989 to 2005. In 2004 Davidson produced the inaugural season at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Under his leadership, numerous works were developed or made their premieres in Los Angeles, including *Zoot Suit*, *Angels in America*, *The Shadow Box*, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine*, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, *Jelly's Last Jam*, and *Children of a Lesser God*. The Taper received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1977, and Davidson received the Tony as Best Director of a Play for *Children of a*

Lesser God in 1980. He was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 2000. He began his career as a stage manager and briefly served as managing director for the Theatre Group at UCLA.

Founded in 1965, **Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF)** celebrates, develops, and supports professional stage directors and choreographers throughout every phase of their careers. SDCF works to build a theatrical community that reflects the cultural, racial, and gender diversity of our nation by creating opportunities for artists of all backgrounds to bring their full, authentic selves to their work as creative leaders in the theatre. SDCF's goals are to provide opportunities to practice the crafts of directing and choreography; to gather and disseminate craft and career information; to promote the profession to emerging talent; to provide opportunities for exchange of knowledge among directors and choreographers; to increase the awareness of the value of directors' and choreographers' work; and to convene around issues affecting theatre artists. sdcfoundation.org.

###

ACCESS.
CONNECTIVITY.
LEGACY.

SDCFoundation.org