

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 909

By Coley

A RESOLUTION to honor Hillsman Lee Wright on receiving the Creating Theatre History Award from the Theatre Historical Society of America and the Outstanding Individual Achievement Award from the League of Historic American Theatres.

WHEREAS, this General Assembly takes great pleasure in paying tribute to a native Tennessean who has devoted his career to preserving historic theatres across America, from New York to Memphis and now, Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, Hillsman Lee Wright was honored by the Theatre Historical Society of America with the 2017 Creating Theatre History Award and the League of Historic American Theatres with the 2017 Outstanding Individual Achievement Award, both of which recognize excellence in preserving theatres and their histories; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wright's forty-three-year career spent preserving historic theatres includes tenures at the Carnegie Hall and Bleecker Street Cinemas in New York City, the Memphis Orpheum, the Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation, and the League of Historic American Theatres and encompasses numerous theatres across the nation; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wright has inspired thousands of people to support his cause by convincing them of the importance and benefits of historic theatre preservation and restoration; and

WHEREAS, most notably a volunteer, Mr. Wright has also served as a board member, patron, donor, service provider, staff member, and activist for a variety of nonprofit organizations, imbuing each of these roles with his distinctive personal style, humor, and persistence; and

WHEREAS, when the Orpheum Theatre (built in 1928) was purchased by a nonprofit foundation for redevelopment, Mr. Wright, a native Memphian, sprang into action as a volunteer and was eventually hired as the project's manager; during his four-year tenure, he transformed the Orpheum into a symbol of rebirth for downtown Memphis through his enthusiasm, showmanship, and contagious optimism, despite numerous setbacks; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wright's confidence quickly inspired the community at large, and a volunteer support organization, Friends of the Orpheum, grew to 800 members in just a few months; because of his leadership and recruitment of Cybill Shepherd to the cause, the fiftieth anniversary fundraising campaign, "Orpheum or Asphalt," was one of the most successful arts-related campaigns in Memphis history; and

WHEREAS, among his many accomplishments, Mr. Wright is the co-founder of the Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation (LAHTF), which is dedicated to protecting, preserving, restoring, and sustaining the operation of historic theatres in Southern California, including Los Angeles's Broadway District, the first and largest historic theatre district listed on the National Register of Historic Places and home to the largest concentration of movie palaces left in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Wright has helped several other Southern California communities save their historic theatres through education, organization, and advocacy; and

WHEREAS, historic theatres around the globe have benefited from Mr. Wright's expertise, enthusiasm, and élan, and he is most deserving of special recognition by this body; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor Hillsman Lee Wright on receiving the 2017 Creating Theatre History Award from the Theatre Historical Society of America and the 2017 Outstanding Individual Achievement Award from the League of Historic American Theatres, commend his

remarkable career in historic theatre preservation and restoration, and extend to him our best wishes for much continued success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.