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For immediate release, ATTN: Community, Education, and Arts Editors

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Note to Editors: high-resolution photos available from Jonathan Schroerlucke



Rabin Youth Arts Award Honors Youth Arts Supporter

The Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras (WYSO) Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 2016 Rabin Youth Arts Award recipient. Harv Thompson will receive the award in the category of Artistic Achievement. The award will be presented at Arts Day on March 9, 2016 at the Monona Terrace in the Hall of Ideas at 9:00 am. Deserving individuals and organizations from across the state were nominated for their support of youth arts across all disciplines.

Harv Thompson is Professor Emeritus of Theater, UW-Madison and UW Extension. A firm believer in the "Wisconsin Idea", Harv considers the boundaries of the University System to be the boundaries of the state. Harv's passion for the arts education throughout Wisconsin is deeply rooted in his belief that the state has a commitment to bring the UW's arts offerings to the diverse audiences found in every corner of Wisconsin.

Harv's career ran on two tracks: his theater endeavors and his administrative leadership. Harv served over twenty years as department chair for the UW extension's Continuing Education in the Arts Department. His role at the UW Extension included maintaining a link between UW arts professors and the UW-Extension youth program of 4-H. Over 50,000 children state-wide are enrolled in 4-H and Harv's leadership helped develop and maintain funding for 4-H arts programs including: Arts Camp, Arts Leadership lab, Showcase Singers, Drama Company and Art Team.

Harv is also founder of the Wisconsin Theater Association, which was developed to assist public schools in their theater offerings including classes and live performances of plays and musicals. Since its inception, the Wisconsin Theater Association has provided educational resources and performances to thousands of students throughout the state of Wisconsin.

Twenty five years ago, Harv founded the Wisconsin High School Theater Festival. For every year since, hundreds of high schoolers attended the three-day festival to participate in a variety of educational workshops and to view live theater performances by both their high school peers and by professional theater groups. Thousands of high school students have benefited from the festival's 25 year run, and Harv continues to remain closely involved in the planning and execution of the festival to this day.

The Wisconsin Youth Symphony Orchestras, located in Madison, WI, presents the Rabin Youth Arts Awards in honor of their founding conductor, Dr. Marvin Rabin, as a means to honor those who follow in his footsteps. The awards are a forum for promoting quality youth arts programs and honoring those who work diligently to provide arts opportunities for children throughout Wisconsin. They also serve as a means to elevate awareness in our community about the importance of arts education for all children.

Now celebrating its 50th season, WYSO membership has included more than 5,000 young musicians from more than 100 communities in southern Wisconsin. WYSO, currently under the artistic direction of James Smith, includes three full orchestras, a string orchestra, a chamber music program, a percussion ensemble, a harp ensemble and a brass choir program. For more information, visit www.wysomusic.org

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