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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Theatre Erindale Receives Generous Gifts

[Mississauga ON, September 2011] On Friday September 16th at the Erindale Studio Theatre, the annual Awards Night Gala of the Theatre and Drama Studies Program celebrated the beginning of the 21st year of this unique Sheridan-UTM partnership. On hand to help present the Awards were the Vice Principal of UTM Amy Mullin, and Vice President of Sheridan Mary Preece. Though there were many moments that displayed the brilliant talents of current students, the highlights of the evening were the introduction of a unique fund in memory of Lawrence Stern, and the one-time gift of ten thousand dollars from UTM Professor Emeritus Roger Beck and Janet Beck.

The Becks were co-founders of the professional actor-training program, and won the Laurie Pallett Patron of the Arts Award some years ago for their constant patronage and ongoing scholarship donations. This gift, however, was to help celebrate the twentieth anniversary. “It couldn’t have come at a better time”, says Artistic Director Patrick Young. “We’re bursting at the seams this year and mounting the two largest shows we’ve ever produced – Nicholas Nickleby and Stage Door. The Becks’ generosity is sponsoring Assistant Directors for both of those, plus a number of needed extras we could never have afforded without them.”

As a token of the program’s appreciation, Theatre Erindale’s annual festival of one-act Independent Student Productions has been re-named “The Beck Festival”. This year’s edition will play December 8-10 at pay-what-you-can prices (free to Theatre Erindale Members). Accepting the cheque from the Becks on Sheridan’s behalf were VP Mary Preece and Director of Development Lisa Piccolo, who then unveiled a striking logo designed by UTM’s Alison Dias. The logo incorporates the smiling faces of Roger and Janet Beck, and will represent the Beck Festival in perpetuity.

Executive Producer Nancy Copeland and graduate Zaib Shaikh, star of CBC’s Little Mosque on the Prairies, inaugurated a unique and exciting fund in memory of longtime program advisor and distinguished Streetsville drama teacher Lawrence Stern. The fund will support first year students of the program in their early visits to Toronto’s professional theatres. On hand to help celebrate were other past students of Stern’s and graduates of Theatre Erindale, including Gemini-winner and TVO star Mark Sykes.

Also presented during the evening were the Jack Frost Theatre Erindale Awards for distinguished backstage work, the Faculty Awards, The A. L. Fernie Bursaries and Scholarships, the Beck Awards, and special awards in memory of Gina Smith, Meg Young, and David Séguin. The Séguin family arrived with a huge birthday cake big enough to be shared by the entire audience!

Entertaining were Mississauga's busiest Musical Director Anthony Bastianon (an instructor in the program), and a dozen current students from across the country with scenes and songs that were alternately hilarious and rivetting.

Theatre Erindale's upcoming season "The Power of Performance" opens with Charles Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby Part 1 on October 20th. For information contact the box office at 905-569-4369 or www.theatreerindale.com.

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Photo: Roger and Janet Beck with the new logo for the Beck Festival designed by Alison Dias.

