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**Chicago
Humanities
Festival**



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago Humanities Festival Appoints New Artistic Director

The Chicago Humanities Festival announces the appointment of **Matti Bunzl** as Artistic Director effective at the conclusion of this year's iteration of the Fall Festival. Matti will succeed Lawrence "Ren" Weschler who will assume an active consulting role with the CHF as Artistic Director Emeritus. Mr. Bunzl also replaces Mr. Weschler as the Marilyn Thoma Endowed Chair for Artistic Leadership.

Mr. Weschler joined the Festival as its Artistic Director in 2006 and under his creative leadership, CHF Fall Festivals included: "Peace and War," "Climate of Concern," "Thinking Big," "Laughter," and now "The Body." His artistic vision resulted in CHF breaking new ground by commissioning and producing plays, sponsoring art exhibitions and expanding its programming into science and technology. The 2009 Festival "Laughter" caught the national mood perfectly and delivered record audiences. "Ren brought enormous creativity and energy to CHF as our Artistic Director," says CHF Board Chair Willard Fraumann. Weschler is stepping into the emeritus role, he explained, in order to focus greater energy on his very successful literary career.

Mr. Bunzl joined the CHF staff in January of 2010 as Associate Artistic Director while Weschler was on sabbatical leave at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. Bunzl was very involved in developing ideas and finding speakers and performers for "The Body," CHF'S upcoming Festival in November 2010. "We have created a wonderful program around the theme of 'The Body' for the Fall," said CHF Executive Director Stuart Flack "and Matti's eclectic knowledge of the arts and humanities has made it exciting to work with him, and we are very pleased to have him take on a broader leadership role at the Festival."

A graduate of Stanford University and the University of Chicago, Bunzl has been on the faculty of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign since 1998. He is a professor of anthropology, history, and German and also holds appointments in the Program in Jewish Culture and Society, the Gender and

Women's Studies Program, the Unit for Criticism and Interpretive Theory, the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center, the Center for South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, and the European Union Center; a range that reflects his broad scholarly interests.

At the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Bunzl has served as director of the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (2003–2007) and the Program in Jewish Culture and Society (2008 to present). Since 2003, he has also served on the board of directors of the Illinois Humanities Council. Ruth Watkins, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, commented on Bunzl's appointment: "Matti has catalyzed a number of exciting humanities initiatives on our campus, and his current and future work with the Chicago Humanities Festival will enable him to bring those types of initiatives to an even larger stage."

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