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**Philanthropist Yosef Wosk Launches New
Max Wyman Award For Cultural Commentary**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

VANCOUVER, BC, (March 20, 2017) / BC Alliance for Arts + Culture / — A new biennial award celebrating achievement in critical writing and commentary on the visual, performing and literary arts will be presented at a ceremony and gala in Vancouver on April 18. Instituted by community leader and philanthropist Dr. Yosef Wosk, the Max Wyman Award for Cultural Commentary is named in honour of Max Wyman, one of Canada’s foremost critics and cultural commentators.

The award, affectionately known as “the Max”, celebrates writing that stimulates critical thinking, fosters an ongoing discussion about the role of arts and culture in contemporary society, and demonstrates the importance of creative commentary as a tool in our understanding and interpretation of the world around us. It will encompass the visual arts, theatre, dance, literature, all genres of music, film and television, as well as more general cultural commentary, in print, broadcast and online formats.

“The award was established to catalyze the art of creative criticism among us,” says Wosk, who created the award and furnished its $5,000 prize. “As our society matures, feedback must also deepen and respond to inspired offerings. A province-wide award will be presented to a writer for an outstanding piece or body of work that will raise the level of cultural conversation.”

Award recipients will receive a commemorative certificate along with a specially commissioned gold, silver and emerald pin mounted in a limited-edition book, both designed by Robert Chaplin, RCA. In 2019, a $5,000 cash prize will be added to the honours. To mark and celebrate the continuing vitality of creative commentary for future generations, the award recipient will also name an emerging author of critical commentary to receive a $1,000 honorarium.

Max Wyman was born in England and emigrated to Canada in 1967. His career includes longstanding relationships with the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Province* newspapers. He has written for numerous national and international publications including *Maclean’s* and *The New York Times*. He has also published several books on the arts in Canada, among them *Dance Canada: An Illustrated History* (cited as one of the "165 great Canadian books of the twentieth century") and *The Defiant Imagination: Why Culture Matters,* a passionate manifesto asserting the central importance of the arts and culture to modern society.

Wyman has served as governor of the Canadian Conference of the Arts (1972-1974), sat on the board of the Canada Council for the Arts (1995-2000), and was president of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (2002-2006). He recently served as president of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (2010-2012). He has served on numerous cultural committees in Vancouver and juries for prominent national arts awards, including the Governor General’s Performing Arts Awards.

For his services to the arts he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 2001, and received an honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Simon Fraser University in 2003. Other honours include the Queen’s 25th, 50th and 60th Jubilee Medals, the Canada 125 Medal and the Cecilia Zhang Memorial Music Award by the Royal Conservatory of Music in 2004. Wyman has also been active in municipal politics and served as mayor of Lions Bay from 2005-2008.

“We are fortunate to have Max Wyman among us,” says Wosk. “He is a cultural paragon whose clear vision, incisive writing, and fearless voice have both grounded and encouraged us for half a century. He is an unparalleled personality, a cultural critic and midwife of creativity whose influence is sure to be modelled by future generations.”

Wyman called the creation of the award “a surprise, an embarrassment and a delight” and added: “At a time when serious and lively engagement with all kinds of cultural expression seems to be under significant threat, the creation of this award could not be more timely.

“Cultural commentary will not produce a cure for cancer. It will not take us to Mars (not physically, at least). But in its constant probing of new ideas and its ceaseless explorations of the human spirit it gives us ways to rethink who we are and contemplate how we can be better. We are privileged and passing occupiers of this marvellous earth. Books, plays, paintings, ballets, music... they guide us to the hidden truths of our daily being.

“And I salute the humane vision, the generosity and the sheer goodness of heart that animates not just this inspirational project but everything Yosef does to make our world a better place, for those who are here now and for those who will follow. He’s the kind of reader every writer writes for.”

The Max Wyman Award for Cultural Commentary will be formally launched at a ceremony at the Vancouver Playhouse on April 18, 2017. Wyman will not only be the first laureate, but will also be presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award in honour of his commitment and dedication to critical writing and cultural commentary. Christopher Gaze, artistic director of Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival, will be Master of Ceremonies. Among the guest speakers and performers will be publisher Scott McIntyre, multidisciplinary artist Hank Bull, writer and editor Charles Campbell, artistic and executive director of PuSh International Performing Arts Festival Norman Armour, actor Nicola Cavendish, pianist Linda Lee Thomas and dancers Noam Gagnon and Wen Wei Wang.

The Max Wyman Award for Cultural Commentary is produced by The Dance Centre in partnership with the BC Alliance for Arts + Culture.

**Full Award guidelines, including a 2019 call for submissions, will be posted in the coming months on the BC Alliance for Arts + Culture’s website at** [www.allianceforarts.com/awards](http://www.allianceforarts.com/awards)**.**

**About Yosef Wosk:** Yosef Wosk is an ordained rabbi, philanthropist, author, community leader, religious art consultant, bibliophile, musician, businessman, and academic. He is currently an Adjunct Professor and Shadbolt Fellow in the Department of Humanities and former Director of Interdisciplinary Programs at Simon Fraser University, where he developed seminal programs such as *The Philosophers’ Café* and The *Canadian Academic of Independent Scholars*. In addition to his work as a rabbi and receiving two honorary doctorates from SFU and Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Yosef holds PhDs in Religion & Literature and Psychology, and Masters degrees in Education and Theology. An avid adventurer and Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, his enthusiasm for world travel is matched by continued support of a global network of libraries and schools. Yosef is also a key figure in visual arts and culture, having served as the Vice Present of the Museum of Vancouver, and through current appointments with the British Columbia Arts Council and Museums Foundation of Canada. In 2010, Yosef was presented with *The Mayor’s Arts Award (Philanthropy)*,Vancouver’s highest recognition for artists and those who support the arts. An appointed member of *The Order of British Columbia* and recipient of both *The Queen's Golden*and*Diamond Jubilee* Medals, Yosef was recently named one of B.C.’s premier intellectuals, identified as one of the top 10 thinkers in BC at the beginning of the millennium.

**About The Dance Centre:** Established in 1986 as a resource centre for the dance profession and the public in British Columbia, The Dance Centre has evolved into a multifaceted organization offering a range of activities unparalleled in Canadian dance. Seeking to boost the profile of dance, and to develop a stronger infrastructure for the art form, The Dance Centre devises programs and presents performances; manages Scotiabank Dance Centre, Canada's flagship dance facility; promotes BC dance to the public and to presenters; and provides resources and services for its membership of dance professionals.

**About the BC Alliance for Arts + Culture:** The BC Alliance for Arts + Culture is British Columbia's leading arts information aggregator and a resource to the arts, culture and heritage community. Since 1986 the Alliance has advocated for the cultural sector by monitoring public policy; synthesizing issues, disseminating news and research; providing support, services and professional development; and representing the interests of artists and cultural workers. The Alliance represents over 400 members from across the artistic disciplines, including organizations, professional associations, not-for-profit groups, artists and cultural workers throughout British Columbia.

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