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## CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL APPOINTS ALISON CUDDY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

LONGTIME WBEZ REPORTER, PRODUCER, AND HOST TO CHART  
CHF'S ARTISTIC VISION AND LEAD PROGRAMMING TEAM



The Chicago Humanities Festival is pleased to announce the appointment of **Alison Cuddy** as Marilynn Thoma Artistic Director.

Cuddy, formerly CHF's Associate Artistic Director, will transition into the position beginning August 1. Cuddy is already at work preparing CHF's 2018 *Springfest* and *Fallfest* themes.

“I am beyond thrilled to continue my tenure at CHF, a truly dynamic and innovative organization dedicated to preserving a simple but fundamental aspect of our cultural and civic lives: the space in which we can explore, embrace and debate without fear or deep rancor the significant trends and currents shaping our worlds — what we call the ‘social life of ideas.’ I’m eager to continue working with the entire CHF staff to build on our current successes and move forward into an exciting future driven by programming that is both challenging and fun, and welcoming to all.”

Cuddy spent more than ten years at WBEZ 91.5 FM, producing the nationally syndicated program *Odyssey* and hosting WBEZ’s flagship program *Eight Forty-Eight*. The latter offered a wide-ranging focus on current affairs and the news of the day, while surveying the city and state’s broader cultural and social life. It was during her tenure as the host of *Eight Forty-Eight* that Cuddy caught the attention of CHF, becoming a go-to interviewer. Cuddy was hired as Program Director at CHF in 2014.

Cuddy was promoted to Associate Artistic Director in 2015, and in that position, has helped conceptualize and implement CHF’s move into year-round programming, most notably the launch of CHF’s *Springfest* in 2016, “Alison has been a crucial member of the Chicago Humanities Festival team as we expanded to active year-round programming,” says **CHF Board Chair Clark Hulse**. “We look forward to her leadership as CHF further enhances its presence both in Chicago and nationally.”

Cuddy has also been instrumental in the neighborhood-based programming strategy that has brought CHF to Bridgeport, Pilsen, and Bronzeville. She also designed and oversees the *Humanities Without Walls Summer Workshop*, a three-week career development program for humanities PhDs from across the United States. Produced in partnership with a consortium of 15 universities, the *Humanities Without Walls Summer Workshop* gives an annual cohort of 30 PhD students the opportunity to use Chicago as a classroom to explore professional opportunities across the public and private spheres.

During recent *Fallfests* and *Springfests*, Cuddy has interviewed Jonathan Lethem, Arianna Huffington, Dan Savage, and even been serenaded by Elvis Costello.

“I’ve always been impressed by Alison’s intelligence, wit, and, above all else, her passion for Chicago and its civic and cultural communities,” says **Executive Director Phillip Bahar**. “I’m excited to see where Alison takes us, now that she’s entrusted with providing the artistic vision for one of the city’s great cultural institutions.”

Originally hailing from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, Cuddy moved to Chicago in 1999. She holds a Masters of Arts in English from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Bachelor of Arts in Cinema Studies from Concordia University, Montreal. She is on the board of the Chicago Film Archive, and serves on the advisory boards of citywide initiatives such as the Terra Foundation’s Art Design Chicago and the Chicago Community Trust’s On The Table.

Former Marilynn Thoma Artistic Director, Jonathan Elmer, stepped down from the position at the end of June to return full time to Indiana University, Bloomington, where he is a professor of English and director of the College Arts and Humanities Institute.

## **About the Chicago Humanities Festival**

At Chicago Humanities Festival, we believe that humanity thrives when people gather, connect and open themselves to ideas that go beyond their individual experience. That's why for more than 28 years, CHF has been curating live events that allow audiences to connect with thinkers--both established and emerging--and see the world differently. Under the leadership of Executive Director Phillip Bahar and Marilyn Thoma Artistic Director Alison Cuddy, CHF is one of Chicago's most vibrant civic institutions. Join us and celebrate the social life of ideas. [chicagohumanities.org](http://chicagohumanities.org)

## **About the Marilyn Thoma Artistic Director**

The Marilyn Thoma Artistic Director is an endowed position charged with providing a creative and dynamic vision for the Chicago Humanities Festival's programming and partnerships, and is supported by a generous gift from Marilyn Thoma, a longtime member of CHF's Board of Directors.