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## Seattle Rep Announces Installation of Premium Hearing Loop System for Patrons with Hearing Loss

“It was so clear, I forgot I had it on!” – Seattle Rep hearing loop user

**SEATTLE, WA (March 31, 2016)** – With great excitement, Seattle Repertory Theatre today announced the installation of induction hearing loops in both its Bagley Wright and Leo K. Theatres, as well as throughout the theatre’s lobby, significantly enhancing the listening experience for theatre patrons with hearing loss. Induction loop technology is prevalent in theatres and opera houses throughout the UK and Scandinavia, but widespread use in the United States has only started in recent years. To date, Seattle Rep is one of only three institutions in the greater Seattle area to install this high performance, user-friendly assistive listening system for those who are hard of hearing.

Hearing loops allow users to connect wirelessly to onstage microphones by pressing a button on their hearing aid or cochlear implant, activating a telecoil, a small copper coil found in most aids and implants. A loop is a copper wire installed throughout the theatre’s seating area, creating a magnetic field that enables a telecoil to wirelessly transmit direct sound to the listener.

“Our patrons were telling us our assistive listening systems needed an upgrade, and we’re pleased to introduce this to the Seattle arts community,” said Jeffrey Herrmann, the Rep’s Managing Director. “Creating an inclusive arts community is a priority for the Rep, and we hope other theatres will follow.” The Rep already offers patrons with hearing loss a captioned performance of each play, as well as an American Sign Language interpreted performance. Infrared headsets that wirelessly transmit sound to individual headphones were previously available at the Rep, but were often noisy or would cut out during performances. For patrons who don’t have hearing aids or a personal telecoil receiver, the Rep has headsets available at coat check that can access the new hearing loop technology.

“Even with hearing aids or cochlear implants, it’s a challenge to understand dialogue in venues like theatres. Sound amplified over loud speakers is very difficult to understand for many people with hearing loss, even with the best hearing aids or cochlear implants. What’s needed is a clear speech signal transmitted directly to your hearing device, separating the sounds you want to hear from the sounds you don’t,” said Karen Utter, President of the Hearing Loss Association of America – Washington (HLAA-WA).

Cheri Perazzoli, Director of Advocacy for HLAA-WA and founder of the Let’s Loop Seattle initiative, notes that, “Patrons who have telecoils will no longer have to stand in line to check out a receiver, remove their own hearing device to wear the venue’s headphones, or fumble with volume controls in the dark.”

The hearing loop was first put into use for the recent Rep production *Luna Gale*, and patrons exclaimed that it was “the best I’ve ever heard a show!” and that “It was so clear, I forgot I had it

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on.” The hearing loop is available now at the Rep to anyone who would like to use it at any time. On April 24, 2016, Seattle Rep will host a public unveiling of the hearing loop system at 7:00 p.m., prior to a captioned, preview performance of *Sherlock Holmes and The American Problem*, which will start at 7:30 p.m. For tickets to this or other Rep productions, or for more information, visit [seattlerep.org](http://seattlerep.org).

The new hearing loop systems at the Rep were installed by DRS Sound Inc. and HearingLoop NW, and were funded by a 4Culture grant, individual donations, and an online campaign through power2give presented by ArtsFund.

Let’s Loop Seattle is an initiative of HLAA-WA, a nonprofit, volunteer-based organization providing support and advocacy for people with hearing loss. For more information, visit [LoopSeattle.org](http://LoopSeattle.org) and [HearingLoss-WA.org](http://HearingLoss-WA.org).

**About Seattle Repertory Theatre**

Seattle Rep was founded in 1963 and is currently led by Artistic Director Braden Abraham and Managing Director Jeffrey Herrmann. One of America's premier not-for-profit resident theatres, Seattle Repertory Theatre has achieved international renown for its consistently high production and artistic standards, and was awarded the 1990 Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre. With an emphasis on entertaining plays of true dramatic and literary worth, Seattle Rep produces a season of plays along with educational programs, new play workshops, and special presentations.

**For more information, interviews, please contact:**

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