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A \$3 million donation by The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] will help provide the Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago, one of the country's premiere art institutions specializing in authentic and progressive interpretations of African and African-American dance, music and folklore, with its own performance space on Chicago's South Side.

The gift will go toward the completion of the Muntu Performing Arts Center, the site of the Muntu's future permanent home, now under construction on 47th and Greenwood in Chicago's North Kenwood/Oakland neighborhood. The gift will be used to build the Center's main lobby, a studio theatre and a 400-seat, main-stage theatre, which will be available for use by other arts and cultural groups when Muntu is not staging a performance.

"The Center will surely be a hub for performing arts, but also an economic and social driver in the historically significant and newly redeveloping Bronzeville, North Kenwood and Oakland neighborhoods," said Boeing Chief Financial Officer James Bell, who made the announcement today in the north Boeing Gallery at Chicago's Millennium Park. The announcement was preceded by a free outdoor performance by several Muntu dancers and musicians. Joan Gray, Muntu's president, accepted the gift on behalf of the dance company.

"The hope is that the Center and the Boeing Theatres within it will become one of the city's top destinations for arts lovers from all over Chicago and the world," said Bell.

According to Gray, the Performing Arts Center will represent a number of important firsts. It will be the first permanent home of an African dance company in the U.S., and Muntu will be the first dance company of any kind in Chicago to own its own performance space.

The Muntu gift reflects Boeing's long-standing commitment to investing in projects and programs that support diversity and diverse communities, as well as those that promote participation in the arts among audiences that may not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in these activities.

"It's important to recognize, nurture and celebrate the various means of expression of all the city's many and diverse citizens," said Bell. "That's why Boeing's support of arts and culture extends far beyond Millennium Park, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and other downtown destinations into the city's neighborhoods where arts institutions like Muntu can serve as a source of pride and as a catalyst for further development."

Boeing's investment will be the first of its kind from a major corporation and the second-largest investment to date in the \$15 million capital campaign for the Center, which is still ongoing. The Center is expected to open to the public in the spring of 2006.

"I hope that the announcement of Boeing's investment will encourage other corporations and charitable foundations to help Muntu realize its dream of having its own permanent performing space," said Bell. "Boeing has been a supporter of Muntu Dance Theatre performances since we first came to the city; it has become near and dear to our hearts, and we are thrilled that we are able to continue to help it thrive and grow in this way."

The Muntu Dance Theatre donation is part of a limited capital investment program for Boeing in the Chicago area. The first investment was for the Boeing Galleries in Millennium Park. According to Bell, this and future investments are intended to build on the solid foundation the company has established in Chicago through its ongoing support of community initiatives. Chicago has been the site of the company's world headquarters since 2001.

The largest African dance company outside of Africa, Muntu ("the essence of humanity" in the Bantu language) Dance Theatre of Chicago performs authentic dances from various cultures in Africa and the Americas. In addition to performances, Muntu provides education and community-based programs, touching the lives of over 300 students each week.

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