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OUR VIEW

HATS OFF TO THEATER

It goes without saying that Hartford is lucky to have the nationally acclaimed Hartford Stage Company. The city is particularly blessed to have a second theater company, TheaterWorks.

TheaterWorks is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year with, among other things, an appearance by film and stage actress Kathleen Turner in the play "High" this summer (see theaterworkshartford.org).

It's a fitting tribute to the company and its founder, Steve Campo. TheaterWorks wasn't founded by a committee of civic leaders, a business group or a university. It was Mr. Campo and a few friends; it

THEATERWORKS ANNIVERSARY

▶ Steve Campo's remarkable drive led to improbable success

didn't look much different from those old movies in which the young people put on a show to save the malt shop, or whatever.

Except that it was different. Mr. Campo was intent on starting a nonprofit professional theater, a daunting challenge.

Through a remarkable combination of vision, energy and persistence, along with key business

partnerships, he has not only established TheaterWorks as a major entertainment venue — drawing more than 40,000 people to downtown

Hartford for its off-Broadway-style plays — but begun to leverage the theater to revitalize the once-moribund Pearl Street area.

A key was gaining ownership in 1993 of the beautiful 1927-vintage Moorish Revival building on Pearl Street, now called City Arts on Pearl, where the company has held forth since the 1980s. Mr. Campo has renovated the building, added an art gallery and turned it into an arts incubator, with eight other nonprofit music, dance and theater groups headquartered there.

More recently he has begun to use a historic former synagogue up the street, and is developing a plan to revive more of the neighborhood, where a few key infill developments and other entertainment venues could make a huge difference.

Mr. Campo stands in a line with Chick Austin, Tim Keating, Moshe Paranov, Judy Dworin and other innovators who, over the years, put the art in Hartford. We wish him many more years of success.