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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cosanti Foundation Reacts to Demolition Plans for Paolo Soleri Amphitheater in Santa Fe

Architect Paolo Soleri hopes to find alternatives to demolition.

Arcosanti, Arizona, June 11, 2010 – On June 8, 2010, the Santa Fe New Mexican reported that the Paolo Soleri Amphitheater at the Santa Fe Indian School “is scheduled for demolition.” The theater was designed in 1965 by Italian architect Paolo Soleri, who is most noted for pioneering concepts in the fields of environmental architecture and alternative urban planning. Many alumni of the Santa Fe Indian School and local residents of Santa Fe are outraged at the idea of losing the theater, a well-loved venue for performing arts events and graduation ceremonies for the students.

Paolo Soleri said “I am willing to do anything to support the preservation of the theater.” Architect Doug Lee (www.leesak.com) said about the demolition plans “It would be a great tragedy when we actually built the theater working with local Indian students.” The Cosanti Foundation looks forward to supporting any effort to preserve, restore, and maintain the Paolo Soleri Amphitheater as a cultural and historic resource in Santa Fe and to work with a variety of organizations to both prevent demolition and to raise funds to help the theater continue to serve both the Santa Fe Indian School students and the Santa Fe community.

Soleri last visited the theater when he traveled to Santa Fe to participate in the 2009 Celebrate Sustainable Santa Fe Festival. Roger Tomalty, who has worked with Soleri for over 40 years, accompanied Soleri during the visit and “was surprised how enthralled Paolo was with the structure.” On his visit, Soleri said “I rediscovered the value of the theater.” Cosanti Foundation executive Tomiaki Tamura describes the structure: “The aesthetic vocabulary of the theater resonates with the environment and architecture of Santa Fe, then and now.”

In 1965 the Institute of American Indian Arts (IAIA) approached Paolo Soleri to design an outdoor amphitheater at its campus in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Soleri’s design called for a dramatically upwardly-shaped, earth-cast concrete structure to cover the performance area. The theater has since been used for events ranging from internationally publicized rock concerts to IAIA graduation ceremonies to the annual Native Roots and Rhythms Festival.

From the book *Soleri: Architecture as Human Ecology* by Iolanda Lima, Copyright 2003 by The Monacelli Press:

“In 1964 Lloyd Kiva New, president of the Institute of American Arts and a friend and admirer of Soleri, commissioned him to build a three hundred seat open-air theater that would both serve its traditional function and “frame the moon and sun. Soleri accepted the assignment... What he was after was not so much stage mobility as synergy among



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the participants. He achieved this by creating a stage and seating with no division, a place where actors and musicians could interact with spectators.”

“Soleri said of the project: ‘We were hoping actors would not just use the stage, but also the area above it, and that’s why we designed the bridge and other platforms. It was meant to be similar to the Elizabethan theater, with action taking place on different levels... The notion of using the local landscape, geology, and natural materials was an integral part of the process. We molded earth and arranged the arches, then we excavated trenches and poured concrete to form the walls, using a technique that captures the consistency and shape of the earth itself.’”

Paolo Soleri recently said “Lloyd Kiva New was the mover that had the imagination and determination to have the outdoor theater at the Santa Fe Indian School. The construction began as the cooperation of the school’s students headed by Lloyd himself and me with the Cosanti Foundation of Scottsdale, Arizona. Imagination was at the origin of the theater, imagination is essential now. This American culture is bent on demolition in all fields. It is a deleterious way of making history and forfeiting memories, the very memories cutting the landscape of history for country in search of culture and civility.”

Soleri’s primary work has been in city design and planning, rather than focusing on individual buildings. He is most known for the alternative planning concept arcology (architecture + ecology) as a method of reducing human impact on the environment while improving quality of life. Soleri often describes “the orchid vs. the forest,” comparing a single building as an architect’s beautiful “orchid” to a complex, interacting city as the “forest.” To Soleri, the amphitheater is an orchid he is proud of.

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About Soleri

Paolo Soleri is an internationally recognized architect, artist, and philosopher who is best known for his theory of arcology, blending architecture and ecology to create a pedestrian urban system in response to problems caused by urban sprawl including environmental degradation, resource depletion, lack of cultural activity, social isolation, disconnection between people and natural resources, and pollution. Soleri founded the Cosanti Foundation, incorporated in 1965, as a nonprofit, educational organization for planning and architecture research. In 1970, Soleri launched Arcosanti (www.arcosanti.org), a prototype arcology in central Arizona.

His numerous honors include the AIA Craftsmanship Medal for Excellence in Design (1963), Gold Medal of Architecture at the World Biennale, Sofia, Bulgaria (1981), the Golden Lion Award at La Bienale di Venezia (2000), the Smithsonian Institution’s Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Lifetime Achievement Award (2006), and the Arizona Technology Council, Arizona Governor’s Celebration of Innovation Lifetime Achievement Award (2008) among dozens of other honors. Soleri was named as an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British



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Architects in 1996, has received multiple honorary doctorates, and his work continues to be exhibited worldwide.

Paolo Soleri is 90 years old, lives in central Arizona, and continues to write, design, draw, give lectures, and provide advice and direction for the continuation of the Arcosanti project.

About Arcology and Arcosanti

Though the arcology concept is still very theoretical, for nearly 40 years Paolo Soleri has been experimenting with the arcology hypothesis at the Arcosanti project in central Arizona. A living, “urban laboratory,” Arcosanti seeks to test and demonstrate the principles of arcology in practice. Arcosanti welcomes about 40,000 visitors annually and over 6,000 people from around the world have participated in Arcosanti’s immersive educational Workshop programs.

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Images of Paolo Soleri or the Amphitheater are available on request.