GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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"BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN" RAISED VITAL FUNDS TO BENEFIT ARTS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT

BEBE NEUWIRTH, CHRIS PAUL, AND HAROLD A. BROWN WERE HONORED AT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

EVENT MARKED THE LAUNCH OF THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ARTIST & ATHLETE COLLABORATIVE

SURPRISE GUEST APPEARANCES INCLUDED DULÉ HILL, MELANIE LYNSKEY, KRISTIE MACOSKO KRIEGER, SARA PORKALOB, QUEEN LATIFAH, AND JASON REITMAN

LOS ANGELES (October 19, 2026) – Geffen Playhouse raised vital funds for the theater's education, community engagement and artistic initiatives at its signature *Backstage at the Geffen* annual fundraiser held October 18, it was announced today. **Melanie Lynskey** presented the Artistic Impact Award to Tony and Emmy Award winner **Bebe Neuwirth**, **Queen Latifah** presented the inaugural Community Impact Award to NBA All-Star, Olympian, and philanthropist **Chris Paul**, and **Kristie Macosko Krieger** presented the Founders Award to Geffen Playhouse founding trustee **Harold A. Brown.**

Geffen Playhouse Executive Director/CEO Gil Cates, Jr. and Geffen Playhouse Artistic Director Tarell Alvin McCraney welcomed the crowd and thanked the audience for their ongoing support of the arts and for helping to keep storytelling thriving on Geffen stages for years to come.

The evening of unscripted, unannounced storytellers and performers was hosted by Geffen alum **Marcel Spears** and featured personal behind-the-scenes anecdotes from a lineup of surprise celebrity guests including **Dulé Hill** and **Jason Reitman**. The evening's entertainment opened with a powerful, original dance performance choreographed by Emmy Award-winning choreographer **Mia Michaels** exclusively for *Backstage at the Geffen*. Next up was an original song composed and performed by Geffen alum **Sara Porkalob** from her upcoming play *Dragon Baby*, the final installment of her *The Dragon Cycle* trilogy, currently in development with Geffen Playhouse.

Prior to presenting the Community Impact Award to Chris Paul, Queen Latifah announced the launch of the **Geffen Playhouse Artist & Athlete Collaborative**, a first-of-its-kind initiative chaired by Chris Paul that brings artists and athletes onto the same stage in the years leading up to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The collaborative will convene athletes, playwrights, performers, and cultural leaders to develop and stage original works before, during, and after the Summer Games, steps away from where the world's top athletes and their families will live and play in Los Angeles.

Backstage at the Geffen recognizes the accomplishments of leaders in the artistic community, supports the theater's mission to produce original, quality work and raises funds for its education and community engagement programs, which bring live theater to youth, seniors and veterans in communities across Los Angeles. *Backstage at the Geffen* celebrates the joy, power and community that make theater vital.

Bebe Neuwirth – Artistic Impact Award
Over the course of her distinguished career, Bebe has achieved extraordinary success in theatre, television and film. In 1980, she made her Broadway debut in *A Chorus Line*. She then appeared in *Little Me, Dancin'*, and *Sweet Charity*, for which she won her first Tony Award, followed by *Damn Yankees*, *Fosse*, and *The Addams Family*. Bebe won her second Tony, along with the Drama Desk, Astaire, Outer Critics Circle, and Drama League Distinguished Performance of the Year Awards for her portrayal of "Velma" in *Chicago*. She later played "Roxie" and "Mama Morton" in the show, making her the only triple-threat to play all three lead roles on Broadway. Her recent performance as "Fräulein Schneider" in *Cabaret* earned her a Drama Desk Award and a third Tony nomination. In 2023, she was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame. Bebe won two Emmy Awards for her role as "Lilith Sternin-Crane" on *Cheers* and received nominations for her work on *Frasier* and for her portrayal of "Dorothy Parker" in the TV movie *Dash and Lilly*. Her numerous film credits include *Say Anything*, *Green Card*, *Bugsy*, *Jumanji*, and *Summer of Sam*. Ms. Neuwirth received the CTFD Rolex Dance Award, the Dance Magazine Award, and the Sarah Siddons Award, among others. She is an honorary member of IATSE Local One, the Stage Hands Union. She previously served on the board of the Entertainment Community Fund, where she founded The Dancers' Resource–a program aimed at relieving the particular emotional and physical challenges faced by dancers.

Chris Paul – Community Impact Award
Affectionately known as the "Point God," Chris Paul is a 12-time NBA All-Star and two-time Olympic Gold medalist. He was named to the NBA's 75th Anniversary Team as one of the 75 greatest players in NBA history. In 2021, Paul became the first player in league history to record 20,000 points and 10,000 assists in their career. He ranks second on the NBA all-time career assists and steals list. In February 2026, Chris announced his retirement after 21 seasons in the NBA. Off the court, he's a father, husband, entrepreneur, author, and philanthropist. His New York Times best-selling memoir, *Sixty-One: Life Lessons from Papa*, *On and Off the Court*, is a powerful and unexpected memoir of family, faith, tragedy, and life's most important lessons. His business footprint is diverse and includes a multi-platform production company Ohh Dip!!! Entertainment which focuses on creating robust documentaries, as well as scripted and

unscripted content. Through the Chris Paul Family Foundation, Chris continues to provide advocacy and resources that enrich and strengthen communities across the country through its Club 61 Leadership Alliance and the accredited HBCU Business of Entertainment Media and Sports class at North Carolina A&T University and Southern University. Paul co-launched the Social Change Fund United with Dwyane Wade and Carmelo Anthony. His philanthropic efforts have earned him the 2016 ESPY's "Sports Humanitarian of the Year" award, the NBA Community Assist Award five times, and the Kobe & Gigi Bryant WNBA Advocacy Award.

Harold A. Brown – Founders Award
Harold A. Brown is an entertainment attorney and longtime partner at Gang, Tyre, Ramer, Brown & Passman, which he joined in 1976. He was also a founding trustee of Geffen Playhouse and served for 25 years, helping shape the theater as a leading cultural institution in Los Angeles. Over the course of his distinguished career, Brown has represented many of Hollywood's leading artists, filmmakers, producers and executives, including Steven Spielberg, Stephen King, Robert Zemeckis, Michael Mann, George Miller, Michael De Luca, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. Known for his deep relationships with colleagues and clients, Brown was honored as the 2017 Beverly Hills Bar Association Entertainment Lawyer of the Year. He has been a trustee of Pitzer College since 2009, serving as its Board Chair from 2017-2021.

Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg, The Adi and Jerry Greenberg Foundation, and UCLA Health served as Presenting Sponsors. Additional sponsors included Gange, Tyre, Ramer, Brown & Passman, Inc.; Linda Bernstein Rubin and Tony Rubin; Alan and Cindy Horn; Paramount; Steve Tisch; and Miranda and Brett Tollman among others.

The *Backstage at the Geffen* Host Committee included Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg; George Cheeks; Mary Ann Cloyd; Bryan Cranston and Robin Dearden; William Stanford Davis and Laura Pallas; Colman and Raúl Domingo; Tara Duncan; Larissa FastHorse; Carla Gardini; Patricia Glaser and Sam Mudie; Adi and Jerry Greenberg; David Greenwalt; Dulé Hill and Jazmyn Simon; Cindy and Alan Horn; Robert Iger and Willow Bay; LaTanya Richardson Jackson; Laura and Jarred Kennedy; Allen and Jessica Kling; Karen and Walter Loewenstern; Fay and Frank Mancuso; Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy; Alana Mayo; Madeline and Bruce Ramer; Allison Rawlings; Linda Bernstein Rubin and Tony Rubin; Michelle Satter; Chris T. Schmidt; Jodi and Howard Tenenbaum; Miranda and Brett Tollman; Julie and Peter Weil; Rita Wilson and Tom Hanks; and Kevyn Wynn.

The post-show reception featured catering by Alligator Pear Catering with wine and spirits sponsored by Deutsch Family Wine & Spirits.

ABOUT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE
Geffen Playhouse has been a hub of the Los Angeles theater scene since opening its doors in 1995. Noted for its intimacy and celebrated for its world-renowned mix of classic and contemporary plays, provocative new works and second productions, the not-for-profit organization continues to present a body of work that has garnered national recognition. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at

large in the arts. Named in honor of entertainment mogul and philanthropist David Geffen, who made the initial donation to the theater, the company was founded by Gilbert Cates and is currently helmed by Executive Director/CEO Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Tarell Alvin McCraney and Board Chair Mary Ann Cloyd. www.geffenplayhouse.org

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