

## LINER NOTES: SONGWRITERS, STORIES AND MUSIC WITH RITA WILSON AND FRIENDS

**JESSI ALEXANDER, KRISTIAN BUSH, RICHARD MARX, JON RANDALL, LINDY ROBBINS, BILLY STEINBERG AND OTHER GUEST MUSICIANS WILL JOIN WILSON FOR AN EXCLUSIVE TWO-WEEKEND DECEMBER ENGAGEMENT IN THE INTIMATE AUDREY SKIRBALL KENIS THEATER**

**LOS ANGELES** (October 29, 2015) – Rita Wilson brings her vocal and songwriting talents to the Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the Geffen Playhouse for eight shows in December. For each performance, Wilson will be joined by special guests for an evening of songwriters telling the stories behind their songs. The shows will be performed in the round with the audience surrounding the artists, providing an up-close and personal experience. They include: Jessi Alexander, Kristian Bush, Richard Marx, Jon Randall, Lindy Robbins, Billy Steinberg among others.

Wilson is no stranger to the Geffen, having appeared in numerous productions over the theater's 20-year history, including *Dinner with Friends* and *Love, Loss and What I Wore*. In 2009, she was presented the Distinction in Theater Award at the annual *Backstage at the Geffen* event.

Well-known as an actress (*It's Complicated*, *Sleepless in Seattle*, a recurring role in CBS's *The Good Wife*, HBO's award-winning series, *Girls* and, most recently on Broadway in Larry David's smash hit, *Fish in the Dark*), and as a film producer (*Mamma Mia!*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and its upcoming sequel), her first love is music. Wilson achieved her dream with the 2012 Decca Records release of her debut album, *AM/FM*, an intimate, elegant and beautifully-sung collection of classics from the '60s and '70s that, taken together, make up the soundtrack of her young life.

Since the release of *AM/FM*, Wilson has focused on a new component of her music as a songwriter. During the past two years, she has collaborated with a number of extraordinarily-talented and successful songwriters composing original material for her second album, scheduled for an early 2016 release. Some of this material was featured in Wilson's sold-out two-week residency at the famed Carlyle Café in New York City in 2014.

Guest songwriters to perform their songs and tell the stories behind them will include:

Established singer/songwriter, **Jessi Alexander**, has written some of the chart topping hits on country radio today. Alexander has penned four #1 singles including "I Drive Your Truck" recorded by Lee Brice which won Song of the Year from the 2013 CMA Awards, 2014 ACM Awards, and 2013 NSAI Awards. Additional #1 singles include Blake Shelton's "Mine Would Be You" and "Drink On It". Alexander's career skyrocketed with her song "The Climb". Miley Cyrus recorded the song and it soon became the anthem for her box office hit *The Hannah Montana Movie* and won the 2009 MTV Movie Awards Best Song from a Movie. Jessi's nine song album, *Down Home* is now available on iTunes.

Grammy-winning recording artist **Kristian Bush** has been leaving his mark on music for more than two decades. The singer, songwriter, producer and multi-instrumentalist started his career with folk-rock duo Billy

Pilgrim in the early 1990s; in 2004, he exploded onto the country music scene with Sugarland, surpassing sales of over 22 million albums worldwide, achieving five #1 singles and winning numerous awards, including Grammys, AMAs, ACMs, CMT Music Awards and CMAs. Bush made his solo debut with catchy Top 20 hit "Trailer Hitch" and his follow-up single "Light Me Up" was spotlighted on Apple Music, People, ETOline and Billboard.com. Both songs are featured on his critically-acclaimed album *Southern Gravity*, which *Country Weekly* named the "feel-good album of the year." To date, Bush has garnered six BMI Awards for his songwriting, and in 2011 he founded the music publishing company and songwriting collective Songs of the Architect. Recent collaborations include Bobby Bones, Rita Wilson, Dan Tyminski, *Pretty Little Liars* star Lucy Hale and more. Bush is serving as a celebrity ambassador for Goodwill Industries International, with "Trailer Hitch" featured as the centerpiece of their #GiveltAway campaign. Bush is also the focus of Nash TV Films' first-ever documentary *Walk Tall: The Journey of Sugarland's Kristian Bush*, which aired in 80 markets nationwide.

As a performer, songwriter and producer, **Richard Marx's** nearly three-decade-long career has had innumerable highlights. The Chicago native has sold more than 30 million albums worldwide, starting with his self-titled debut which went to #8 and spawned four Top 5 singles, including the chart-topping "Hold on to the Nights," with "Don't Mean Nothing" earning him a Grammy nomination for Best Male Rock Vocal Performance. The follow-up, 1989's *Repeat Offender*, was even more successful, hitting #1 and going quadruple-platinum with two #1 singles in "Satisfied" and "Right Here Waiting." When both Rush Street (with two #1 AC hits in "Keep Coming Back" and "Hazard") and Paid Vacation (with its #1 AC hit, "Now and Forever") went platinum, Marx achieved a seven-year string of triumphs that rivaled any in pop-rock music history. To this day, he is the only male artist in history to have his first seven singles reach the Top 5 on the Billboard charts. He went on to earn a 2004 Song of the Year Grammy for co-authoring Luther Vandross' "Dance with My Father." Across all formats, Marx has scored an amazing total of 14 #1 singles (including Keith Urban's #1 smash "Long Hot Summer") both as a performer and songwriter/producer, making him a true multi-talented threat who continues to challenge himself and his fans. He holds the honor of being one of a handful of artists who have had a number one hit in each of the past four decades.

**Jon Randall** started his professional musical journey singing backup and playing guitar with Emmylou Harris's Grammy award winning Nash Ramblers. Randall has toured and recorded with countless household names including Vince Gill and Dierks Bentley. Most known for his CMA Song of the Year award for "Whiskey Lullaby," Randall is credited as co-writer with Whisperin' Bill Anderson and producer of "Up on the Ridge," Dierks Bentley's acoustic project which earned CMA, Grammy, and ACM nominations. Randall's success as a musician, background singer, writer, and producer continues to flourish from the heart of Nashville. Randall currently serves as a Governor on the board of the Nashville Recording Academy where he previously served as President.

**Lindy Robbins** is an award-winning, multi-platinum selling songwriter from Los Angeles. Her current and recent radio hits include: the #1 worldwide hit "Want to Want Me" by Jason Derulo as well as the follow up single "Cheyenne;" David Guetta's "Dangerous" (featuring Sam Martin); "Classic" by MKTO; "Slow Down" by Selena Gomez; "Skyscraper" by Demi Lovato; "Tonight, Tonight" by Hot Chelle Rae; "It Girl" by Jason Derulo; and "Miss Movin' On" by Fifth Harmony. She is also known for writing the top 5 singles: "Incomplete" by the Backstreet Boys, "What's Left of Me" by Nick Lachey, and the 2006 Disney Song of the Year "Cinderella" by The Cheetah Girls. Other key releases include songs recorded by a variety of diverse artists: One Direction,

5 Seconds of Summer, Zedd, Jlo, Leona Lewis, Olly Murs, Faith Hill, One Republic, Ella Henderson, R5, Prince Royce, Michael Feinstein, Anastasia, Brandy, Jason Mraz, Liza Minnelli, Jordin Sparks, Toni Braxton, Shaggy, Westlife, Gloriana, Matthew Morrison, Big Time Rush, Bruce Vilanch, David Cook, Lisa Loeb, Jesse McCartney, Clay Aiken, Monica, and Audra McDonald.

**Billy Steinberg** has been among the most successful songwriters of the past 30 years, co-writing (with Tom Kelly) five #1 singles on Billboard's "Hot 100" chart, including "Like A Virgin" (Madonna), "True Colors" (Cyndi Lauper), "So Emotional" (Whitney Houston), "Eternal Flame" (The Bangles) and "Alone" (Heart). Additionally, Billy co-wrote other well-known Top 10 U.S. pop hits, including "I'll Stand By You" (Pretenders, Carrie Underwood), "I Touch Myself" (the Divinyls), "How Do I Make You" (Linda Ronstadt), "I Drove All Night" (Roy Orbison, Cyndi Lauper, Celine Dion), "In Your Room" (The Bangles), "Too Little Too Late" (JoJo) and "Give Your Heart A Break" (Demi Lovato). Steinberg and Kelly were inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 2011. Growing up in Palm Springs, California, he pursued a career as a recording artist and songwriter while also working in his family's table grape business. His band, Billy Thermal (Thermal was the town where the vineyard business was located), was signed to legendary producer Richard Perry's Planet Records. In the mid-1990's, Steinberg teamed up with Rick Nowels, a highly regarded writer/producer. The duo won Grammy Awards for producing their song and title cut, "Falling Into You," from Celine Dion's multi-platinum, 1996 album. Steinberg & Nowels also wrote hit singles for Melanie C. ("I Turn To You") and Robert Miles ("One And One"). Billy currently works with songwriting partner, Josh Alexander. They have written and produced the hits "Too Little Too Late" (JoJo) and "Give Your Heart A Break" (Demi Lovato).

Tickets priced from \$79 to \$89; VIP cabaret-style seating (including two complimentary drinks served table-side) available from \$129 to \$149. Fees may apply. Purchase in person at the Geffen Playhouse box office, by phone at 310.208.5454 or on line at [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com).

Thank you to Morgan Stanley and Keyes for their presenting sponsorships.

### **PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE**

Thursday, Dec. 10, 2015	8:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Jessi Alexander, Richard Marx & Jon Randall)
Friday, Dec. 11, 2015	8:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Jessi Alexander, Richard Marx & Jon Randall)
Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015	7:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Richard Marx and other guests)
Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015	9:30 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Richard Marx and other guests)
Thursday, Dec. 17, 2015	8:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Kristian Bush, Lindy Robbins & Billy Steinberg)
Friday, Dec. 18, 2015	8:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Kristian Bush, Lindy Robbins & Billy Steinberg)
Saturday, Dec. 19, 2015	7:00 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Kristian Bush, Lindy Robbins & Billy Steinberg)
Saturday, Dec. 19, 2015	9:30 pm (Rita Wilson joined by Kristian Bush, Lindy Robbins & Billy Steinberg)

Guest musician schedule is subject to change.

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### **LOCATION**

Audrey Skirball Kenis Theater at the Geffen Playhouse  
10886 Le Conte Avenue Los Angeles, CA 90024

### **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 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. 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 Artistic Director Randall Arney, Executive Director Gil Cates, Jr. and Co-Chairs of the Board Martha Henderson and Pamela Robinson. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year and maintains an extensive education and outreach program designed to engage young people in the community at large in the arts. Following a strong 2014/2015 season, during which five productions extended, the company's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary season features eight productions (two world and three West Coast premieres) featuring some of the nation's leading playwrights and directors. [www.geffenplayhouse.com](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com)

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