

**MELLODY HOBSON & GEORGE LUCAS
AND DAVID FURNISH & SIR ELTON JOHN
HONORED AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

LADY GAGA MAKES SURPRISE APPEARANCE – OPENS THE SHOW!

***Star-Studded, Sell-Out Event Raises More Than \$1.5 Million
Benefitting Arts and Education Programs and New Play Development***

LOS ANGELES, March 23, 2015 – Sunday (March 22) night’s star-studded fundraiser at the Geffen Playhouse and the pre-show host committee dinner grossed over \$1.5 million, a record, for the Geffen Playhouse’s education, outreach and artistic initiatives. Multi-award winning composer and a Geffen Playhouse Board Founding Trustee **Quincy Jones** presented the **Distinction in Service Award** to Ariel Investments President **Melody Hobson** and distinguished filmmaker **George Lucas**. Tony nominated director **Jason Moore** presented the **Distinction in Theater Award** to producer **David Furnish** and internationally renowned singer/songwriter and performer, **Sir Elton John**.

Castle star **Nathan Fillion** served as Master of Ceremonies for *Backstage at the Geffen*, an irreverent evening of laughter, music and stories featuring personal “backstage” memories and musical performances by stars of the stage and screen including: **Anjelica Huston, Samuel L. Jackson, Beau Bridges** and Geffen Playhouse Artistic Director, **Randall Arney**. Virtuoso violinist, **Lee England, Jr.** who, coincidentally, played for Melody Hobson and George Lucas’s wedding, performed his version of “All of Me” by John Legend. The multi-faceted actress, singer, dancer and choreographer **Toni Basil** choreographed 12 dancers who performed a hip hop version of “Swan Lake.”

David Geffen served as Honorary Chair of the event; **Linda Bernstein Rubin** and **Loretta Everett Kaufman** Co-Chaired the *Backstage at the Geffen* committee. **Pamela Robinson Hollander** and **Martha Henderson** Co-Chair the Geffen Playhouse Board of Directors. The evening was beautifully produced by **Gil Cates, Jr.** and directed by **Randall Arney**.

The curtain rose to wild applause as **Lady Gaga**, surprising everyone including the honorees, took center stage to perform “You and I” accompanying herself on the piano before joining the audience for the remainder of the show.

Monies raised benefit the Geffen Playhouse’s artistic initiatives including new play development, playwright commissions, and second productions, as well as the not-for-profit’s award-winning education and outreach programs which help bring the excitement of live theater to more than 15,000 disadvantaged youth, seniors and veterans annually.

Backstage at the Geffen title sponsor **City National Bank**, returning for the sixth year, was joined by presenting sponsors **Audi of America, Clay Lacy Aviation, Louis XIII**, and **Robert K. Kraft**, with special thanks to **UCLA**.

Event Highlights:

- **Love blooms on stage** – Samuel L. Jackson regaled the audience with his story of stumbling into acting in college and for the love of a girl. The acting panned out and so did the girl, LaTanya Richardson. She became his wife and to this day, “Is my harshest critic and biggest supporter.”
- **From London to New York** – Anjelica Huston, in hysterical, self-deprecating memories of her earliest reviews, remembered one critic comparing her voice to, “An unstrung tennis racket.” A

turn as understudy to Marianne Faithfull (then dating Mick Jagger), as Ophelia in *Hamlet* eventually led her to pack her bags, leaving London for New York and beginning her career in America.

- **Memories of Gil** – Beau Bridges waxed nostalgic about his mentor, the late Gil Cates, director, producer and Geffen Playhouse founder. The story reached back to 1976 when Bridges was tapped to co-star in the film *Dragonfly* directed by Cates. It was a less than stellar beginning when Bridges proceeded to faint after working himself into a frenzy over a particularly daunting scene. Unfortunate as that experience may have seemed, Cates partnered with Bridges many more times in the following decades. Bridges credited Cates with teaching him patience, understanding and the power of learning from others.
- **The show must go on—or not!** Geffen Playhouse Artistic Director Randall Arney spoke lovingly of the late, great stage legend Uta Hagen and her nearly “break a leg” experience when she literally fell off the stage during a performance. Despite her protests to keep going, she was rushed to nearby UCLA Medical Center and ever the trooper, spent two hours entertaining the doctors and nurses well into the wee hours before receiving clearance to perform the remainder of the run.
- **A Legacy Built on a Dream** – Geffen Playhouse Board Vice-Chair Gil Cates, Jr. announced the formation of a legacy fund spearheaded by David Geffen, “The theater’s guardian angel, David Geffen, who stepped up 20 years ago to support my father’s dream of a world-class theater in Los Angeles, has stepped up again to cement the foundation and future of this one of a kind institution.”
- **Arriving in Style** – Guests were greeted at the entrance by a 2015 Audi R8 V10 Carbon Spyder, stunning, agile and possessing unrivaled power and performance.
- **Dining with the Stars** – Honorees, special guests and the event’s Host Committee enjoyed a pre-event dinner in a giant tent from Classic Party Rentals erected directly across the street from the Geffen Playhouse. Catered by Ronen Levy Events, the dinner also featured cocktails and wines from The House of Remy Martin portfolio, LOUIS XIII cognac and Piper-Heidsieck champagne, also part of the pre-show reception at the Geffen. Décor featured beautiful floral arrangements by Flowers in Beverly Hills.

Jeffrey Katzenberg, a Founding Trustee of the Geffen Playhouse Board of Directors, offered the dinner’s opening toast, celebrating the Geffen Playhouse as, “One of the true treasures of our city because of another true treasure, David Geffen.”

- **A Royal Tasting** – Guests enjoyed a unique and rare tasting of LOUIS XIII, the world’s finest cognac. An intricate alchemy blended from 1200 eaux-de-vie from the finest growing area in the heart of France’s cognac region, LOUIS XIII takes up to 100 years to create and is overseen by four different generations of Cellar Masters.
- **Sweet Ending** – After the show, guests indulged in desserts ranging from Pure Cheesecakes, Black Market Gelato, Richard Ruskell Pastries and Deluscious Cookies to decadent offerings from Ronen Levy Events and Seasons 52. Artists were presented a beautiful thank you gift from Chantecaille Cosmetics and every guest at valet left with a gift from Headspace and yummy Organic Candy courtesy of the Organic Candy Factory.

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. 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, Geffen Playhouse Board Vice-Chair Gil Cates Jr. and Board Co-Chairs Martha Henderson and Pamela Robinson Hollander. 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 and the community at large in the arts. For more information, please visit www.geffenplayhouse.com/backstage.

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