

# GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

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**“BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN” RAISES MORE THAN \$1 MILLION  
TO BENEFIT ARTS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT**

**NATIONAL YOUTH POET LAUREATE AMANDA GORMAN, HON. NICOLE AVANT  
AND NETFLIX CO-CEO TED SARANDOS WERE HONORED  
AT THE 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

**SURPRISE CELEBRITY GUEST APPEARANCES INCLUDED KENYA BARRIS, JON M. CHU,  
SHARON LAWRENCE, FRENCH STEWART, KATHLEEN TURNER AND MORE**

LOS ANGELES (August 9, 2021) – Geffen Playhouse raised more than \$1 million for the theater’s education, community engagement and artistic initiatives at its 19<sup>th</sup> annual *Backstage at the Geffen* fundraiser held August 7, it was announced today. **Lin-Manuel Miranda** presented the Artistic Impact Award to National Youth Poet Laureate **Amanda Gorman**, and **Laura Dern** presented the Distinction in Service Award to Hon. **Nicole Avant** and Netflix Co-CEO **Ted Sarandos**.

The evening of unscripted, unannounced storytellers and performers was hosted by comedian, actor, writer and producer **Tone Bell** and featured personal behind-the-scenes anecdotes from a lineup of surprise celebrity guests including **Kenya Barris**, **Jon M. Chu**, **Sharon Lawrence** and **French Stewart**.

The evening opened with a performance of Nirvana’s *In Bloom* by 11-year-old British and Zulu drumming sensation **Nandi Bushell**, and also included a performance of Warren Zevon’s *Splendid Isolation* by **French Stewart**, who was accompanied on guitar by Zevon’s son **Jordan Zevon**. The lineup of surprise performers also featured a return to the Geffen by **Kathleen Turner**, who performed a monologue from *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*, in which she appeared at Geffen Playhouse in 2012. Turner originated the role of Molly Ivins in 2010 for the world premiere of the production at Philadelphia Theatre Company. The evening closed with a bespoke dance choreographed exclusively for *Backstage at the Geffen* and performed by Los Angeles-based dance theatre ensemble **Blue13 Dance Company**.

*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 more than 15,000 youth, seniors and veterans in communities across Los Angeles.

**Amanda Gorman** is a Los Angeles native who discovered her voice through poetry, storytelling and performance, Amanda Gorman is using her genius to change the world. At just 23 years old, she is the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history—enamoring the nation with her performance of her poem "The Hill We Climb." Years earlier, while still a student at Harvard, she was appointed the first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate by Urban Word. She is a committed advocate for the environment, racial equality, and gender justice. Her activism and poetry have been featured on the Today Show, PBS Kids, and CBS This Morning, and in The New York Times, Vogue, Essence, and O, The Oprah Magazine. She first graced the Geffen Playhouse stage in 2017 to honor Lin-Manuel Miranda and Dick Van Dyke with her poem "The Playhouse," written specifically for Backstage at the Geffen. She knows every lyric to the entire Hamilton soundtrack, which she showcased at the 2017 Backstage post-show dance party!

**Hon. Nicole Avant and Ted Sarandos** first met at an event organized by Nicole in her role as a finance co-chair of Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Campaign. Her first words to him were "You're late," and the rest is history. They married in 2009, and the same year, Nicole became the first Black woman and the youngest US Ambassador to the Bahamas. As Ambassador, Nicole focused on five priority initiatives: Education, Alternative Energy, Economic and Small Business Development, Women's Empowerment, and raising awareness of the challenges facing people with disabilities. Nicole is the daughter of music mogul Clarence Avant and Jacqueline Avant, and she recently produced the acclaimed and award-winning documentary *The Black Godfather*.

Ted Sarandos has been a game-changer in the entertainment industry for the last two decades. As Co-CEO and Chief Content Officer for Netflix, his revolutionary vision has led the streaming platform to critical acclaim with 15 Oscars, 114 Primetime Emmys, 22 Golden Globes, 22 BAFTAs (12 for Film & 10 for TV), and many more! Ted's inventive creativity launched an entirely new entertainment medium and has reimagined how audiences view stories. He is amplifying diverse, underproduced voices and creating immeasurable opportunities for storytellers around the world.

UCLA Health served as Title Sponsor for Backstage at the Geffen, marking its first sponsorship for the theater's annual fundraiser.

Presenting sponsors included City National Bank, Adi and Jerry Greenberg, Loretta Everett Kaufman and Victor Kaufman, and Jodi and Howard Tenenbaum. Audi of America served as Gold Sponsor.

Event Co-Chairs included Merle Dandridge, Adi Greenberg, Loretta Everett Kaufman and Linda Bernstein Rubin.

Serving as Honorary Co-Chairs were Ann and Jim Gianopoulos, Jazmyn Simon and Dulé Hill, Cindy and Alan Horn, Quincy Jones, Loretta Everett Kaufman and Victor Kaufman, Gloria Calderón Kellett and David Kellett, Lyn and Norman Lear, Melody Hobson and George Lucas, Fay and Frank Mancuso, Madeline and Bruce Ramer, and Barbara and Richard Sherman.

*Backstage at the Geffen* was produced by Gil Cates, Jr. and Matt Shakman.

The pre-show reception and dinner featured spirits sponsored by House of Suntory.

A silent auction was held and included unique one-of-a-kind items and experiences, as well as hotel packages and jewelry provided by *Backstage at the Geffen* supporters Four Seasons Resort Maui, Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, Carillon Miami Wellness Resort and Edward Avedis Fine Jewelry.

### **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 Executive Director Gil Cates, Jr., Artistic Director Matt Shakman and Board Chair Howard Tenenbaum. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve young people and the community at large in the arts. [www.geffenplayhouse.org](http://www.geffenplayhouse.org)

### **ABOUT AUDI OF AMERICA**

At Audi of America, we believe the Future is Electric. Our U.S. model lineup will be 30 percent electrified, including fully electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids, by 2025, and globally we are committed to net CO2 neutrality by 2050. In 2020, Audi sold 186,620 vehicles in the U.S., and this year, we look forward to the next chapter in our journey to reinvent premium mobility with the arrivals of the fully electric Audi e-tron GT and Audi Q4 e-tron. Learn more about who we are and how we're working to create a more electric, innovative, and inclusive future at [audiusa.com](http://audiusa.com) or [media.audiusa.com](http://media.audiusa.com).

### **ABOUT CITY NATIONAL BANK**

With \$69.1 billion in assets, City National Bank provides banking, investment and trust services through locations in Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, Nevada, New York City, Nashville, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Washington, D.C. and Miami\*. In addition, the company and its investment affiliates manage or administer \$76.9 billion in client investment assets. City National is a subsidiary of Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), one of North America's leading diversified financial services companies. RBC serves more than 17 million personal, business, public sector and institutional clients through offices in Canada, the United States and 34 other countries. For more information about City National, visit the company's website at [cnb.com](http://cnb.com). *\*City National Bank does business in Miami and the state of Florida as CN Bank.*

### **ABOUT ADI AND JERRY GREENBERG**

Adi Greenberg joined the Geffen Playhouse Board of Directors in 2009 and has served as Vice Chair since 2017. She became a theater actress at the age of six, appearing in numerous productions regionally and in New York. After completing her B.A. in theater at Barnard College, Columbia University, she moved to Los Angeles where she pursued a successful career in television and film. In addition to the Board of the Geffen Playhouse, Ms. Greenberg serves on the Board of No Limits for Deaf Children and Families, a nonprofit that teaches underserved deaf children and their families the skills to succeed in school and in life through its after-school educational centers and distinguished theater arts program, promoting advocacy and awareness worldwide. A mother of three, Ms. Greenberg currently resides in Santa Monica, CA with her husband and children.

### **ABOUT LORETTA EVERETT KAUFMAN AND VICTOR KAUFMAN**

Loretta Everett Kaufman joined the Geffen Playhouse Board of Directors in October 2012. Born in New York, she has Masters' degrees in both Journalism and Liberal Studies from NYU. She has written several books including: "Going Back to Work, A Survival Guide for Comeback Moms" and "And What Do You Do? When Women Choose to Stay Home." She is a former Trustee for several organizations including Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Americans for the Arts, Autry Museum of the American West, Environmental Media Association, American Museum of the Moving Image and the George Gustav Heye Center in New York. She is married to Victor A. Kaufman, who is Vice Chairman of IAC and is a director of the Company. Mr. Kaufman was the founding Chairman and Chief Executive

Officer of Tri-Star Pictures, Inc. as well President and Chief Executive Officer of Tri-Star's successor company Columbia Pictures Entertainment, Inc. In 2020, he was awarded Ph.D. from UCLA in Social Psychology.

**ABOUT JODI AND HOWARD TENENBAUM**

Howard Tenenbaum is Vice President at the Keyes Automotive Group. Howard and Jodi Tenenbaum are longtime donors to Geffen Playhouse. Howard is Chairman of the Board of Geffen Playhouse, a member of the Board of Viewpoint School and the Greater Los Angeles New Car Dealers Association, and is a former member of the Board of Directors of the Colorado Timberline Academy and The Help Group. Under his leadership at Keyes, he has created many Corporate Responsibility Programs, including Operation Thank You for Military Appreciation Month and the Keyes for Kids Toy Drive. Howard and Jodi have four children, Jeffrey, Michael, Joshua and Ella.

**ABOUT UCLA HEALTH**

UCLA Health comprises four hospitals on two campuses — Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital and the UCLA Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital on the university's main campus, and UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center — and more than 200 medical practices throughout Southern California. UCLA Health ranks #1 in California and Los Angeles, and #3 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospitals survey.

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