

“BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN” RAISES MORE THAN HALF A MILLION DOLLARS

Sold Out Evening Honoring Leslie Moonves and Rita Wilson Shines a Spotlight on Importance of Live Arts

LOS ANGELES, March 10, 2009 — Monday night's star-studded event at the Geffen Playhouse and the W Los Angeles' NINETHIRTY restaurant netted more than half a million dollars for the Geffen's Stage for Any Age education and outreach programs. The event, honoring President and CEO of CBS **Leslie Moonves** and actress/producer **Rita Wilson**, was co-chaired by **Roma Downey** and **Mark Burnett**, hosted by producing director **Gil Cates**, and featured artists of the stage and screen including **Carol Burnett**, **Kristin Chenoweth**, **Dana Delany**, **Brendan Fraser**, **Sean Hayes**, **Christine Lahti**, **Helen Mirren**, **Ray Romano**, **Dick Van Dyke**, **Nia Vardalos**, **Bruce Vilanch**.

Performance Highlights:

- **Candide to Chorus Line** – Guests were treated to a few surprise musical performances, including the rousing aria “Glitter and Be Gay” (complete with sparkling props) by Tony Award winner **Kristin Chenoweth**, and a hilarious duet by **Nia Vardalos** and **Sean Hayes** who rewrote the words to *A Chorus Line*'s “Nothing” to wax poetic on the evening's honorees. And finally, the incomparable **Dick Van Dyke** and his a cappella group “The Vantasticks” closed the show with a rap version of “Spoon Full of Sugar” that could make any medicine go down.
- **Crutches, Halitosis and Chins, Oh My** – The high points of the evening were the intimate stories shared by some of stage and screen's biggest stars. They ranged from **Christine Lahti**'s tale about stealing an injured audience member's crutch to some classified information about **Carol Burnett**'s chin (watch “Easy Street” in *Annie* a little closer next time ...) to **Martin Short** with a side-splitting story about a costar's halitosis – the key descriptor being “like an Altoid in a morgue.”
- **Bosom Buddies** – Proud hubby **Tom Hanks** showed everyone who his true bosom buddy was as he led standing ovations throughout the night and then hobnobbed with all guests at the post-party, beaming with joy at the show put on in honor of his wife, **Rita Wilson**.
- **Mogul Memories** – Upon accepting his own honor, the charismatic Les Moonves graciously paused to honor every storyteller on stage with a personal anecdote – and even took the time to tease CBS rookie **Brendan Fraser**, who was playing the class clown, with “Ask **Ray Romano** what happens when you misbehave.”

- **Ted in Tights** – When **Mary Steenburgen** took the stage to present the evening’s Distinction in Service Award, husband **Ted Danson** donned a leotard and tights (complete with pink leg warmers) to do his best impression of Les Moonves a la 1974 in a “reenactment” of the dance class where Moonves and Steenburgen first met.

Overall Event Highlights:

- **Standing Room Only** – All parts of the “Backstage at the Geffen” evening, including the preshow host committee dinner at W Los Angeles’ NINETHIRTY, were completely sold out, leaving the theater with a waitlist the night of the event and raising the theater more than \$500,000.
- **Silent Auction Makes Some Noise** – The evening’s silent auction, which featured experience based items such as a weekend at Audi’s racetrack in Sonoma and a meet-and-greet at Jon Stewart’s Daily Show raised nearly \$25,000 for the evening, with the highest bidder nabbing an ultra-luxurious Hawaiian vacation with stays at Four Seasons Resort Maui at Wailea and Four Seasons Resort Lana’i at Manele Bay – complete with perks from golf to helicopters – for about \$11,000.
- **Let Them Eat Cake** - In addition to tray passed treats and a chocolate tasting bar, (accompanied by shots of milk), guests were treated to a dollhouse-like three-dimensional cake replica of the Geffen Playhouse donated by Hansen’s Bakery.
- **It’s Easy Being Green** – The Geffen Playhouse worked with the Natural Resource Defense Council to purchase carbon offsets for the event, and presenting sponsor ClearEdge Power showcased their groundbreaking CE5 Energy System, which will ultimately help the theater (and any interested patrons) in reducing its carbon footprint up to 44 percent.
- **Music to Our Eyes** – Honoree Rita Wilson’s brother, musician Chris Wilson, showed his sibling support by entertaining the guests with post-show music in the Geffen’s historic outdoor courtyard.
- **Drink Up** – The evening’s signature drink was a POM Blanco, made with POM Wonderful and Don Julio Tequila, while Beaulieu Vineyards poured the red and white and Kenwood Vineyards from Heck Estates provided the champagne.
- **Local Partners Show Some Geffen Love** – Local brands showed their support to the Geffen Playhouse by providing more than \$100,000 in in-kind donations spearheaded by Los Angeles Magazine. This incredible support nearly eliminates the theater’s up-front cost for the evening and includes all botanicals by local Silverlake florist Bittersweet Butterfly, pre-show and post-show food by Tres LA Catering, cars for all the storytellers by Audi and a VIP host committee dinner hosted by NINETHIRTY at the W Los Angeles – Westwood.

Host Committee Dinner Highlights (NINETHIRTY, W Los Angeles – Westwood):

- **Menu Worthy of Stars** – The gala host committee was treated to an intimate greek-themed dinner with the honorees at the W Los Angeles' restaurant NINETHIRTY where Executive Chef Monique King served Mediterranean grilled chicken with kalamata olive polenta, wilted spinach, roasted tomatoes and feta.
- **It's All in the Family** – Honoree Les Moonves arrived with his biggest fans – his parents – to the private dinner prior to receiving his *Distinction in Service Award* at the Geffen Playhouse's Backstage at the Geffen Gala.
- **The Ride of Their Night** – The host committee, which consisted of about 200 of the theater's top donors, board members and the evening's honorees and artists, took a short trolley ride to the theater to join in the onsite festivities and take their seats for the performance.

ABOUT BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN GALA

The Geffen Playhouse's annual event raises funds for *Geffen's Stage for Any Age* programs, which help bring the excitement of live theater to 27,000 families and community members each year. The proceeds from *Backstage at the Geffen* help underwrite low ticket admissions to *Saturday Scene*, the popular theater performances for children; fully support the *Geffen School Tours Program* that takes theater to participating elementary and middle-schools that have little or no resources for the performing arts; and benefit CREATE (Community Representatives Engaged in Active Theater Education), a season-long, interactive exploration and analysis of live theater for community and social service groups, deemed a model program by the City of Los Angeles.

ABOUT THE GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE

The 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 musicals, the Geffen Playhouse 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 is helmed by Producing Director and President of the Board Gilbert (Gil) Cates, Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Susan Barton and Chairman of the Board Frank Mancuso. Proudly associated with UCLA, the Geffen Playhouse 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 GeffenPlayhouse.com.

ABOUT W LOS ANGELES - WESTWOOD

W Los Angeles-Westwood is a modern oasis – a contemporary chic retreat where design and comfort mix and mingle. Recently renewed by design guru Thom Filicia, W Los Angeles – Westwood invites you to indulge in their newly remodeled modern-bungalow suites, stylish poolside cabanas equipped with state-of-the-art IntelliChaise technology, and new outdoor restaurant The Backyard. Here, guests can dine at world-class restaurants, indulge in sexy, sophisticated nightlife, relax poolside in a private cabana, and be pampered at LA's most exclusive spa. Premiere attractions include LA's hottest bar-Whiskey Blue; critically acclaimed restaurant NINETHIRTY; new poolside bistro-The Backyard; NY's hottest spa-bliss; and a new state of the art workout facility. Centrally located and minutes from Beverly Hills/Rodeo Drive, Hollywood, and the coastline, W Los Angeles enjoys a prime location in beautiful Westwood Village offering easy access to key interest points such as UCLA, the Armand Hammer Museum and the Geffen Playhouse. Located on two acres of lush gardens with a heated pool and private furnished cabanas, W Los Angeles is a sanctuary within the city.

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