

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**DICK VAN DYKE AND LIN-MANUEL MIRANDA HONORED
AT 16th ANNUAL “BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN” FUNDRAISER**

**THE STAR-STUDED EVENT RAISED MORE THAN \$1 MILLION
TO BENEFIT ARTS AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT**

**FEATURING APPEARANCES BY JIM CARREY, BILLY CRYSTAL, RITA MORENO AND AISHA TYLER;
PERFORMANCES BY KRISTEN BELL, MIA MICHAELS AND REGINA SPEKTOR**

LOS ANGELES (May 20, 2018) – Last night’s star-studded event, *Backstage at the Geffen*, at the Geffen Playhouse grossed more than \$1 million for the theater’s education, outreach and artistic initiatives. The fundraiser, which recognizes 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, honored legendary stage and screen performer **Dick Van Dyke** and award-winning composer, lyricist and actor **Lin-Manuel Miranda**. Comedian **Jim Carrey** presented the Distinction in Theater Award to Van Dyke and EGOT award-winning actress **Rita Moreno** presented the Education Impact Award to Miranda.

The evening of unscripted, surprise performers and storytellers featured personal tales of life behind the scenes from **Billy Crystal** and **Beth Behrs** and performances by **Kristen Bell**, **Mia Michaels**, **Regina Spektor** and poet **Amanda Gorman**. It was produced by Geffen Playhouse board member **Kevin S. Bright**, Executive Director **Gil Cates, Jr.**, Chief Development Officer **Regina Miller** and Artistic Director **Matt Shakman**.

Two-time *Backstage at the Geffen* host **Aisha Tyler** opened the show with a tribute to the evening’s honorees. “It is artists such as Dick and Lin-Manuel that exemplify art’s capacity to change the national and international conversation. Apart from the years of entertainment they’ve given us all, we owe them a debt of gratitude for continually teaching us how we can use our chosen art forms to change the world. And since we are all here tonight in support of the Geffen Playhouse, I think it’s fair to remind you that from the very beginning, the very first chosen art form of these two legends was theater.”

Backstage at the Geffen brings together artistic, entertainment and business leaders and the Los Angeles region’s most prominent philanthropic organizations to raise funds for the Geffen Playhouse’s artistic endeavors, including new play development, playwright commissions and world premiere productions that inspire thought, evoke conversation, and engage the

community in the live arts. Last year, *Backstage at the Geffen* raised more than \$1 million, allowing the Geffen to expand its literacy, high school, veterans and Lights Up programs.

Honorary Co-Chairs included George Lucas & Melody Hobson, Barbra Streisand & James Brolin, Katie McGrath & J.J. Abrams, Cindy & Alan Horn, Ann & Jim Gianopulos, Kelly & Ron Meyer, Lyn & Norman Lear, Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks, Quincy Jones, Jr., Loretta Everett Kaufman & Victor Kaufman, Barbara & Richard Sherman, Madeline & Bruce Ramer and Fay & Frank Mancuso. Event Co-Chairs are Loretta Everett Kaufman, Adi Greenberg and Linda Bernstein Rubin.

City National Bank continued for the ninth consecutive year as Title Sponsor. Presenting Sponsors were Audi of America in its 13th year and K Period Media in its second year.

Event Highlights

- The show opened with a seven-minute original work created by *So You Think You Can Dance*'s Emmy Award-winning choreographer **Mia Michaels**, featuring a mashup of music from *Mary Poppins*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Hamilton* and *In the Heights* performed by 16 hip-hop, modern and Latin ballroom dancers. The performance brought the audience to its feet for the evening's first standing ovation.
- The evening's first storyteller was Geffen Playhouse's new Artistic Director **Matt Shakman**, who reminded the audience of the magic of theater when he recalled his earliest days of running the non-profit Los Angeles theater The Black Dahlia with only "an empty space and a little imagination."
- *2 Broke Girls* star and Geffen Board Member **Beth Behrs** charmed the audience with hilarious stories about working the Geffen's front of house while she was a theater student at UCLA.
- Film and television star **Kristen Bell** sang "More Than Just a Spare," a song written for – but ultimately cut from – Disney's smash hit film *Frozen*, which encapsulated her character Anna's goofy persona and determination to see the good in everything, and Bell's own rendition of George and Ira Gershwin's "The Man I Love."
- Emmy Award-winning comedian **Billy Crystal** spoke of his lifelong love of the theater, telling stories about his first theater-going experience at eight-years-old to see Sammy Davis Jr. in *Mr. Wonderful*, sharing an unforgettable exchange with Walter Cronkite while working as a house manager and understudying a role in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, and most recently, experiencing the joy of live performance through his grandson, who dressed as Lin-Manuel Miranda for Halloween. When asked why he chose to be Miranda rather than Alexander Hamilton, his grandson replied, "Because Lin-Manuel wrote everything, the music, the book, the lyrics. What did Hamilton ever do?"
- **Gil Cates, Jr.**, as the Geffen Playhouse's Executive Director, thanked the evening's donors and discussed the parallels in Van Dyke and Miranda's artistic and philanthropic

contributions and the Geffen's mission to bring theater to young people, veterans and seniors.

- Published author, first-ever National Youth Poet Laureate and college student **Amanda Gorman** received the night's second standing ovation for a poem written exclusively for the event highlighting the importance of arts in education.
- Grammy Award-nominated singer-songwriter **Regina Spektor** performed a medley of "Jolly Holiday" and "Chim Chim Cher-ee" followed by her cover of "Dear Theodosia" from *The Hamilton Mixtape*, which she sang live for Miranda for the first time.
- 86-year-old EGOT award-winner **Rita Moreno** presented Miranda with the Education Impact Award with an original rap about his influence on American theater, arts education and his dedication to relief efforts in Puerto Rico.
- Honoree **Lin-Manuel Miranda**, who shared that he played Bernardo in his sixth grade production of *West Side Story*, accepted his award from Moreno and told the audience, "My heart is totally full and I'm totally speechless. Speechless is weird for me. That doesn't happen often." He paid tribute to fellow honoree Van Dyke and let the audience in on a family secret: that his son goes to bed listening to Spektor's version of "Dear Theodosia" but believes it's sung by his mother.
- Comedian and actor **Jim Carrey** galloped onto the stage on a make-believe horse for his tribute to Van Dyke. Confirming Van Dyke's place in comedy history, he said, "He's right up there with Keaton and Chaplin and – cough – Jim Carrey." He asked the audience to close its eyes as he said Van Dyke's name, saying "When you say someone's name and it puts a smile on your face and opens up the light in your heart, that's the ultimate test."
- Accepting the award for Distinction in Theater, **Dick Van Dyke**, at 92-years-old, joked about his early days as a comedian – "I was Jim Carrey." – and his hopes of doing more theater – "I want to do *On Golden Pond*." – before asking his a cappella group, The Vantastix, to join him for a *Mary Poppins* medley. After lively versions of "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" and "Step in Time," he closed the show by inviting all of the evening's artists, including Miranda, and guests to accompany him onstage for an impromptu sing-a-long of "Let's Go Fly a Kite."
- All *Backstage at the Geffen* artists were given an Audi for the evening and guests were greeted at the entrance by a 2018 Audi RS 5.
- Guests enjoyed a post-show celebration catered by Ronen Levy Events with spirits sponsored by Beam Suntory featuring Effen Vodka and Sipsmith Gin cocktails, and a sculpture cake by *Cake Wars* judge Richard Ruskell.

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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 welcomes an audience of more than 130,000 each year, and maintains extensive education and community engagement programs, designed to involve underserved young people and the community at large in the arts.

www.geffenplayhouse.org

ABOUT CITY NATIONAL

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ABOUT K PERIOD MEDIA

K Period Media is a Los Angeles-based production company committed to developing, financing, and producing quality films and content for a variety of platforms. Founded by Kimberly Steward in 2013, the company is dedicated to finding and making socially-relevant, story-driven projects with mainstream appeal. To date, its films include the award-winning 2014 documentary *Through A Lens Darkly: Black Photographers and the Emergence of a People* and the acclaimed 2016 feature *Manchester by the Sea*, which was nominated for six Academy Awards®, including Best Picture.

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