

MELLODY HOBSON AND GEORGE LUCAS  
AND SIR ELTON JOHN AND DAVID FURNISH  
TO BE HONORED AT GEFFEN PLAYHOUSE ANNUAL FUNDRAISER  
LAUNCHING 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ITS FOUNDING

*Exclusive "Backstage at the Geffen" Event Set for Sunday, March 22, 2015  
City National Bank Returns as Title Sponsor*

LOS ANGELES, CA (December 15, 2014) – Next year's eagerly awaited "Backstage at the Geffen" will honor Melody Hobson and George Lucas with the **Distinction in Service Award** and Sir Elton John and David Furnish with the **Distinction in Theater Award** at the 13th annual fundraiser, slated for Sunday, March 22, 2015. The irreverent evening of laughter, music and stories featuring personal "backstage" memories and songs by a cavalcade of stars precedes the award ceremony in the Gil Cates Theater at the Geffen Playhouse and will be produced by Vice Chair of the Board, Gil Cates, Jr. David Geffen is Honorary Chair. The event also launches the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the not-for-profit theater.

Funds raised are earmarked for a host of Geffen Playhouse endeavors including new play development, playwright commissions, second productions and artistic risks, as well as the theater's award-winning education and outreach programs which help bring the excitement of live theater to more than 15,000 disadvantaged youth, seniors, veterans and community members annually. Last year's event raised over \$1.4 million for these programs.

"Backstage at the Geffen" title sponsor **City National Bank** returns for its sixth year.

"Next year's honorees are two powerful couples ... dynamic trailblazers whose accomplishments in the arenas of entertainment and business are no less impressive than their many philanthropic contributions," said Board Co-Chairs, Martha Henderson and Pamela Robinson. Henderson is the executive vice president in charge of City National Bank's entertainment division, and Robinson is the founder of The Robinson Company, a leading executive search firm in the entertainment business.

As President of Ariel Investments, Melody Hobson is responsible for firm-wide management and strategic planning, overseeing all operations outside of research and portfolio management. Additionally, she serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees for Ariel Investment Trust. A nationally recognized voice on financial literacy and investor education, she is a regular contributor to CBS News as well as providing weekly money tips on the *Tom Joyner Morning Show* and penning a column for Black Enterprise magazine.

Hobson is Chairman of the Board of DreamWorks Animation SKG as well as Director of The Estée Lauder Companies, Inc. and Starbucks Corporation. Her community outreach includes serving as Chairman of After School Matters, a non-profit providing Chicago teens with high quality, out-of-school programs.

Filmmaker George Lucas' devotion to timeless storytelling and cutting-edge innovation has resulted in some of the most successful and beloved films of all time, including the *Star Wars* saga and the *Indiana Jones* franchise, while also pioneering new digital standards for sophistication in film visuals and sound and inspiring generations of young people to follow their imagination and dreams. Lucas serves on the board of The Film Foundation, the USC School of Cinematic Arts Advisory Board and will build the Lucas Museum of Narrative Art, emphasizing American illustrative, digital, cinematic and animation art as an avenue for the exploration of the great storytelling history, populist works and artistic innovation of the past 150 years.

The monumental career of international singer/songwriter and performer Sir Elton John is now in its fifth decade. Selling more than 250 million records worldwide, including *Candle In The Wind '97*, the biggest selling single of all time, he is the recipient of over 40 gold and platinum albums, mostly co-written with his long-time songwriting partner, Bernie Taupin and include *Rocket Man*, *Your Song* and *Sacrifice*. For the big screen, he collaborated with lyricist Tim Rice on the Academy Award-winning soundtrack for Disney's *The Lion King*, which later debuted on Broadway, receiving six Tony Awards, including Best Musical. He followed with the music for the Tony Award-winning *Aida* and the international stage production, *Billy Elliot the Musical*. Among his numerous awards and honors are five Grammys, a Grammy Legend award, a Tony and Kennedy Center Honor. In 1998, he was knighted by HM Queen Elizabeth II who honored him with the title, Sir Elton John, CBE. Along with partner David Furnish, Sir Elton produced the Rocket Pictures animated movie *Gnomeo & Juliet* with a follow-up, *Gnomeo & Juliet: Sherlock Gnomes* currently in development. Since 1992, the Elton John AIDS foundation has raised more than \$300 million for HIV prevention, treatment and advocacy programs across the globe.

David Furnish parlayed a successful career in advertising into filmmaking, first directing the BAFTA nominated documentary *Elton John: Tantrums & Tiaras in 1995*. The following year, with backing from the Walt Disney Company, he formed the film production company Rocket Pictures, producing the independent films *Women Talking Dirty* and *It's a Boy/Girl Thing* and the music television series *Spectacle: Elvis Costello with...* In 2011, Rocket Pictures released its first major animated feature *Gnomeo & Juliet*, capturing the biggest February animated film box office opening weekend in North American history. Furnish also produced Broadway's *Billy Elliot the Musical*, which won ten Tony Awards. In addition, 2016 will see the release of *Rocketman*, a fantasy biopic of Sir Elton John's life featuring some of his most iconic songs. Furnish is Chairman of the Elton John Aids Foundation and a contributing editor for British GQ. Most recently, he became a partner in FIZZ, a new champagne lounge in Caesars Palace Hotel, Las Vegas. The lounge features photography pieces from David and Sir Elton's personal collection.

Melody Hobson, George Lucas, Sir Elton John and David Furnish join an elite group of past honorees including: Julie Andrews, Carol Burnett, Steve Martin, Kristin Chenoweth, Helen Mirren, Billy Crystal, Rita Wilson, Bruce Ramer, Jim Gianopulos, Creative Artists Agency, Alan Horn, Barry Meyer, Leslie Moonves, Herb Gelfand and Colin Callender.

#### **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 second productions, 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 was founded by Gilbert Cates, and is currently helmed by Artistic Director Randall Arney, Managing Director Ken Novice, Chief Development Officer Regina Miller and Board Chairs, Martha Henderson and Pamela Robinson. 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](http://geffenplayhouse.com).

#### **ABOUT CITY NATIONAL BANK**

City National Bank is the wholly owned subsidiary of City National Corporation (NYSE: CYN). It is backed by \$26.3 billion in total assets, and provides banking, investment and trust services through 78 offices, including 16 full-service regional centers, in Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, Nevada, New York City, Nashville, Tenn., and Atlanta. The company and its investment affiliates manage or administer \$56.7 billion in client investment assets, including \$38 billion under direct management. For more information about City National, visit the company's website at [cnb.com](http://cnb.com).

Host Committee memberships begin at \$2,500 per person. For more information, please visit [www.geffenplayhouse.com/backstage](http://www.geffenplayhouse.com/backstage) or call (310) 208-6500 ext. 112.

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