



AURORA THEATRE COMPANY LIGHTS UP THE NIGHT WITH ANNUAL “AURORA BOREALIS” FUNDRAISING GALA

Berkeley, CA (May 6, 2010) - Berkeley's acclaimed **Aurora Theatre Company**, now celebrating its 18th season, lit up the night on **Monday, May 3** with an evening of heavenly wining and dining at **Aurora Borealis**, the company's 12th annual benefit, held at the newly-renovated historic Hotel Shattuck Plaza in Berkeley. Over 200 guests attended the sold-out fundraising fête, chaired by **Deborah Goodman**, which raised upwards of **\$180,000**. Funds raised at the gala event will support Aurora Theatre Company's outstanding live performances, innovative education program, and the Global Age Project new works program. Individual tickets to the invitation only event sold for \$200, and sponsored tables went for \$3,000.

Before dining on a delectable three course meal featuring Atlantic salmon and braised short rib prepared by chef Banks White, and wine courtesy of Chateau de Latour, Matchbook Winery, and Steve and Linda Wolan, guests enjoyed champagne courtesy of Ironstone Winery and bid on over 80 silent auction offerings, including tickets to productions at several of the Bay Area's leading arts organizations; a private tour of the de Young museum; an opportunity to rock out with film and music star Kevin Costner at a Kevin Costner and Modern West concert; a VIP backstage visit with green witch Elphaba and tickets to a performance of *Wicked* in San Francisco; signed Neil LaBute memorabilia; a theater excursion to Ashland and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival; and visual art items from David Lance Goines, Mark Stephen Finein, and Audrey Heller. Guests were also treated to a performance by local singer/songwriter **Nell Robinson** (a.k.a. Hilary Perkins), who performed an enchanting set of classic Loretta Lynn and Johnny Cash tunes.

The evening concluded with a spirited live auction of exclusive items led by auctioneer **Grant Snyder** and actress **Julia Brothers**. In addition to Brothers, other Aurora artists in attendance included **Joy Carlin, Barbara Damashek, Mark Jackson, Beth Wilmurt, L. Peter Callender, Lauren Grace,** and **Pamela Gaye Walker**. Guests bid on arts and entertainment-themed items during the live auction: **Diane Verducci** and **Michael Korman** (Berkeley), and **Alison Teeman** and **Michael Yovino Young** (Oakland) will share an enchanting holiday stay on New York City's Upper East Side while they take in a bevy of

AURORA THEATRE COMPANY AURORA BOREALIS

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Broadway's best shows. **Bob and Gail Hetler** (Berkeley) and **Alex and Judith Glass** (Berkeley) will each experience an authentic Parisian Salon hosted by Aurora's own resident Julia Child, Board President **Ellen Levine**; special guest **Tom Ross**, Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director, will join in the joie de vivre for an evening filled with delectable food, wine, and conversation. **Bob and Gail Hetler** will have more one-on-one time with Artistic Director Tom Ross, as will **Karen Teel** (Lafayette), when they accompany Ross and become Artistic Directors for a Day.

Additional big-ticket items included a week-long Stinson Beach retreat, which went to Pixar executive **John Walker** and his wife **Pamela Gaye Walker** (Berkeley), who is currently featured in Aurora's production of **JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN**. **Zandra Le Duff** (Oakland), **Gennaro DeVito** (Oakland), and **Jane Barrett** (Berkeley) will all jump the Pond and have the opportunity to channel their favorite Jane Austen novel during their respective stays at a charming English country cottage in Kent. **David Wilson** and **Stacia Cronin** (Berkeley) will share a priceless lunch with Oliver Williamson, the 2009 Nobel Prize Winner of Economics. **Paul Templeton** and **Darrell Louie** (Berkeley), **Carolyn Weinberger** (Berkeley), and **Evie and Gordon Wozniak** (Berkeley) will take in the picturesque views of Tomales Bay as they enjoy sumptuous oyster feasts. Raffle winners **Carol and Joe Neil** (Berkeley) will experience the Aloha spirit as they relax for seven days in exotic Maui (with 50,000 United Airlines travel miles to help get them there). **Ginger Alafi and husband Moshe** (San Francisco and Berkeley) capped off the festivities with a \$25,000 challenge grant from the Alafi Family Fund, which was more than matched with over \$35,000 by the end of the evening.

Aurora Borealis Committee members included: **Sabrina Fadiel** (Oakland), **Deborah Goodman** (chair, Berkeley), **Ellen Levine** (Oakland), **Sara Knight** (Berkeley), **Darrell Louie** (Berkeley), **Wendy Markel** (Berkeley), **Hillary Reinis** (Berkeley), **Leigh Robinson** (El Cerrito), **Sherry Smith** (Berkeley), **Lisa Taylor** (Berkeley), and **Anita Thede** (Berkeley).

Nominated for 27 and winner of 7 Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Awards for 2009, Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theater. Located in the heart of the Downtown Berkeley Arts District, Aurora Theatre Company has been called "one of the most important regional theaters in the area" and "a must-see midsize company" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street Journal* has "nothing but praise for the Aurora." The *Contra Costa Times* stated "perfection is probably an unattainable ideal in a medium as fluid as live performance, but the Aurora Theatre comes luminously

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AURORA THEATRE COMPANY AURORA BOREALIS

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close,” while the *San Jose Mercury News* affirmed “[Aurora Theatre Company] lives up to its reputation as a theater that feeds the mind,” and the *Oakland Tribune* declared “it’s all about choices, and if you value good theater, choose the Aurora.”

Aurora Theatre Company rounds out its 18th season in June with Stephen Karam’s fiercely funny **SPEECH & DEBATE**, directed by Robin Stanton. Following **SPEECH & DEBATE**, the company opens its 19th season in August with Alice Childress’ stunning **TROUBLE IN MIND**, starring Bay Area favorite Margo Hall and directed by Robin Stanton. Acclaimed solo performer David Cale returns to the Bay Area in October with the Bay Area Premiere of his new one-man play **PALOMINO**. In January, Aurora Theatre Company presents the second main stage production to develop from its Global Age Project, the World Premiere of Allison Moore’s **COLLAPSE**, directed by Jessica Heidt; as a National New Play Network World Premiere, the play will be produced at Curious Theatre Company (Denver) and Kitchen Dog Theater Company (Dallas) following the Aurora’s lead production. In honor of Tennessee Williams’ 100th birthday, Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director Tom Ross helms Williams’ rarely-produced stage gem **THE ECCENTRICITIES OF A NIGHTINGALE** in April. Closing the season is the first American professional production of British director David Farr and Icelandic actor-director Gísli Örn Gardarsson’s thrilling avant garde adaptation of Franz Kafka’s **METAMORPHOSIS**, directed by Bay Area auteur Mark Jackson in June.

For subscriptions, tickets, and more information about Aurora Theatre Company productions, the public can call **(510) 843-4822** or visit **auroratheatre.org**.

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