



AURORA THEATRE COMPANY SAILS INTO THE NIGHT WITH ANNUAL “AURORA BOREALIS” FUNDRAISING GALA

Berkeley, CA (May 08, 2009) - Berkeley's acclaimed **Aurora Theatre Company**, now celebrating its 17th season, presented a night of heavenly wining and dining on **Monday, May 4** at **AURORA BOREALIS**, the company's 11th annual benefit, held at The Pavilion at Scott's Seafood in Jack London Square. 140 guests attended the fundraising event, a nautically-themed fête co-chaired by **Deborah Goodman** and **Ellen Levine**, which raised upwards of **\$130,000**. 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. Tickets to the invitation only event were sold for \$200-300, with sponsored tables selling for \$3,000.

Before dining on a sumptuous three course meal featuring Salmon Florentine and Tuscan Chicken, guests enjoyed wine courtesy of Chateau de Latour and Valley of the Moon Winery and bid on several silent auction offerings, including a private dinner with **Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates** and **Senator Loni Hancock**, a traditional Chinese dragon boat cruise, tickets to productions at several of the Bay Area's leading arts organizations, private tours of the de Young museum and Legion of Honor, and one-on-one acting coaching from distinguished stage actor **L. Peter Callender**. **The Coverlettes (Darby Gould** of Jefferson Starship, **Katie Guthorn** from *A Karen Carpenter Christmas*, and singer/songwriter **Carol Bozzio Littleton**) from Aurora's hit holiday show *The Coverlettes Cover Christmas* gave a live performance of nautical-themed songs. The evening concluded with a spirited live auction of exclusive items led by well-known KQED auctioneer **Greg Sherwood**.

Guests bid on a bevy of arts and entertainment-themed items: **Bennett Markel** and wife Wendy (Berkeley), an Aurora Borealis committee member, will discover first hand that there's no business like show business when they, and four friends, meet for an evening of conversation with actor **Josh Kornbluth** and producer **Jonathan Reinis** and get the inside scoop on what it really takes to create a new work for the stage; the group will have dinner at Reinis' home. **Barbara Alward** and

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her husband Keith (Berkeley), along with seven friends, will become stars in their very own Aurora production in a staged reading of a contemporary play, cast and directed by Artistic Director **Tom Ross**. The Markels, along with event honorees **Kathleen Garrison** and her husband **David Wood** (Berkeley), each made surprise impromptu bids for second and third private reading parties with Ross; each of the three readings will be performed at the Aurora Theatre in front of private audiences.

Additional big-ticket items included a week-long getaway to Umbria for high-bidder **Jack Bieda** (Emeryville), a theater excursion to Ashland and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for Aurora Board member **Cindy Snow** and her husband Steve (Oakland). Splendor in Sonoma await **Michael Yovino-Young** and wife Alison Teeman (Berkeley), while **Kathy Pickup** (Oakland) will hear London calling during a jaunty excursion across the Pond. Aurora Board President **Robert Hetler** (Berkeley) will receive one-of-a-kind items from Aurora Theatre Company's West Coast Premiere of *Betrayed*, signed by the playwright, *New Yorker* journalist George Packer, and members of the talented Packer family. Aurora Borealis committee member **Evie Wozniak** and husband Gordon (Berkeley) will see the Bay Area as they have never seen it before during a luxurious Zeppelin flight-seeing tour. Wine sponsors Chateau de Latour offered a spur-of-the-moment "flight" of their popular Que Syrah Syrah, purchased by **Michael Korman** and Aurora Borealis committee member **Diane Verducci** (Berkeley). **Ginger Alafi and husband Moshe** (San Francisco and Berkeley) capped off the festivities with a \$25,000 matching grant from the Alafi Family Foundation, which was matched dollar for dollar by the end of the evening.

Aurora Borealis Committee members included: **Sabrina Fadial** (Oakland), **Deborah Goodman** (co-chair, Berkeley), **Ellen Levine** (co-chair, Oakland), **Darrell Louie** (Berkeley), **Wendy Markel** (Berkeley), **Carol Neil** (Berkeley), **Hillary Reinis** (Berkeley), **Leigh Robinson** (El Cerrito), **Sherry Smith** (Berkeley), **Anita Thede** (Berkeley), **Diane Verducci** (Berkeley), and **Evie Wozniak** (Berkeley).

Aurora Theatre Company continues to offer challenging, literate, intelligent stage works to the Bay Area, each year increasing its reputation for top-notch theatre. 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" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while *The Wall Street*

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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 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 17th season in June with Bob Glaudini’s unconventional romantic comedy **JACK GOES BOATING**, directed by Joy Carlin. The company opens its 18th season in August with Clifford Odets’ legendary Depression-era drama **AWAKE AND SING!** directed by Joy Carlin. Tony-nominated director Barbara Damashek returns to the Aurora in October to helm Neil LaBute’s exploration of body image in contemporary America, **FAT PIG**, and the jingle bells will rock again this December with a new edition of **THE COVERLETTES COVER CHRISTMAS**. Aurora Theatre Company Artistic Director Tom Ross helms the World Premiere of Joel Drake Johnson’s **THE FIRST GRADE** in January, and Aurora Theatre Company founding Artistic Director Barbara Oliver returns to direct Henrik Ibsen’s masterwork **JOHN GABRIEL BORKMAN** in April. Closing the season in June is the Bay Area Premiere of Stephen Karem’s innovative comedy **SPEECH & DEBATE** directed by Robin Stanton.

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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