CONTACTS: Patty Onagan / 626-921-1157 or ponagan@pasadenaplayhouse.org
Peter Goldman / 323-954-7510 or p.goldman@dcpublicity.com

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# THE PASADENA PLAYHOUSE 2016 GALA *A NIGHT IN THE CATSKILLS* RAISES $310,000 FOR THE PLAYHOUSE

## TWO-TIME ACADEMY AWARD WINNER® JANE FONDA AND CELEBRATED RECORD PRODUCER RICHARD PERRY HONORED With 2016 Community Honoree SHEILA GRETHER-MARION

**PASADENA, CA (May 9, 2016) –** The Pasadena Playhouse's annual gala, *A Night in the Catskills*, was held on Saturday, April 30, 2016. Co-chaired by Julietta Perez and Art Silveri, the event honored two-time Academy Award Winner Jane Fonda, celebrated record producer Richard Perry and community honoree Sheila Grether-Marion. With El Molino Avenue cordoned off for the event, the Gala spilled into the street, with two classic cars leading the way to the festivities in The Pasadena Playhouse's Engemann Family Courtyard. The event was an enormous success, raising $310,000 for The Pasadena Playhouse.

Guests were adorned in their 1960's best, paying homage to everyone from Jackie Kennedy Onassis to Joan Holloway from *Mad Men*. Women wore vintage mink stoles, short dresses in vibrant colors speckled with gold lame, pill-box hats, and sparkling period jewelry as they sipped Deep Eddy vodka martinis down El Molino. Men were in their Don Draper best, sporting clean lines and freshly polished shoes.

In the theater lobby was a set created especially for the event, straight out of *Mad Men,* compliments of Design Within Reach and styled by 1000xBetter. Guests took turns posing on the mid-century modern furniture in order to snap the perfect photo to remember the special evening.

The inside of the theater was completely transformed for the Gala. Risers were installed above the Playhouse seats, creating a beautiful space for the guests to dine. The tables spilled out from the stage, giving guests a unique behind-the-scenes view of The Playhouse in the perspective of the actor. With the podium located under the balcony overhang, the guests looked out into the heart of the theater, bathed in soft teal light, accenting the architectural highlights of the building.

The lucite chairs, vintage table settings and chartreuse, patterned tablecloths, added to the 1960's vibe. As pianist Marc Bosserman played Dave Brubeck's iconic "Take Five," guests made their way into the theater to take their seats for the dinner. The centerpieces, underwritten by Betty Sanford and designed by Lauryl Lane Botanical Stylist, were a striking arrangement of tulips, roses, and lilies adding explosions of color throughout the venue.

Once the Gala guests were seated, the Mistress of Ceremonies, writer, performer and NPR personality Sandra Tsing Loh, who will be bringing her critically acclaimed *The Madwoman in the Volvo* to The Pasadena Playhouse in June, took the stage.

Ms. Loh introduced Artistic Director, Sheldon Epps, for a few remarks. Epps acknowledged current state Assemblyman Chris Holden, who is a friend to The Pasadena Playhouse and was in the audience. Epps spoke of how grateful he was to the Gala patrons, underwriters and sponsors. Epps, who wore his father's tie, straight out of the 1960's, harkened back to his father's profession as a preacher. After thanking Julietta Perez and Art Silveri, the Gala co-chairs, as well as the staff of The Playhouse, he spoke in his best sermon voice, as if preaching from the pulpit, encouraging the guests to, "Dig down. Dig way *way* down for the glory of The Pasadena Playhouse."

Sandra returned to the stage to introduce the first of three musical performances; multi-platinum recording artist, Sam Harris. Harris performed a song from his hit show, *HAM: A Musical Memoir.* Harris, who called The Pasadena Playhouse, "My favorite theater in LA," also shared a charming story about honoree, Jane Fonda. When he was 18, Harris snuck onto the Warner Bros. lot where they were shooting *9 to 5*. He parked himself in a long line of Japanese investors who were meeting the cast (Fonda included). When Jane Fonda went to shake his hand, she noted, "You're not supposed to be here, are you?" to which Sam Harris replied, "No." Jane smiled at him and said, "I won't tell anyone."

While the entertainment continued, dinner was being served. The menu, provided by redwhite+bluezz, was 1960's-inspired, starting with an iceberg lettuce wedge salad, with tomato, bacon and blue cheese. The main course was a braised short rib with grilled garlic shrimp, served over garlic-mashed potatoes and charred asparagus, topped with crispy onions. Rounding out the dinner was a rich dessert course: flourless chocolate cake with Luxardo cherries, bourbon whipped cream, caramel and pistachios.

During the dessert course, David DiCristofaro, Chair of The Playhouse Board of Directors, took to the podium to speak about community honoree, Sheila Grether-Marion. DiCristofaro remarked, "Sheila Grether-Marion is a standout among extraordinary patrons of the arts, and in particular, of the theater. Despite her personal challenges, Sheila continues to be a constant, supportive force in the work the Playhouse does."

DiCristofaro then introduced former chair of The Playhouse and past community honoree recipient, Michele Dedeaux Engemann. Michele spoke of her dear friend, Sheila Grether-Marion and said, "Without her, by all of our sides, we would not be here tonight. Sheila has supported the arts throughout all of the years that she has been a member of this community." Engemann continued, "This place is alive and well because of the love, energy, caring and determination of Sheila Grether-Marion."

In addition to her award from The Playhouse, Sheila Grether-Marion also received a Proclamation from the City of Pasadena, presented by Assemblyman Chris Holden. She was recognized for her 17 years of generous support and dedicated volunteer service. After accepting her award, she gave a beautiful speech about her relationship to The Pasadena Playhouse, which began when she was an usher at 16. Her mother attended The Pasadena Playhouse and her mother-in-law was one of The Playhouse's first performers in 1917. For Sheila, her connection to The Playhouse is truly a family affair. She then encouraged everyone in the audience to get involved, because "you'll have a love affair with it like I have."

Following Sheila Grether-Marion's acceptance speech, Sandra Tsing Loh returned to introduce the next performer, Geno Henderson. Henderson starred in Original Broadway Cast of *Baby It's You! (*which originated at The Pasadena Playhouse*),* for which Richard Perry served as Music Producer. As a tribute to Perry, Henderson performed a high-energy medley of early rock and roll favorites from the production, including "Louie, Louie", "Duke of Earl", and "Rockin' Robin."

Martin Sheen, an iconic actor known for his roles in *Apocalypse Now* and *The West Wing*, was called onstage to present the award to Richard Perry and Jane Fonda. Sheen asked the audience to "Imagine all of the art that has been performed and presented in this nearly-100-year old beautiful theater." Sheen confessed that he had only known Richard Perry for only an hour, and the crowd roared. However, the speech took a serious turn when he spoke of Jane's sacrifices. Sheen explained, "Jane has been a personal hero of mine, for all of my adult life, for her legendary contributions to peace, non-violence and social justice. She has given an extraordinary gift to our nation, our culture, by risking everything to try and awaken the conscience of a nation in moral slumber. Jane once said, 'If what you believe doesn't cost you something, then you are left to question its value.' Ms. Fonda has been awarded many prestigious awards, and we're going to add another one here tonight."

First, Mr. Perry took the stage. "It's a distinct pleasure to be here at the theatre. Moreover, this brings back great memories." Richard said. "As with any musical, it's a hard road to Broadway and Sheldon Epps believed in *Baby It's You!* and gave us the opportunity to put up the show for a six-week run. We knew that would be a great stepping-stone to Broadway. While we were at The Playhouse, we all fell in love with the theater and especially Pasadena."

Jane Fonda took the podium and thanked Martin Sheen, Sheldon Epps, and her co-honoree and partner, Richard Perry. She then congratulated fellow honoree, Sheila Grether-Marion calling her, "a survivor." Jane continued, "and because of you, The Playhouse has been a survivor. It's a pleasure to share this honor with you tonight."

Fonda said of The Pasadena Playhouse, "When a community has a hub like this, it's the heart of the community. It's a nationally famous theater, but the value to the community cannot be overemphasized."

Following the awards, Sharon Lawrence, last seen at The Pasadena Playhouse in Noel Coward's *Song at Twilight*, encouraged the guests to give generously during the auction. She referenced "I'm Still Here" from *Follies*: "'Good times, and bum times, I've seen 'em all, and my dear, I'm still here.' Unlike so many grande dames of theater's golden era, this place is *still* here. It simply can't be knocked down or knocked out. And that makes The Pasadena Playhouse as relevant today as it was 99 years ago. So when it comes time to bid tonight, please remember that. Let's help make it happen together. "

The incredible Live Auction items included an URB-E: a foldable electric bicycle, opportunities to appear onstage in next year's productions of the *Panto at The Playhouse* production of *A Cinderella Christmas* and *The Fantasticks*, four tickets to see Adele's sold-out Staples Center concert in the Wells Fargo Suite, and a five-day getaway to Santa Fe, New Mexico.

The evening ended on a high note, with legendary singer Freda Payne. Payne closed the night with a special program that included a knockout performance of her million selling 1970 hit single, "Band of Gold," which had the guests out of their seats and dancing the night away.

As the event came to a close, the guests strolled out onto the courtyard, to take in the April evening. They each received a gift bag, filled with a gift card from Blaze Pizza, mini bottle of Deep Eddy Vodka, a wish tablet from Tops Malibu, notepad set from Design Within Reach, body wipes from YESTo, lip gloss from Kevyn Aucoin, cookies from Vanilla Bake Shop, face moisturizer from LATHER, gift card from Sugarfina and a Pasadena Playhouse Tote Bag.

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