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City of Dallas

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CITY OF DALLAS OFFICE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP PRESENT DALLAS' INAUGURAL *FREE NIGHT OF THEATER*

TWENTY-SIX THEATERS OFFER MORE THAN 3,000 FREE TICKETS

DALLAS, TX – The City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) is pleased to announce Dallas' inaugural *Free Night of Theater*, to be held from Thursday, October 16 through Monday, November 10, 2008. Presented in conjunction with Theatre Communications Group (TCG), *Free Night of Theater* offers theatergoers over 3,000 free tickets to more than 26 Dallas-area theaters. Dallas is one of 120 communities across the country participating in the event, which campaigns to attract new audiences to live theatrical performances.

Theatergoers will be able to reserve tickets through the *Free Night of Theater* website, www.freenightoftheater.net, beginning at noon on Wednesday, October 1, 2008. Tickets can only be reserved online and reservations are handled on a first come, first serve basis. Each participating theatre will set a reservation ticket limit for their productions. Once tickets have been reserved through the website, patrons will be able to pick up their tickets at the will-call window of the individual theater's box office on the night of the show. Patrons are strongly encouraged to visit a theater that they have never attended.

As of September 1, more than 3,000 tickets (valued at more than \$50,500) have been pledged for *Free Night of Theater Dallas*. Participating theatres include: African American Repertory Theater, Charles W. Eisemann Center, The Company of Rowlett Performers (C.O.R.P.), Contemporary Theatre of Dallas, Dallas Children's Theater, Dallas Hub Theater, Dallas Theater Center, Echo Theatre, Garland Civic Theatre, ICT MainStage, Jubilee Theatre, Lyric Stage, MBS Productions, One Thirty Productions, Pocket Sandwich Theatre, Repertory Company Theatre, Shakespeare Dallas, Teatro Dallas, TeCo Theatrical Productions, The Black Academy of Arts and Letters, The MET Theatre, Theatre Britain, Theatre Three, Uptown Players, WaterTower Theatre, and WingSpan Theatre Company.

"We are ecstatic that Dallas will join the other national communities offering rich and diverse live theatre opportunities to our citizens free of charge," said Maria Munoz-Blanco, Director of Cultural Affairs for the City of Dallas. "Free Night is the perfect opportunity for Dallas to celebrate and build upon the contributions the theatre community has made to our cultural landscape."

In response to the excitement generated by the program, Teresa Eyring, executive director of TCG, remarked, "The Free Night of Theater program has provided the theatre community a unique opportunity to open its doors to thousands of new theatergoers and introduce that audience to the joys of live theatre. We are very excited that the program has proven to be so successful in bringing in non-traditional theatre audiences to theatres from coast to coast."

Free Night of Theater was conceived at TCG's National Conference in 2003 as a way to remove perceived barriers that have historically prevented audiences from attending not-for-profit theater. The program was piloted in 2005 in three cities; Philadelphia, San Francisco and Austin. That year over 150 theatre companies welcomed nearly 8,000 theatergoers of which an estimated 80 percent were attending the theatre for the first time. Since 2005 the program has grown tremendously. In 2008, the fourth year for *Free Night*, the program will include over 600 theatre companies in over 120 cities and will provide an estimated 75,000 tickets. Recent attendance research gathered by Shugoll Research reports that 41 percent of last year's *Free Night* patrons returned and purchased tickets to another performance at the same theatre following their Free Night experience. In fact, 80 percent of attendees to the 2007 program reported that they had attended live theatre somewhere since *Free Night*.

Some of the 2008 program participants include the following communities:

- Cities: Austin, TX; Baltimore, MD; Charleston, SC; Chicago, IL; Cincinnati, OH; Cleveland, OH; Dallas, TX; Indianapolis, IN; Kansas City, MO; Los Angeles, CA; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; Portland, OR; Salt Lake City, UT; San Diego, CA; San Francisco, CA; Seattle, WA; St. Louis, MO; Washington, D.C.; and many more.
- States: Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

According to Brad Erickson, executive director of Theatre Bay Area and participant in each of the previous three *Free Night of Theater* events, "Since the campaign's pilot year...we have seen an extraordinary response from theatres, audiences and the whole community. The demand for live theatre—when it's made accessible to all—is overwhelming. We're bringing in new audiences—young people, people of color, people from all walks of life—and the research tells us they are going back for more. Free Night of Theater has thrown the doors of our theatres open wide."

For more information on Dallas' *Free Night of Theater*, visit the national *Free Night* website at www.freenightoftheater.net. Information is also available through the Office of Cultural Affairs website at www.dallasculture.org.

Office of Cultural Affairs

The City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) works to enhance the vitality of the City and the quality of life for all Dallas citizens by creating an environment wherein arts and cultural organizations can thrive so that people of all ages can enjoy opportunities for creative expressions and the celebration of our community's multicultural heritage. Our mission is to establish a cultural system that ensures that ALL Dallas citizens and visitors have an opportunity to experience the finest in arts and culture. The OCA is advised by an 18-member Cultural Affairs Commission appointed by the Dallas City Council. The OCA manages the city's Cultural Contracts, Neighborhood Touring and Public Art Programs; oversees six cultural centers including the Bath House Cultural Center, Ice House Cultural Center, Juanita Craft Civil Rights House, Latino Cultural Center, Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, and South Dallas Cultural Center; and operates the city's classical music radio station, WRR101.1FM. More information on the programs and services provided by the OCA can be found at www.dallasculture.org.

Theatre Communications Group

Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, offers a wide array of services in line with its mission: to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Artistic programs support theatres and theatre artists by awarding approximately \$3 million in grants annually, and offer career development programs for artists. Management programs provide professional development opportunities for theatre leaders through workshops, conferences, forums and publications, as well as industry research on the finances and practices of the American not-for-profit theatre. Advocacy, conducted in conjunction with the dance, presenting, opera and symphony orchestra fields, includes guiding lobbying efforts and providing theatres with timely alerts about legislative developments. The country's leading independent press specializing in dramatic literature, TCG's publications include *American Theatre* magazine, the *ArtSEARCH* employment bulletin, plays, translations and theater reference books. As the U.S. center of UNESCO's International Theatre Institute, a worldwide network, TCG supports cross-cultural exchange through travel grants and other assistance to traveling theatre professionals. Through these programs, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field, and promote a larger public understanding of and appreciation for the theatre field. TCG serves more than 440 member theatres nationwide. More information about TCG is available at www.tcg.org. For more information about the national *Free Night of Theater* program, visit www.freenightoftheater.net.

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