

LESLIE MOONVES AND RITA WILSON  
TO BE HONORED AT ANNUAL  
'BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN' GALA

*Star-Studded Evening Chaired by Mark Burnett & Roma Downey Recognizes Leadership in the Theater Community and Raises Funds for Geffen Playhouse Education Programs*

*Monday, March 9, 2009*

LOS ANGELES, December 5, 2008 — The Geffen Playhouse's annual *Backstage at the Geffen* gala, which recognizes leadership in the theater community while raising funds for the Geffen Playhouse education programs, will honor President and CEO of CBS **Leslie Moonves** and actress / producer **Rita Wilson**. The event, which will be chaired by producer **Mark Burnett** and actress **Roma Downey** will be held March 9, 2009 at the Geffen Playhouse.

A founding board member of the Geffen Playhouse and a graduate of New York's Neighborhood Playhouse, Moonves will receive the *Distinction in Service Award* for positioning CBS Corporation as a proponent of the performing arts. Under his leadership, CBS and its networks have been leaders in hiring theatrically trained actors, writers and directors for its programming, including Tony Award winner Mary Louise Parker (*Weeds*), Steppenwolf company member William L. Peterson (*CSI*), and prominent playwright David Rambo (*CSI*), while encouraging them to also pursue their work on stage. In addition, Moonves continues to bring theater and its stars into the limelight each year by broadcasting the Tony Awards, giving our intimate artform national reach.

Rita Wilson, who has appeared on the Geffen stage in *Collected Stories* (2000), has continued to make live theater a priority not only as an actress, but as an advocate. Elsewhere onstage, Wilson appeared as Roxie Hart in *Chicago* on Broadway and recently starred in the world premiere of Lisa Loomer's *Distracted*. Offstage, Wilson donates her time and efforts to the arts non-profits Shakespeare Festival / LA and UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television, among others.

Each year, *Backstage at the Geffen* is a truly unique night at the theater. Geffen Playhouse Producing Director Gil Cates guides the audience on a virtual backstage tour with some of LA's most prominent performers telling behind-the-scenes stories and sharing intimate performances. This year's presenters and performers will be announced shortly, but previous artists who have shared their backstage stories include: Jason Alexander, Julie Andrews, Sally Field, Carrie Fisher, David Hyde Pierce, John C. Reilly and Dick Van Dyke.

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Mr. Moonves and Ms. Wilson join an elite group of Geffen honorees, including Annette Bening (presented by Anjelica Huston in 2008) and Robert A. Iger (presented by Julie Taymor in 2008), Helen Mirren (presented by John Lithgow in 2007), HBO President Colin Callender (presented by Annette Bening in 2006), and Karl Malden (presented by Tom Hanks in 2004), who have each been celebrated at *Backstage at the Geffen*, an event that has become known throughout the city as a “must-attend” night at the theater.

Similar to last year, the event will be conducted in partnership with the National Resource Defense Council (NRDC), which will help the theater “green” the event with responsible choices and carbon offset purchases. Other partners include the W Hotel Los Angeles and its NINETHIRTY restaurant, which will host an exclusive pre-show dinner by Executive Chef Monique King for honorees, special guests and the event’s Host Committee; and Los Angeles Magazine, which will sponsor appetizers and beverages for all gala guests.

The evening raises funds for the Geffen’s education and outreach programs, which help bring the excitement of live theater to more than 27,000 children, families and community members each year. The proceeds from *Backstage at the Geffen* help underwrite low ticket admissions to *Saturday Scene*, the popular theater performances for children; fully support the *Geffen School Tours* program that takes theater to participating elementary and middle-schools that have little or no resources for the performing arts; and benefit CREATE (Community Representatives Engaged in Active Theater Education), a season-long, interactive exploration and analysis of live theater for community and social service groups, deemed a model program by the City of Los Angeles. Last year, the event raised more than half a million dollars for these theater programs.

### **BACKSTAGE AT THE GEFFEN**

Monday, March 9, 2009

7pm – Reception

8pm – Program

Distinction in Service Award – Leslie Moonves

Distinction in Theater Award – Rita Wilson

Geffen Playhouse

10886 Le Conte Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90024

### **TICKETS**

Single tickets begin at \$300. For additional ticket prices and more information, please contact the Geffen Playhouse Director of Development, Regina Miller at 310.208.6500, ext.112.

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