

DIABLO REGIONAL ARTS ASSOCIATION RAISES OVER A QUARTER MILLION DOLLARS AT **ON BROADWAY GALA** SOLD OUT EVENT FOR LESHER CENTER A GRAND SUCCESS

WALNUT CREEK, CA (13 October 2022) — **Diablo Regional Arts Association's** annual **On Broadway Gala** returned to kick off the Lesher Center for the Arts' 2022/23 season with a smashing evening of fine dining and rollicking entertainment. Leaders in the arts and civic communities came together in downtown Walnut Creek to celebrate the center and its work as a leading presenter of thrilling arts and culture events in the East Bay. The sold-out **On Broadway Gala**, co-chaired by Catharine Baker and Bob Power, with honorary co-chairs Angie Coffee and Eric Rudney, first dazzled partygoers with a champagne reception and silent auction featuring one-of-kind experiences and events. An exclusive performance by Beach Blanket Babylon's Renée Lubin entertained guests while they enjoyed a gourmet dinner on the plaza. A lively auction wrapped up the evening's fabulous presentations, after which guests danced the night away. Held Saturday, October 1 at the Lesher Center for the Arts, DRAA's **On Broadway Gala** netted \$300,000, funds that will enable the center to continue its leadership as a cultural hub in Contra Costa County and present arts that help the East Bay thrive.

New DRAA Board President **David Julius**, PhD, Professor UCSF (and recent recipient of a Nobel Prize), and DRAA Executive Director **Peggy White** mingled with guests such as Walnut Creek Mayor **Matt Francois**, former mayor **Gail Murray**, CEO of Walnut Creek Chamber **Bob Linscheid**, and enthusiastic supporters including **Peters Suh**, **Devorah Levine**, and **Deke Sharon** (arranger, on-site music director, and vocal producer for all three of Universal's hit films in the *Pitch Perfect* franchise). During the cocktail hour, guests enjoyed passed hors d'oeuvres including ahi tuna cones and wagyu beef skewers, while **Phat Strad**, America's original female rock electric string quartet, serenaded the partygoers. Attendees were then seated at beautifully decorated tables outdoors on the plaza and welcomed warmly by emcee **Marcus Washington**,

Emmy-nominated NBC Bay Area news anchor. The effervescent **Renée Lubin**, who delighted audiences at Beach Blanket Babylon for over 33 years and has been called San Francisco's "resident diva" and "local treasure" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, then took the stage to perform favorites such as Ray Charles' "Let the Good Times Roll," Nat King Cole's "Route 66," and Etta James' "At Last." A spectacular dinner prepared by Dan Ripley Catering began with a late summer heirloom tomato salad followed by entrées of red wine braised short ribs and grilled cauliflower steak, finishing with molten chocolate cakes and seasonal berries.

The evening continued with a thrilling live auction featuring one-of-a-kind experiences, including the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to personally introduce Lyle Lovett and John Hiatt, two of America's most prolific songwriters of any generation, onstage for their performance kicking off the Leshher Center's thrilling "Headliners" series on November 4. (The winner also received four premium tickets to the sold-out show, plus dinner with specially selected wine pairings at Massimo Ristorante.) Another popular item was a private four-course wine-paired dinner for 12 presented by Stewart Beatty, Executive Chef of Postino Restaurant. Held at Save Mount Diablo's sprawling thousand-acre Curry Canyon Ranch house with breathtaking views of the mountains, the dinner sold for a stunning \$20,000. A coveted opportunity for a photo op/meet and greet with Emmy and Golden Globe Award winner Henry Winkler (known to millions as "the Fonz") was snapped up by multiple bidders. Also up for auction were a walk-on role in Center REPertory's ever popular "A Christmas Carol" (won for \$7,000), a weeklong stay at the luxurious Fairmont Kea Lani in Maui, and a sushi and sake culinary adventure under the stars at Sasa Walnut Creek hosted by Brian Hirahara (President of Walnut Creek Downtown), Bob Power, Kevin Sanchez, and Gary Skrel (former Mayor of Walnut Creek). The sensational evening concluded with guests hitting the floor to dance the night away, with late-night partygoers enjoying savory nibbles including miniature gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches and charcuterie cones. Funds raised at the **On Broadway Gala** will support the Leshher Center for the Arts, a beacon for both world-renowned artists and local residents, setting the stage for the DRAA's development of innovative programs that bring joy and inspiration to all incomes and ages in Walnut Creek and surrounding cities.

Headliner Sponsors of the **On Broadway Gala** included the Hofmann Family Foundation, Rudney Associates, Simpson Family, Patricia Stull and Dino Riggio, and Cheryl and Christian Valentine. Showstopper Sponsors included Spalding Ashley, Angie and Pete Coffee, Brian Hirahara, Holly Ingraham and David Julius, TWANDA, Chevron, Kaiser Permanente, Miller Starr Regalia, JP Morgan Chase & Co., Leshar Foundation, and ParkSmart, Inc. Center Stage Sponsors included Catharine and Dan Baker, Cindy and Gary Darling, Denise and Ed Del Beccaro, Julie and Tom Ducharme, Samantha and Matt Francois, Loella and Ralph Haskew, Natalie Inouye, Laura and Eric Lamison, Marsha and Dick Servetnick, Cindy and Tom Silva, Jennifer and Peters Suh, Peggy and Michael White, Jill and Kevin Wilk, COPA Innovations Labs, Hall Equities Group, the City of Walnut Creek, First Republic Bank, John Muir Health, Republic Services, and ZMC Hotels. The presenting wine sponsor was Wente Vineyards, and media sponsors were NBC Bay Area, Telemundo 48, Diablo Magazine, and KKIQ Radio.

The **Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA)** is the nonprofit partner of the Leshar Center for the Arts (LCA) and supports the LCA to evolve over time from a rentals-focused venue to a nationally recognized leading mid-sized presenter of great art and artists and the home of a dynamic arts education program.

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