

## THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY EXCEEDS GOAL OF \$3M TO “SAVE THEATREWORKS NOW” *Tony Award recipient has raised \$4M in donations for critical fundraising campaign*

PALO ALTO, CA (30 November 2023) – With today marking the deadline to raise \$3 million for its critical “Save TheatreWorks Now” campaign, **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** announces it has exceeded its fundraising goal by \$1 million dollars, bringing in \$4 million in donations from more than 700 individual donors. The Tony Award recipient theatre company announced on August 9 that post-COVID recovery left a shortfall of funds urgently needed to complete its 53rd season. Since then, donations of all sizes have poured in from theatre lovers across the country, including several major donations, enabling the company to close the funding gap needed to solidify contracts for actors, directors, and designers for the remainder of its 53rd season.

“The overwhelming success of this campaign is another jubilant example of the powerful community around TheatreWorks,” said Executive Director **Debbie Chinn**. “Our work is not done, but this provides us with the funds needed to contract artists for the rest of our current season, plus a cushion to help us survive the inevitable headwinds TheatreWorks, like all arts groups, will continue to encounter.” Chinn also noted the remarkable response and speed with which the funds were raised, adding, “We went straight to the public asking for help in our time of need and the community really showed up for us, confirming we provide a valuable service that is recognized and appreciated. Now we can confidently focus on further stabilizing the company, as we launch our annual Season of Giving campaign to reach our ongoing organizational funding needs.”

Said TheatreWorks Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli**, “The goal with this campaign was always two-fold: to raise the critical funds needed right away, and raise awareness that TheatreWorks post-COVID recovery is dependent on audience attendance and sustaining donations. So many people who were not previous donors at any level stepped up and gave generously. We saw a tremendous uptick in ticket sales, and a heartening increase in

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subscriptions, inching us closer and closer to pre-pandemic levels.” She continues, “During the past three months, theatre lovers from far and wide came forward to help in a variety of ways, affirming TheatreWorks’ deep roots and extensive reach in the Bay Area. I heard over and over that they just could not imagine a future without TheatreWorks. To all of them, we are so grateful.”

Among the many who supported TheatreWorks is internationally acclaimed pianist and performer **Hershey Felder**, who donated his services and travel costs for a sold-out, one-night-only benefit performance of *Hershey Felder’s Great American Songbook Sing-Along*, raising more than \$140,000 for the “Save TheatreWorks Now” campaign. Felder returns to TheatreWorks February 7-11, 2024 in a limited engagement of Hershey Felder as *George Gershwin Alone*, with tickets currently available to current subscribers. Any remaining tickets will go on sale to the public December 15.

During its “Save TheatreWorks Now” campaign, the company received individual gifts of funds, as well as donations of stock, pledges for ongoing support, and contributions to its endowment. Major donations came from local supporters including \$250,000 from Peggy and Yogen Dalal, and \$500,000 from Katharine Kleinke, who also pledged an additional \$500,000 towards TheatreWorks’ endowment. The company also received a \$500,000 grant by an anonymous donor, helping to secure the \$1 million campaign overage.

Says Sardelli, “Planning is already underway for creating a vibrant and exciting season of plays and musicals that are both entertaining and meaningful to our community, based on a sustainable business model that is grounded in current funding realities. We are a non-profit organization and will continue to fundraise as part of our regular operations, as do all regional theaters. We are thrilled to be able to complete this season as planned and go on to present engaging theatre that serves our communities in Silicon Valley and beyond, for a long time to come.” TheatreWorks will announce details about Season 54 in early 2024. For up-to-date information about TheatreWorks’ programming the public may visit **[theatreworks.org](http://theatreworks.org)**.

TheatreWorks’ holiday production of the musical comedy *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* is now playing at the Lucie Stern Theatre, performing through December 24, 2023.

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In-demand regional theatre director Meredith McDonough helms TheatreWorks' production, with Tony Award winner James Monroe Iglehart collaborating as Creative Producer on a festive production of the hilarious and heartwarming show.

**TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** was founded in Palo Alto in 1970 by Robert Kelley as a community-based organization and rose to become one of the nation's top producers of new works. In 2019 the company was recognized with the theatre world's highest honor, the Regional Theatre Tony Award, after which it embarked on a victorious 50th Anniversary Season of plays and musicals. But the abrupt pandemic shutdown in March 2020, followed by years of virtual and hybrid performances and a slow return of audiences, led to substantial shortfalls in subscription and single ticket revenue, as well as individual support. As reported in the news, its fate has been shared by many theatre companies, several of which are now ceasing production around the Bay Area, across the US, and abroad. COVID funding helped sustain operations during the pandemic but came with the requirement that they be spent during that period to keep people at work. Now that this source is depleted, theatres are struggling to return to sound financial footing. The completion of its "Save TheatreWorks Now" fundraising campaign has enabled TheatreWorks to complete its 53rd Season and make plans for its 54th season.

TheatreWorks Silicon Valley has created a reputation as one of the nation's leaders in cultivating and producing new musicals and plays, developing and premiering 72 works by new and veteran artists, and presenting 172 Regional Premieres. Prior to the pandemic closures, TheatreWorks reached more than 100,000 people per year, presenting works that celebrate the human spirit and reflect the diversity of its community, with a history of inclusive casting and selecting or creating works that shine a light on the experiences of the diverse populations of the Bay Area. It was at TheatreWorks that the 2010 Best Musical Tony Award-winner *Memphis* was first workshopped and received its World Premiere. Stephen Schwartz's musical *The Prince of Egypt*, based on the DreamWorks movie of the same name, also made its World Premiere at TheatreWorks before debuting in London's West End in 2020. Among TheatreWorks' community services are the Children's Healing Project at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital which serves children in long-term care and their siblings, as well as its theatre program at Stanford's Ronald McDonald House for children in families seeking lifesaving hospital treatments.

Additional information on this campaign and making donations can be found at **[theatreworks.org/support/save-theatreworks](https://theatreworks.org/support/save-theatreworks)**.

Media sponsor for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's 2023/24 season is *San Francisco Chronicle*.

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