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APPLAUSE! 2009 Gala Brings in Big Dollars in a Down Year

Event Generates Nearly \$275,000 to Support Local Actors, Education and Outreach Programs

ST. LOUIS (November 11, 2009) – STAGES ST. LOUIS, the region's only mid-sized professional musical theatre company, announced today that its eighth annual gala auction, APPLAUSE! 2009, raised proceeds of \$272,000 this past Friday. This year's numbers come on the heels of a difficult economic year for the arts community, but one that saw success at STAGES with ticket revenues holding steady at nearly 1.7 million dollars and the American regional premiere of *The Drowsy Chaperone*, which went on to become the best selling show in STAGES history.

Funds raised through the APPLAUSE! event go to support Education and Outreach Programs conducted by the STAGES Performing Arts Academy, as well as the employment of local actors. Today, STAGES provides more annual workweeks to local union actors than any other St. Louis-area theatrical company.

The 2009 Gala was held Friday, November 6 at the Ritz-Carlton in Clayton, and was attended by a crowd of approximately 370 people. The entertainment was presented by "The Leading Ladies of STAGES" and featured star of Broadway's *Mamma Mia!* Corinne Melancon, star of the 2008 STAGES production of *Little Women* Casey Erin Clark, and local talent Zoe Vonder Haar. Notable attendees included:

- o Event Chair and STAGES Board Member Judy Kent and husband Jerry
- o Ernst & Young Chairman and CEO Jim Turley and wife Lynne, STAGES Board Member
- o STAGES Board Member and Former State Senator Michael Gibbons and wife Liz
- o Presidents of BSI Constructors Paul Shaughnessy, with wife Laura, and Jim Shaughnessy, with wife Karen
- o President of Monsanto Fund Deborah Patterson
- o Brown Shoe Wholesale President Gary Rich and wife Diana
- o Sachs Properties President Kathy Higgins and husband Paul
- o Chesterfield Mayor John Nations and wife Bridget
- o Former Maverick Tube Corp. CEO Gregg Eisenberg and wife Donna

"I am continually amazed at the generosity of the people of St. Louis and their overwhelming support for the unique niche filled by STAGES, especially in such hard economic times," said Jack Lane, the organization's Executive Producer. "These much needed dollars enable us to continue providing the region with the highest quality musical theatre performances and educational opportunities."

STAGES will present its 24th season of mainstage musical theatre productions in Kirkwood in 2010. The season will include *Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (May 28 – June 27), *Promises, Promises* (July 16 – August 15), and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *State Fair* (September 3 – October 3). The 2009 Theatre for Young Audiences production will feature *Disney's The Aristocats* (August 4 – August 15).

STAGES is also currently in the midst of a \$31 million capital campaign to build a Performing Arts Center in Chesterfield. Once the Center opens, STAGES will be the only non-profit theatre organization in the area to own and operate its own theater.

Editor's Note: Event photographs available upon request or online at <http://www.stagesstlouis.org/about/news/news.cfm>