

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Alert for Theatre Editors and Journalists

Chance Theater closes out its “Bold New Home” Capital Campaign Main Stage at Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center is named the Cripe Stage



Chance Theater Board of Directors, Resident Artists and Staff at Chance Noir on August 29

September 21, 2015 in Anaheim, CA ... Chance Theater is pleased to announce the completion of its \$890,000 “Bold New Home” capital campaign. The fundraising drive began two years ago, has received strong support from several prominent community members, and has given the Chance a new theatrical home, which is known as the Bette Aitken *theater arts* Center, in honor of gifts totaling over \$285,000 from community leaders Wylie & Bette Aitken.

The journey to this home began in September 2013, when Chance Theater announced plans to move the company into a new space that would include two stages, a classroom, better amenities for patrons and artists, and, most importantly, an opportunity for the award-winning ensemble to make a larger impact in its community by broadening its educational and outreach programs.

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On August 29, 2015, the campaign came to a close at the Chance’s fundraiser, *Chance Noir*, when Board Chair Scott Well, realizing that the Chance was only \$5,200 short of meeting the \$50,000 Final Encore Challenge, asked everyone to help close out the campaign once and for all. Almost instantly, patrons’ hands started shooting up in the air, and in a matter of minutes, over \$8,000 had been raised and the capital campaign was over. The Chance staff, board, and resident artists breathed a collective (and stunned) sigh of relief... and then everyone in the room burst into applause. Scott then invited Vice-Chair Larry Cripe and his wife, Sophie, to the stage. In honor of their accumulative gifts of over \$100,000 during the course of the campaign, the Chance’s larger of its two stages, with a capacity of 150 seats, will henceforth be known as the Cripe Stage. Larry and Sophie stepped to the microphone and were met with a standing ovation. They spoke about the strong bond they feel to the Chance and how proud they are to have been a part of this important stage in its growth.

THE PEOPLE WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE

Over the course of the last two years, over 230 individuals stepped up to help make this campaign a success, plus several prominent community members who made major gifts, including: Wylie & Bette Aitken, Sophie & Larry Cripe, Mary Kay Fyda-Mar, Tod & Linda White, Yvonne & Damien Jordan, Scott & Sandra Graham, Robert Berman & Robin Preiss-Glasser, Dr. Michael & Jean Abdalla, Lily M. Fan, Camille Goulet, David & Danice Limberg, the Pierce & Gray families, Eddie Schuller & Rachelle Menaker, Scott & Georgia Well, and all Chance board members, staff and resident artists.

“I can’t tell you how strongly Bette and I feel about this amazing troupe of artists,” said Wylie Aitken, the largest contributor to the multi-year campaign. “I can tell you that their passion is only exceeded by their incredible talent. We believe they have become part of our family, and this has been a great rebirth of what is an unbelievable theater.”

Bette Aitken explains why she’s proud to have her name so closely associated with this Anaheim company, “I think that the Chance inspires people. They inspired me. I was just on my way to get a coffee or something one day when I saw the sign. So one night I decided to find out what the Chance was... I loved it. I really loved it. So thank you very much, Chance people, for all the things you do for us.”

Some fundraising highlights during the campaign included Wylie Aitken surprising his wife Bette at the Grand Opening in January 2014 by announcing a \$250,000 donation to name the new theater arts center after her; Tod & Linda White and Larry & Sophie Cripe issuing a \$75,000 challenge gift at the official dedication ceremony in February 2015 with a
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deadline of September 1... and was met by the end of May; and finally the \$50,000 Final Encore Challenge issued by Wylie & Bette Aitken, Larry & Sophie Cripe, Mary Kay Fyda-Mar and Tod & Linda White in June in order to cover unforeseen construction costs and upgrades, and close out the campaign once and for all by November... and it actually closed out on August 29th.

“This new addition has already allowed us to do more and be more for this community, even within the last two years,” said Founding Artistic Director Oanh Nguyen. “Moving forward, we will keep telling contemporary stories that promote connection and compassion and inspire creativity. This new space has allowed us to keep investing in local artists, while continuing our new works program that involves artists from all over the country. In addition, we are now offering more youth programming that aims to introduce young people, not just to live theater, but to their own artistic impulses that we believe will serve them in any path they choose to follow in life.”

Since moving into their new home in 2014, the company has achieved some amazing things, including:

- Received an Ovation Award from LA Stage Alliance for Best Choreography for its inaugural production, *Lysistrata Jones*, which was also nominated for Best Musical.
- Expanded its Speak Up – Take a ‘Chance’ summer program to include double the number of at-risk students
- Currently producing its first season of Theater for Young Audiences
- The first in our region to begin a “Relaxed Performance” initiative, making theater accessible to children and adults who have an Autism Spectrum Condition, sensory and communication disorders, or learning disabilities.
- Produced two world premieres, including *Loch Ness*, which was developed in the On The Radar New Play Series.
- Produced readings of seven new shows in development, four of which have gone on to receive world premieres in major regional theaters, including Lincoln Center and Cleveland Playhouse.
- More than doubled its subscriber base, and increased ticket revenue by 20%.
- The first season of shows was also recognized by the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle, Robby Awards, San Diego Story, Orange Curtain Review, and other press outlets.

To schedule interviews, request photos, or for any additional information, please contact Casey Long at (714) 900-3284 or by e-mail at casey@chancetheater.com.

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ABOUT CHANCE THEATER

Proud to be one of the leading ensemble-driven theatre companies in Southern California, CHANCE THEATER has won five Ovation Awards (including two for Best Production of a Musical--Intimate Theater for *Triassic Park -- The Musical* and *Jerry Springer: The Opera*). The Chance also received an LADCC Award last year for its reimagined revival of *West Side Story*. The Anaheim City Council recently named Chance Theater “the official resident theater company of Anaheim”. Twice named “Outstanding Arts Organization” by Arts Orange County, Chance Theater is also a recipient of the LADCC’s Polly Warfield Award for Excellence. Founded in 1999, Chance Theater is focused on its goal of being Orange County’s premiere mid-size contemporary theater by contributing to a more compassionate, connected, and creative community. As a constituent member of Theatre Communications Group, Network of Ensemble Theaters, and the LA Stage Alliance, Chance Theater continues to bring national attention to the Southern California and Orange County theater scenes.

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