

For immediate release

“CTG: THE GALA 2024”

Sir Matthew Bourne to Be Inaugural Artistic Honoree

Tony Award Winner Lea Salonga Announced as Headlining Performer

**Sunday, April 28 at The Mark Taper Forum and The Music Center
Tickets and Information at CenterTheatreGroup.org**

LOS ANGELES, CA (February 15, 2024) — Sir Matthew Bourne, the director and choreographer of the current “Romeo and Juliet,” now playing at the Ahmanson Theatre, has been named the inaugural artistic honoree for CTG: The Gala 2024 on Sunday, April 28, 2024 at the Mark Taper Forum. Tony Award winner Lea Salonga, recently on the West End in “Old Friends” directed by Bourne, will be the evening’s headlining performer. Performances will also include an excerpt from Bourne’s groundbreaking “Swan Lake” by New Adventures stars Jackson Fisch and Rory Macleod.

Snehal Desai, Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group, said, “We are overjoyed to honor the Tony Award-winning director and choreographer Sir Matthew Bourne, who has been sharing his memorable dance theatre productions with the CTG community and L.A. audiences for over twenty-five years. Matthew is not only a singular artist but someone who has been dedicated to making sure the next generation of artists and audiences have access to the arts. We could not think of a better or more deserving person to honor at this year’s gala.”

Desai continued, “We are also honored and delighted that Lea Salonga will be returning to the Mark Taper Forum for the first time since her unforgettable performance in ‘Flower Drum Song’ back in 2001. Lea is one of the greatest musical theatre stars of all time, and it will be a very special night to welcome her back to CTG and the Taper. We are thrilled that both Matthew and Lea have agreed to join us for what will be an unforgettable evening.”

As Center Theatre Group’s largest annual fundraiser, proceeds from the event will help the theatre company further its mission to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and arts education programs.

“CTG’s annual gala is one of my personal favorite nights of the year,” said Center Theatre Group Managing Director/CEO Meghan Pressman. “Nothing makes me prouder than to see our community of arts lovers gather on the plaza to both celebrate and support the best live theatre in Los Angeles. We have a lot to celebrate this year, but we also have a lot of work to do in order to help close the financial gap, and raise necessary funds needed to return to season programming at the Mark Taper Forum, while continuing to also program the Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatre. CTG: The Gala 2024 is going to be an incredible one-night only event, and we hope it goes a long way towards accomplishing these goals. We can’t wait to see you there.”

Sir Matthew Bourne is renowned for shattering stereotypes and exploring and pushing boundaries in dance. *The New Yorker* has said that Bourne is “the most popular choreographer of theatrical dance in the western world.” Center Theatre Group has been his American home since 1997, when the company presented the U.S. premiere of his groundbreaking “Swan Lake” at the Ahmanson Theatre.

Along with “Swan Lake,” Center Theatre Group has presented Bourne’s “The Car Man,” “Edward Scissorhands,” “The Red Shoes,” “Sleeping Beauty,” “Play Without Words,” “Nutcracker!,” “Cinderella,” and the current “Romeo and Juliet.” In addition, the Cameron Mackintosh production of “My Fair Lady” with choreography and musical staging by Bourne, and the Disney and Mackintosh presentation of “Mary Poppins” with co-direction and choreography by Bourne were also presented by Center Theatre Group at the Ahmanson.

Lea Salonga most recently starred in and produced the new musical “Here Lies Love” at the Broadway Theater and headlined “Old Friends” (alongside Bernadette Peters) directed by Matthew Bourne on London’s West End. She is best known for her Tony Award winning role in “Miss Saigon.” She has also won the Olivier, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Theatre World Awards. She was the first Asian to play Eponine in the musical “Les Misérables” on Broadway and returned to the beloved show as Fantine in the 2006 revival. On Broadway, Lea starred in the 2018 Tony Award winning Broadway revival of “Once on This Island,” “Allegiance,” and “Flower Drum Song.” Many fans of all ages recognize Lea as the singing voice of Princess Jasmine from “Aladdin” and Fa Mulan for “Mulan” and “Mulan II.” For her portrayal of the beloved princesses, the Walt Disney Company bestowed her with the honor of “Disney Legend.”

The evening will begin with cocktails and dinner in Eva & Marc Stern Grand Hall in the historic Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, followed by a special intimate production featuring musical performances from Lea Salonga and tributes to Matthew Bourne at the Mark Taper Forum. The night will conclude with food, drinks, and dancing on the Jerry Moss Plaza at The Music Center. Center Theatre Group board member Jana Bezdek returns as this year’s Gala Chair. Additional performers and honorary co-chairs are to be announced at a later date.

Gala packages begin at \$3,000 and are on sale now. Tickets for the one-night-only benefit performance begin at \$250 and will go on sale at a later date. Find more information on packages for CTG: The Gala 2024 at CenterTheatreGroup.org.

BIOS

SIR MATTHEW BOURNE

Sir Matthew Bourne is firmly established as the UK's most popular and successful choreographer and director. He is the creator of the world's longest running ballet production, a record-breaking nine-time Olivier Award winner, and the only British director to have won the Tony Award for both Best Choreographer and Best Director of a Musical.

Matthew started his dance training at the comparatively late age of 22 and danced professionally for 14 years. As artistic director of his first company, Adventures in Motion Pictures, from 1987 until 2002, Matthew created many award-winning works (including "Nutcracker!," "Highland Fling," "Swan Lake," "Cinderella," and "The Car Man"). Further hit productions were created when New Adventures was launched in 2002 (including "Play Without Words," "Edward Scissorhands," "Dorian Gray," "Sleeping Beauty," "The Red Shoes," and "Romeo and Juliet"). New Adventures quickly became the UK's busiest and most successful dance company and the major exporter of British dance across the world.

Matthew is also a West End and Broadway choreographer; a 30-year relationship with producer Cameron Mackintosh has resulted in the globally successful musicals "Mary Poppins" (which has recently enjoyed a West End revival), "My Fair Lady" and "Oliver!" He has seven honorary doctorates and in 2018 received an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from University of Oxford. He is also an Associate Artist of Sadlers Wells Theatre in London and The Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles.

In 2015, he became the first dance figure to be given the Stage Award for Outstanding Contribution to British Theatre, presented by the UK Theatre Awards. He received the OBE in 2001 and was knighted in the Queen's New Year honours in 2016; in the same year he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Award in recognition of his outstanding services to dance.

Recent work includes directing Stephen Sondheim's "Old Friends" (which ran at the Gielgud Theatre in London's West End until 6 January 2024) and his latest work for New Adventures "The Midnight Bell," which premiered in 2021 and went on to win the National Dance Award for Best Modern Choreography in 2022.

LEA SALONGA

Multiple award-winning actress and singer Lea Salonga is renowned across the world for her powerful voice and perfect pitch. Lea most recently starred in and produced the new musical "Here Lies Love" at the Broadway Theater and headlined "Old Friends" (alongside Bernadette Peters) directed by Sir Matthew Bourne on London's West End.

Lea is best known for her Tony Award winning role in "Miss Saigon." In addition to the Tony, she has won the Olivier, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle and Theatre World Awards. She was also the first Asian to play Eponine in the musical "Les Misérables" on Broadway and returned to the beloved show as Fantine in the 2006 revival. On Broadway, Lea starred in

the 2018 Broadway revival of “Once on This Island” as the Goddess of Love, Erzulie. The show’s return to the Broadway stage earned a Tony Award for “Best Revival of a Musical” and also garnered Lea and the cast a Grammy nomination for “Best Musical Theater Album.” She has also been seen on Broadway in “Allegiance” and “Flower Drum Song.”

Many fans of all ages recognize Lea as the singing voice of Princess Jasmine from “Aladdin” and Fa Mulan for “Mulan” and “Mulan II.” For her portrayal of the beloved princesses, the Walt Disney Company bestowed her with the honor of “Disney Legend.”

Lea stars in the first season of “Pretty Little Liars: Original Sin” (a reboot of the popular series) available on MAX, after starring in the critically acclaimed Sony musical-drama “Yellow Rose.” Lea can also be heard in the Netflix animated series “Centaurworld” and in FX’s animated series “Little Demon.” In August 2021, Lea released her single “Dream Again” and in November, “Lea Salonga: Live in Concert with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra” from the Sydney Opera House aired as part of “Great Performances” on PBS. A live album of the performance was subsequently released by Broadway Records.

Lea’s 2022 Dream Again Tour and her 2019 The Human Heart Tour saw sold-out audiences and record-breaking sales across North America and the United Kingdom. Lea has toured all over the world, performing sold out concerts in such locations as the Sydney Opera House, 02 Arena, Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Singapore’s Esplanade, Kuala Lumpur Convention Center, Hong Kong Cultural Center, Queen Sirikit Convention Center in Bangkok, and Carnegie Hall in New York.

In addition to her stage and screen credits, Lea served as a judge on the Philippines hit version of “The Voice,” including the ratings juggernaut “The Voice Kids.” She has released multiple solo albums, toured the world with legendary popopera quartet Il Divo, and received rave reviews for her many cabaret engagements, including a record setting run at New York’s 54 Below.

In her 45-year career, Lea has performed for six Philippine presidents (from Ferdinand Marcos to Benigno S. Aquino III), four American Presidents (Joe Biden, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush), and for Diana, Princess of Wales and Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. She was honored by “Time Magazine” as a Time100 Impact Award Recipient and received the Gold House 2023 Gold Legend Award.

Lea Salonga will kickstart a new tour with her solo show “Stage, Screen & Everything In Between” in June 2024. She will visit locations across Great Britain, with a night at Theatre Royal Drury Lane (where she appeared in “Miss Saigon” 35 years ago) on June 24, 2024.

Center Theatre Group, one of the nation’s preeminent arts and cultural organizations, is Los Angeles’ leading not-for-profit theatre company, which, under the leadership of Artistic Director Snehal Desai, Managing Director / CEO Meghan Pressman, and Producing Director Douglas C. Baker, programs the Mark Taper Forum and the Ahmanson Theatre at The Music Center in Downtown Los Angeles, and the Kirk Douglas Theatre in Culver City. Center Theatre Group is one of the country’s leading producers of ambitious new works through commissions and world premiere productions and a leader in interactive community engagement and education programs that reach across generations,

demographics, and circumstances to serve Los Angeles. Founded in 1967, Center Theatre Group has produced more than 700 productions across its three stages, including such iconic shows as “Zoot Suit;” “Angels in America;” “The Kentucky Cycle;” “Biloxi Blues;” “Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992;” “Children of a Lesser God;” “Curtains;” “The Drowsy Chaperone;” “9 to 5: The Musical;” and “Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo.”
CenterTheatreGroup.org

American Express is the official credit card for Center Theatre Group.

#

February 15, 2024