CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE REMARKABLE HONOREE

JESSICA LANGE

ROB BOYETT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

GALA
A LEGENDARY NIGHT

FEBRUARY 26, 2018
ZIEGFELD BALLROOM
NEW YORK CITY
Congratulations to everyone at Roundabout!

AJA CHARITABLE FUND
Good evening and welcome to Roundabout’s 2018 Gala at the new Ziegfeld Ballroom. Tonight, we celebrate the extraordinary career of Jessica Lange.

To say I have been a longtime fan of Jessica would be a huge understatement. From her film debut in Grey Gardens, to her performance in Long Day’s Journey Into Night, and, most recently, in The Glass Menagerie of Tennessee Williams’s masterpieces, she never fails to captivate her audience. It’s not just films either. She is equally magnificent on the small screen, giving masterful performances in Grey Gardens, American Horror Story and, most recently, Feud. Across her illustrious career she has garnered two Academy Awards, five Golden Globes, three SAG Awards and three Emmy Awards. And as impressive as those statistics are, I am most dazzled by her work on the stage. She was magnificent on Broadway in both of Tennessee Williams’s masterpieces A Streetcar Named Desire and The Glass Menagerie. So, you can imagine how thrilled I was when she agreed to play Mary Tyrone in our 50th Anniversary season production of Long Day’s Journey Into Night. What you might not be as familiar with is her performance as both transfixing and, most recently, in the Theatrical Workforce Development Program.

Tonight, we want to draw your attention to our newest success, a game-changing program for young adults aged 18-24. Last year, we announced a partnership with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) to create a game-changing program for young adults aged 18-24. Roundabout, through our Theatrical Workforce Development Program (TWDP), provides unprecedented hands-on skills training and job placement resources to young people for whom college is not an option. Program participants chose from a variety of backstage career paths ranging from makeup to carpentry to electricity. The most exciting part of this new program is that upon completion, the fellows will emerge with marketable skills in a sector where job growth is estimated to increase by 4-24% over the next two years, earning salaries ranging from $25-$55+/hour. Proceeds from tonight’s event will directly support future TWDP fellows and all the students and teachers impacted by Education at Roundabout’s work in New York City and beyond.

There are many other members of the Roundabout family that we want to thank for their incredible generosity in making tonight a success. Gala Vice Chairs – Bank of America, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Rosanne and Scott Bok, Michael T. Cohen, Colliers International, Dr. Taylor W. Lawrence, Maureen Hayes, Tom and Kitty Patterson Kempner, Lisa and Gregg Rechler, Carmen Grossman, and Randi Leeds. Additionally, we must thank Dr. Taylor W. Lawrence for helping to make possible what we know will be an amazing concert by Kristin Chenoweth. Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, we want to thank all of you for your generosity to Roundabout both this evening and throughout the year.

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The Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre is given to individuals and organizations who have made an indelible impact on the theatre world. It is named to honor his lifelong commitment to theatre and his incredible support of Roundabout both on stage and off.

In 1994, Jason Robards made his Roundabout debut in the first New York revival of Harold Pinter’s No Man’s Land with his dear friend, Christopher Plummer.

The award was designed by sculptor Arthur Carter, whose bronze and steel sculptures have been exhibited in New York, Paris and around the globe.
iron will. Roar though he might, Kong didn’t stand a chance. Nor did the rest of us. There’s a point in the film when Jessica fixes Jeff Bridges with a piercing stare, then turns away and sinuously saunters down a long mountainous path in a pair of tight blue shorts and striped red top that would awaken the mighty ape in any mortal man and the envy of any woman. Fortunately she turns back to us time and again to share her fierce and singular talent with a power that transcends gender, a range that defies bone structure. A woman, utterly herself, who never cries victim, blames or complains. A woman who does not allow herself to be pushed around by any man, unless of course she wants him to. And age has conferred upon her that continued sense of rightful purpose. Just watch her latest triumph as Joan Crawford in Feud. Watch her give exquisite dimension to that tired old cliché of the bitch goddess clawing her way to the top and inevitably fading to black. It is a meticulously drawn portrait packed to overflowing with nuance, intelligence, naked fear and mature sensuality. Performed with a courage there inside her since the first day she stepped in front of the camera, breathtaking, young and nubile. Maybe there’s something special in the waters of Minnesota because Jessica makes you want to drown in them.

Actor lists are long ones, and the attrition rate can be overwhelming. We live precarious lives. Our careers endure by the grace and favor of you, our audience. But personal endurance requires an inner fortitude, a strength of purpose and an integrity of soul that is both hard won and painfully earned.

I is indefinable and it’s unmistakable. An elusive quality that commands your attention and prevents your turning away. A magical something that simultaneously attracts and unnerves the viewer, burning with a force only Mother Nature could have engendered. And Mother gifted Jessica Lange with that force. Out of the midwest she came, an irresistible twister, unstoppable and inescapable. But for me, that is not the reason I cannot turn away from watching this peerless actress at work. It is not only the intelligence or the emotional availability or the physical beauty that compels me so much as her profound and relentless pursuit of truth. It is that which makes her, in my eyes, one of the finest actresses of her, or for that matter, any generation.

Actors are like ice cream. We come in all flavors. What might taste delicious to some can be unpalatable to others. And mass appeal often carries with it the burden of being somewhat too vanilla and easy to digest. But whatever your flavor of choice, ultimately it’s going to melt. Not so with Ms. Lange.

Her work has been, like it or not, a testament to what should be an actor’s principle intention, baring the soul, making you care, forcing you to see yourself in them. Work that demands unshirting bravery. And she has had, as well, the bravery to resist every actor’s worst enemy, the desire to be popular, to burn a hole in the red carpet, hand on hip, peering vacuously over one shoulder, franchising your brand. Being made in Minnesota most likely has something to do with her perseverance along the rocky road that is every actor’s flavor.

In her less than auspicious film debut, King Kong, she gamely fought off the advances of that big bully, sexual harassment at its most peculiar, and overcame the burden of instant stardom. Avoiding the assembly line of pretty faces displaying more body and less soul as the years pass, she self-retired for three years, deciding best to hone the skills required for a great actress. And that is what she has become. That is the task she nobly and honorably pursues.

But let me assure you my head is not in the clouds. I am fully aware of her internal strength, powerful determination and iron will. Roar though he might, Kong didn’t stand a chance. Nor did the rest of us. There’s a point in the film when Jessica fixes Jeff Bridges with a piercing stare, then turns away and sinuously saunters down a long mountainous path in a pair of tight blue shorts and striped red top that would awaken the mighty ape in any mortal man and the envy of any woman. Fortunately she turns back to us time and again to share her fierce and singular talent with a power that transcends gender, a range that defies bone structure. A woman, utterly herself, who never cries victim, blames or complains. A woman who does not allow herself to be pushed around by any man, unless of course she wants him to. And age has conferred upon her that continued sense of rightful purpose.

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I think I remember where I was when I first saw Jessica Lange perform. It was at a movie theatre in Manhattan or Brooklyn in 1979—I lived in Brooklyn—and the film was Bob Fosse's brilliant All That Jazz. In it, the then 30-year-old Lange played Angelique, a wise and flirtatious angel of death who enjoys her ongoing conversation with Joe Gideon, a choreographer and director who's as drawn to death—to Angelique—as he is to life. You could see why. Lange's Angelique was such a charmer, and as wise and crafty as her quarry; unlike any other young actress who would have used the part as an excuse to garner attention, Lange's focus turned it all around—she wanted to pay attention to you, to learn your darkest secrets, it seems, and secret them away in her considerable soul. All That Jazz was only her second film. Her first, King Kong, had been a media event, but that didn't stop Pauline Kael and other critics from praising the Minnesota-native for her freshness of approach, her determination. I think that's what one sees in her eyes in movies like 1981's The Postman Always Rings Twice. Unlike the great femme fatales of the past who played the role, Lange's Cora doesn't think with her eyelashes; her brains are mixed in with her body and heart: loneliness has made her rely on herself, on the cunning necessary to survive in a world that could care less about your survival. And I think that is what I find so heartbreaking in Lange's work in general: the characters she plays on screen, on stage, are not survivors front and center but survivalists—women who struggle with the notion, let alone reality, of being. Her Amanda Wingfield in the 2005 revival of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie rocked me to my core because before all—before all the defeat and jonquils—you got how Amanda's charm was a weapon she had used to defend her kids—and to defend herself from life's ability to cheat you of joy, if you let it. The brilliance of her recent turn as Mary Tyrone in the 2016 Roundabout revival of Eugene O'Neill's 1941 masterpiece, Long Day's Journey Into Night, changed everything because Lange didn't make Mary's loneliness theatrical—that is, she avoided what lesser performers have done, which is to play Mary's pathos as an attention-getting trick. Instead, Lange let us feel Mary's bones underneath her costuming, the marks on her junkie body, by not playing to the audience and literally turning her back on us so we could embrace her unawares as Mary looked out, out at a horizon no drug and no amount of love would ever be able to bring closer, or further away. Mary couldn’t stand our love—she would disintegrate if she felt it. So, Lange's brilliant choreography—to be seen and not seen, all at once—made Mary so alive that she brought our own loneliness to the fore. Even as she kills herself, Mary survives in order to tell the tale of pain and isolation and a once perfect love that laps at her soul, just like those baby waves swimming towards the horizon. Lange's gift to us is to make words and feelings and thoughts visible that would otherwise be lost to us, and then she fills that darkness and light with that which only a great, full hearted performer can give, which is to say love.
HiLTON aL/  You went to school in Minnesota.

JESSICA LAnE: I went for one quarter to the University of Minnesota, where I was an art major. I wanted to be a painter. I got through one entire quarter. When I was about to start my second, the class that I needed to fulfill my requirements was full. The only other thing that was available was a photography class. So I signed up for that and there was this wild man who was my teacher. He actually brought some of his friends over to meet me in the class.

Ha: Because he loved your work.

JL: Well no, because I think he liked me.

Ha: Oh! Yes, yes.

JL: I didn’t have any work at that point. And I wasn’t really all that interested in photography but I sure did love going in the darkroom with these guys and hanging out. It was fabulous. But then they were all going off to Europe—they were young documentary filmmakers. And I fell in love with

Ha: What were you living on?

JL: Nothing. Except one of the guys, the main filmmaker, had an inheritance that he graciously let us all live on. It wasn’t huge, more like a trust, but we didn’t need much in those days. We weren’t flying first class, we were driving an old Land Rover like a trust, but we didn’t need much in those days. We weren’t flying first class, we were driving an old Land Rover from the south of Spain up to Paris and Amsterdam. That’s when I first went through Paris, in May of ’68.

Ha: Oh my god.

JL: This was Paris during the student uprisings. It was thrilling. I’d go out at night and they were burning barricades and the cobblestones had been torn up. The riot police and the students were on the streets—and I thought, “Well, this is where I’m going to live.”

Ha: Where you wanted to put down roots.

JL: Yeah. But first I tried to go back to Minnesota. It didn’t work. I went back again for one quarter, and then the boys all came back from Europe and moved to New York. So I moved out to New York, too.

Ha: How old were you by then?

JL: 20.

Ha: Were you performing at all?

JL: No. But through these guys, I met this modern dancer who danced with [Merce Cunningham’s company, Ellen Klein. I wasn’t a dancer, but she had this underground theatre company, and did these weird performances—this was 1970, you could do anything. She introduced us to some mime, and I really liked that. So I found that that great old mime, Etienne Decroux, was still teaching in Paris. So I moved to Paris.

Ha: By yourself?

JL: Yeah.

Ha: What was it about mime that really drew you in?

JL: Well, it wasn’t what we think of when somebody says “mime,” this kind of representative thing. Decroux’s work was very abstract, what he called “mime concrete.” It was movement.

Ha: This is related to what we both dislike, which is “Acting”: showing off as a spectacle, as opposed to simply being. I remember in Feud when you go to Bette’s dressing room and you’re looking around and your hand just touches the dirt, and there’s a sad little flower. You just start playing with it. Knowing Decroux’s work, he taught you to be present to what objects were, no?

JL: I think so. He would break down a physical movement, then create an emotional story about it. He was so specific—absolutely rigid in his teaching. You would work for maybe a week on a particular movement and you would do it over and over and over. It’s a great title.

Ha: Who wrote that? It’s a great title.

JL: Tom Eyen. Candy Darling did the original production! I worked on it and then I left. I don’t know if we ever performed it. But I thought, “Well, this is interesting. Acting.”

Ha: Because it has words.

JL: It has words and this whole other element that I understood. And as much as I loved it, what was I ever going to do as a mime?

Ha: How else were you supporting yourself?

JL: I lived on absolutely nothing for years. I never paid rent. I lived in the Marais, above a kosher sausage factory, and I was supposed to go down and give them my rent once a month, but they never paid any attention, so I never paid. Which worked out well!

Ha: How long were you studying with him?

JL: Two or three years, and then I had to come home for personal reasons. But I ended up going back to Paris about a year later. That was the beginning in a little showcase theatre, I did my very first play.

Ha: What was the play?

JL: The White Where and the Bit Player. Do you remember it?

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It's interesting, too, because also when you're living that way, it's teaching you something beautiful about sadness. You're lonely in a way that will never happen to you again.

JL: I remember so clearly one day sitting in the window of my little apartment and thinking, “I'm so lonely, this is going to kill me.” And the only way that I can get through this is just to live moment to moment.

TA: You can almost touch it, right? I remember when I lived in Berlin for six months—I'd never lived anywhere else before. And I remember looking at my feet on the cobblestones, being amazed that I was able to walk from a café to a restaurant. I'd never felt loneliness before. And it's a soul cry.

JL: We talk about it and say, “Oh, I'm lonely.” We trivialize it. But if you're in the depths of it, it's like life and death, right? It's profound. But I have to say, even with that, I was happier in Paris than—

TA: Than almost anywhere.

JL: Yeah.

TA: When you went back to Paris the second time, was that when you modeled for Antonio (Lopez)?

JL: That had to have been around ’72, when I met Antonio and that whole other world of Paris. He was one of those people that just step into your life and suddenly—

TA: The lights go on. How did you meet?

JL: I was living on the Rue de Seine and my sister was visiting. On the flight over she had been reading an article about this guy who lived in Paris named Antonio who would discover young women and have them pose for his sketches. My sister knew I had zero money and she said, “Wouldn't it be interesting if you could find this guy Antonio and model for him and make some money?” This is how weird life is: the next night I came home, and on my door was a note from Antonio saying that he had seen me, I don't know where, in the little bar down the street or somewhere. And that he would like to have me model for him.

TA: He asked the barman?

JL: Paris was very small in those days. He found out where I lived and left me a note. Isn't that crazy? He had a studio not far from me, on the Rue de Rennes. We would just hang out. He loved to dress you up. That was when Karl Lagerfeld was just beginning, and he would get clothes from Karl and then do my makeup. And then we'd go out and dance all night and walk home at six o'clock in the morning. It was just being young and having fun.

TA: Yes, and everybody weighs a hundred pounds and there's all that energy. Had you taken acting classes at all by then?

JL: No. When I left Paris again, I signed up for acting classes because I didn't know what else to do. It just seemed like a natural progression after the years of mime.

TA: How old were you?

JL: I was 25. I thought, “OK, I'll just work as a waitress and I'll study.” I studied with Herbert Berghof, and then with Warren Robertson. And later with Mira Rostova. And even later with Sandra Seacat.

TA: What was Mira like?

JL: Well, she was all about text. More than anything, I remember always just sitting.

TA: Were you auditioning?

JL: During auditions, in the little bar down the street or someplace. He was one of those people that just step into your life and suddenly—

TA: You auditioning?
where there’s nothing there but it’s all “out here,” you know? Makes me want to scream in the theatre.

**HA**: When there’s no interior life.

**JL**: It’s unlike film, with the camera, it’s a dance. It’s a seduction. I think the better the film actor, the more they understand that you let the camera into something very private. With the stage you have that same interior life, but somehow you have to open it to the world. I knew what had to happen, but I didn’t know how to get there the first time I did Streetcar. It was Sir Peter Hall who coaxed me into letting the audience in.

**HA**: To help you. And to also be with you, right? Some people just can’t do it. It’s different in film because there’s a crew, and your relationship is with the director and it’s so intimate.

**JL**: I remember when I worked with Kim Stanley it drove her crazy doing film work. She said, “I can’t keep track,” because we’re shooting out of sequence—it’s the antithesis of stage performance, where you start at A and get to Z. Film for her was the reverse. It was about allowing that thing to be more interior and less presentational.

**HA**: What did you love about playing with her?

**JL**: Everything was out there. She never protected herself in that emotional territory.

**HA**: That scene where you push her and she says, “You have done it now little sister.” One of the most demonic things I’ve ever seen.

**JL**: When we started doing that, because we’re both very physical actors—it was rough. She would slap me hard, no stage slap. After two or three takes of her slapping me in the face, I grabbed her—I remember this—and threw her against the wall and said, “Get out of my way, old woman.” And I could see this hit her, because it wasn’t scripted. She said to me later, “Keep doing that. Say that to me every time.” I’d say it and she’d slap me, and it just got rougher and rougher. But working with Kim was exactly the way I love to work with another actor, where it’s on fire and dangerous and you don’t know where it’s going. She was extraordinary.

**HA**: What was the next stage piece for you?

**JL**: I did Streetcar twice, which seems to be a pattern. I do it once and then again to make sure I can get it all right. A producer in London heard me talking at some press event, and I said I’d like to play Mary Tyrone. So he got the rights to Long Day’s Journey (Into Night) and we did a production in London several years later.

**HA**: You wrote something very beautiful in the introduction to one of the published versions. You said that you never felt that you were finished with her.

**JL**: I wish I could do it again. That’s one of those parts, like Blanche if you didn’t age out of it, you could keep playing Blanche for the rest of your life and never get to the bottom of her. I live part of the year in New Orleans and every time I hear those cathedral bells I think, “Oh this is what she was talking about.” I hadn’t lived in New Orleans before I had done Blanche three times. So now when she describes how, “Those cathedral bells are the only clean thing in the Quarter,” it resonates. That’s discovery, right? You could keep discovering Mary Tyrone until the day you died and never get to the bottom of it.

**HA**: Could there be anything more beautiful than that? I mean, really.

**JL**: Oh my line when he says, “You have to forget the past, Mary.” And she says, “Why?”

**HA**: Yes. Except your other line when he says, “You have to forget the past, Mary.” And she says, “Why?”

**JL**: “How can I? The past is the present. It’s the future, too. We all try to lie out of it, but life won’t let us.”

**HA**: That’s right. You need that limitlessness of the role.

When I saw you as Mary Tyrone it was just extraordinary to me, because I’ve known and been hurt by women who were addicted to something. You learn that you have to stay away, in a certain way.

**JL**: You have to protect yourself.

**HA**: Yes, because the drug is giving them license to not empathize. I remember having this conversation with you—someone counted how many drinks they have during the course of the play.

**JL**: It starts early, right after breakfast.

**HA**: Mary is trying to survive herself in a way, right? The way you played it was that she was trying to survive her love—it disappointed her, but she couldn’t get away from it.

**JL**: So much is disappointment, isn’t it? And also having never been addicted, you have to really rely on the imagination to understand what that means, to really have that need. That last speech of hers, when she says, “And then in the spring something happened to me,” and she remembers. Oh Chris! That great love. “I met James Tyrone.”

**HA**: “I was so happy for a time.”

**JL**: Could there be anything more beautiful than that? I mean, really.

**HA**: No. Except your other line when he says, “You have to forget the past, Mary.” And she says, “Why?”

**JL**: “How can I? The past is the present. It’s the future, too. We all try to lie out of it, but life won’t let us.”
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Fondly,

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and its continuing dedication to the development,
production and presentation of high-quality theater
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We salute this year’s honoree:
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on her Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre

Saluting Jessica Lange
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Our congratulations to Jessica Lange on receiving The Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre!

Cheers to Todd Haimes and everyone at Roundabout Theatre Company on a wonderful Gala and another fabulous season!

MARCIA DUNN and JONATHAN SOBEL
Congratulations to Roundabout Theatre Company! I am honored to be a part of the extraordinary and dedicated Board of Directors and the talented and energetic team at Roundabout, powerfully led by Todd and Julia. I look forward to being front row as Roundabout continues to grow and thrive.

Sylvia Golden

Roundabout’s mission and creativity are a gift to the theatre world. Congratulations to all.

Patricia and Bernard Goldstein
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Congratulations to a fabulous team!!!

Congratulations to Jessica Lange
on a truly legendary career.

Love, your friends at
Congratulations to honoree Jessica Lange on receiving the Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre, and to Roundabout for its commitment to education and enriching the lives of students and teachers through the arts.

JIM AND JOSIE KELLY
Congratulations Todd, Julia, Sydney, Steve and the entire Company for another fabulous year at Roundabout Theatre Company.

STEFHANIE and RON KRAMER
Congratulations to Jessica Lange for her most deserving award!

Looking forward to Kristin Chenoweth’s amazing performance and happy that I was able to help bring her to the stage!

DR. TAYLOR W. LAWRENCE
Congratulations to Roundabout Theatre Company and to Honoree Jessica Lange for receiving the Jason Robards Award for Excellence in Theatre. Cheers to another successful season!

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Congratulations to tonight’s honoree, Jessica Lange, and to Roundabout Theatre Company on another successful season.

We salute Jessica Lange for her extraordinary talent and her contribution to the theatre world.

We applaud Todd Haimes and the entire Roundabout Team for their commitment to the artists and the community ensuring quality theatre is accessible to all.

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CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE REMARKABLE HONOREE

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