

For Immediate Release
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Press Contact: Amy Scott-Douglass
202.547.3230 x 2312
ascottdouglass@shakespearetheatre.org

POLITICIANS AND MEDIA PERSONALITIES PERFORM IN SHAKESPEARE THEATRE COMPANY'S RECORD-SETTING *WILL ON THE HILL* FUNDRAISER

More than \$253,000 raised for Education and Outreach at STC

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Thirteen members of Congress, CNN's Jessica Yellin, WJLA's Gordon Peterson and other local and national personalities took to the stage May 4, 2009 for the Shakespeare Theatre Company's annual *Will on the Hill* event. The all-star troupe helped Shakespeare Theatre Company achieve a record-setting fundraising total of more than \$253,000.

The *Will on the Hill* Committee, chaired by Nick Allard of Patton Boggs and Jim Portnoy of Kraft Foods, as well as Past Chair W. Michael House of Hogan & Hartson, led the fundraising effort, which exceeded the prior year's achievement despite the difficult economic times. The funds raised support the Shakespeare Theatre Company's extensive education and outreach programming.

This year's play, titled *A Midsession Night's Dream*, was written by Peter Byrne and directed by David Muse. It follows the path of a young Senate page who falls asleep during a filibuster and dreams that he and William Shakespeare travel through Washington, using Shakespearean verse to resolve partisan conflicts.

Representative Jane Harman opened the show with a line that adapted Shakespeare's well-known opening of *Romeo and Juliet*: "Two parties, both alike in dignity." Representative Wm. Lacy Clay and CNN correspondent Jessica Yellin won more than their share of laughs as star-crossed, teenaged lovers separated by their parents' party politics. While Yellin borrowed verse from the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet* to express her angst—"Wherefore art thou Democrat?"—her pleas were met with contemporary prose from Clay, who deadpanned, "So, like, what? You want me to join the Green Party?"

Representative Donna Edwards played an environmental activist whose rendition of John of Gaunt's speech from *Richard II* "This blessed plot, this earth—" was so effective that she actually won the debate against an industrialist (played by Ben Ginsberg of Patton Boggs LLP). "An environmental activist won?" Edwards asked, in character. "No wonder I didn't recognize the feeling." The audience of 520 people also delighted at Senator Roger Wicker's performance as the ultra-conservative whose "PDA has a direct line to the Cato Institute" and Representative Brian Baird's performance as the liberal who believes that "school vouchers cause cancer."

There were also a few playful moments as the politicians waited in the dressing rooms. One of the politicians reportedly tried to steal another's costume, and a third politician was reluctant to don an especially floppy hat. "My staff is going to be here, and they'll have their cameras," the Congressman worried.

"We are so grateful to everyone who supports our education and outreach programming through their giving to *Will on the Hill*," said Gregory Smith, STC Director of Education, who took the podium to welcome the audience. "My only wish is that everyone could see first hand the incredible impact their giving has for students in schools around the metro region and in our education studios." Smith then turned the stage over to one such group of students, Christine Donnelly's Shakespeare Club from Parkdale High School in Riverdale, Maryland. The high schoolers performed a short student-directed and created excerpt from *Romeo and Juliet*.

Shakespeare Theatre Company's 2008-2009 season continues with the May 12-June 28 run of Noël Coward's *Design for Living*, directed by STC's Artistic Director Michael Kahn, at the Lansburgh Theatre (450 7th St NW). From June 16-July 19 director Robert Falls reprises his 2006 in-your-face production of *King Lear* at Sidney Harman Hall (610 F St NW). Stacy Keach, fresh from his Helen Hayes award winning performance in *Frost/Nixon*, stars as the aging patriarch. For subscription packages and tickets contact the STC Box Office. Phone: 202.547.1122, Toll Free: 877.487.8849, TTY: 202.638.3863 or visit www.shakespearetheatre.org.