



Press Release

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Theatre Communications Group Celebrates Fifth Anniversary of *Free Night of Theater*

Annual National Event tops Over 700 Theatres in 120 Cities

"Free Night of Theater has thrown the doors of our theatres open wide."
---Brad Erickson, Theatre Bay Area managing partner

New York, New York, September 2009 - Theatre Communications Group (TCG) is pleased to announce that the 5th anniversary of its ***Free Night of Theater*** program will open across the country on Thursday, October 15, 2009 (and run until October 31st). The successful national audience development program was designed to attract new patrons to live theatre and give existing patrons access to venues they might not be familiar with. This fall, theatre-goers from coast to coast will be given the opportunity to attend performances presented by over 700 theatres, in more than 120 cities, completely free of charge.

Continuing the program's tradition of national expansion, Houston, Minneapolis and several smaller communities across the country, have joined the 2009 program further expanding it to a truly national initiative. Introduced as a three-city pilot program in 2005, the program was designed to raise general awareness of America's not-for-profit theatres and attract new and non-traditional audiences. A complete list of participating cities and theatres is available at www.freenightoftheater.net.

"Since 2005, close to 200,000 tickets have been made available to new theatregoers, and for the second year over 100 communities will participate in the program," said Teresa Eyring, TCG's executive director. "The research reports demonstrate the effectiveness of the program in generating new audiences for theatres. And there is great excitement about the program's 2009 launch on October 15 in New York City, Chicago, San Francisco and over 117 other cities across the country."

The 2008 program research -- gathered by Shugoll Research of Bethesda, MD -- reports that 92% of the participants rated the program as "excellent to very good" and responded that they were "extremely satisfied" with the program overall. Of those patrons who attended a theatre they had never been to before, 34% returned to that theater and purchased a ticket (with 40% of those attendees buying a full price ticket), and 91% say they are very likely to participate in Free Night again in 2009. For the full Shugoll Research report, please contact Phillip Matthews at pmatthews@tcg.org.

In addition, ***Free Night*** has a proven track record of attracting non-traditional theatre audiences including infrequent theatre attendees, young people, the less educated, non-white and those with lower household incomes. Specifically, within each category, 72% attended a theatre they had never been to before, 35% are under the age of 35, 20% have less than a college degree, 28% are non-white, and 36% have combined household incomes under \$50,000

The program has also been a great success for participating theatre companies. According to Molly Smith, artistic director of Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., "Arena is proud to include TCG's **Free Night of Theater** program in our repertoire of community outreach programs. It provides the opportunity for a broader audience - one that may not attend theatre on a regular basis - to be introduced to the excitement of live theatre. **Free Night** has been a foot-in-the-door for many new audience members, and that's something that benefits us all!"

Tickets to **Free Night of Theater** will be available beginning October 1, 2009 and most performances will take place from October 15 – October 31, 2009. For tickets and more information on the **Free Night** program, please visit the national website, www.freenightoftheater.net.

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Theatre Communications Group (TCG), the national organization for the American theatre, exists to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. Founded in 1961, TCG's constituency has grown from a handful of groundbreaking theatres to nearly 700 member theatres and affiliate organizations and more than 12,000 individuals nationwide. TCG offers its members networking and knowledge-building opportunities through our conferences, events, research and communications; grants approximately \$2 million per year to theatre companies and individual artists; advocates on the federal level and serves as the US Center of the International Theatre Institute, connecting its constituents to the global theatre community. TCG is the nation's largest independent publisher of dramatic literature, with 10 Pulitzer Prizes for Best Play on our booklist; it also publishes the award-winning AMERICAN THEATRE magazine and ARTSEARCH®, the essential source for a career in the arts. In all of its endeavors, TCG seeks to increase the organizational efficiency of its member theatres, cultivate and celebrate the artistic talent and achievements of the field and promote a larger public understanding of, and appreciation for, the theatre.

In 2005, TCG received the Tony Honors for Excellence in Theatre in recognition of its impact on the national field. TCG and its member theatres are major contributors to the American theatre sector, which employs more than 131,000 people, produces over 202,000 performances each year and contributes \$1.9 billion to the US economy annually. A 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, TCG is led by executive director Teresa Eyring and governed by a national board of directors representing the theatre field. www.tcg.org.