



JOAN MANGUM

"Blame It On Bacharach!" the 24th musical celebration presented by Southland Theatre Artists Goodwill Event (S.T.A.G.E.), took place over two nights at the Wilshire Theatre. The performances raised nearly \$350,000 for AIDS Project L.A.

S.T.A.G.E., the world's longest continuously running AIDS benefit, brings together show business elite who donate their time and talent to the star-studded benefit. This year was no exception as the show featured a special adaptation of Bacharach's Broadway hit *Promises, Promises*, starring Vicki Lewis and Danny Gurwin. Donna McKechnie, who appeared in the original cast, reprised the show-stopping *Turkey Lurkey Time* dance number, joined by Sandahl Bergman, Jane Lanier and Valarie Pettiford. Actress Marilu Henner did a hilarious turn as Marge MacDougall. Also featured in the production were Ian Abercrombie, Paul Ainsley, Chris Cordone, Alvin Ing, Lynne Marta, Jamiee McMurray, Linda Michele and Gregory North.

The second half belonged to a selection of the composer's best-loved songs, leading off with cabaret star Marilyn Maye taking on *What The World Needs Now Is Love*. The original Plaids from the long-running *Forever Plaid*—Stan Chandler, David Engel, Roger Befeler and Larry Rabin—reunited for an irreverent medley of Bacharach's film mu-

sic. Oscar and Grammy nominee Stephen Bishop performed *Blue On Blue* accompanying himself on guitar. Former *Star Search* winner Cate Adams performed a dramatic *Baby It's You* while *American Idol* runner-up Justin Guarini sang *The Look Of Love*. Grammy-winning Melissa Manchester chose a medley of *Anyone Who Had A Heart* and *I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself*, R&B singer Deniece Williams performed *Magic Moments* and Jai Rodriguez did *Go Ask Shakespeare*.

TV star Stefanie Powers performed a bold arrangement of *Walk On By* while Broadway veteran Nancy Dussault did *The April Fools*. Cate Caplin and Gary Franco danced to *Here I Am* and saxophonist Dave Koz performed a stirring instrumental version of *This Guy's In Love With You*. Donna McKechnie and Valarie Pettiford returned for the second act to sing *House Is Not A Home* and *Alfie*, respectively.

Event Chair Betty Garrett, joined Ian Abercrombie, Paul Ainsley and Alvin Ing, in a humorous version of *There's Always Something There To Remind Me* while S.T.A.G.E. veteran Carol Cook closed the show with a boisterous monologue, aided by sign language interpreter Jon Maher and joined by the entire company for a touching *That's What Friends Are For*.

The show was directed by

David Galligan with musical direction and arrangements from Mary Ekler.

This year's "Producers" award was presented to original S.T.A.G.E. Event Chair Doris Roberts and community activist and former APLA Board Chair Brenda R. Freiberg.

An extensive silent auction offering travel packages, gift baskets and memorabilia filled



the Wilshire Theatre lobby for both performances. Soap star and host of *Merv Griffin's Crosswords* Ty Treadway raised additional funds by auctioning off trips to New York and South Africa, tickets to *Dancing With The Stars* and the *American Idol* finale and a dinner party for 10 prepared by Neal Faser of Grace Restaurant. Framed musical quotes hand-drawn by Burt Bacharach himself were also auctioned.

More than 65 members of SHARE gathered at a local country club for the group's annual Funding Reception.

Culminating a year of fundraising activities, more than \$800,000 will be distributed to local charities. Among those receiving individual grants are The Dreammaker's Project, The Center for the Partially Sighted, Team Prime Time, Kayne Eras Center, Exceptional Children's Foundation, Salvin Special Education Center, Stuart House, Ahead With Horses, SHARE's Child Disability Center at Cedar's-Sinai Medical Center, I Have A Dream Foundation, Bethune Theatredance, Friends of CASA, and Infinite Dreams.

"This evening is one of our favorites as it is so wonderful to



S.T.A.G.E. BENEFIT—"Blame It On Bacharach" was the theme of the 24th fundraiser for AIDS Project L.A. at the Wilshire Theatre in Beverly Hills. Actress Doris Roberts (left, below) received the "Producers" award. Among those on hand (above, from left): actress/singer Stefanie Powers, Broadway star Donna McKechnie, actress Marilu Henner of *Celebrity Apprentice* and Justin Guarini of *American Idol*. **Photos by Chris Kane**

fund these wonderful facilities," enthused Dolores Nemiro, president of SHARE.

Founded in 1953, the group has raised more than \$44 million to assist "at risk" youth, developmentally disabled and abused children in need.

The SHARE Boomtown Gala will be held May 31.

Nearly 1,000 high school students will showcase their considerable vocal talents in the Walt Disney Concert Hall at the Los Angeles Master Chorale's prestigious 19th annual High School Choir Festival on Friday, April 18. Choirs from 28 Southland schools have been chosen to participate in this year's vocal extravaganza, which will be conducted by music director, Grant Gershon. The two-part performance is free to the public.

Seating is on a first-come, first-served basis. For concert information, call 800-787-5262 or visit www.lamc.org.

Actelion Pharmaceuticals will present "Cool Comedy—Hot Cuisine," an event to benefit the Scleroderma Research Foundation, on April 16 at the Beverly Wilshire.

Foundation boardmember Bob Saget hosts the star-studded evening, which features performances by actor/comedienne Sarah Silverman, Grammy-winning musician John Mayer, comedian Jeffrey Ross, the Dick Bright Orchestra and appearances by Bill Bel-

lamy, SRF boardmember Dana Delany and others. Celebrity chefs and restaurateurs Susan Feniger (also on the board) and Mary Sue Milliken of *The Food Network's Too Hot Tamales* will prepare a five-course Latin-themed dinner.

Tickets start at \$500. A live auction will feature eight unique packages ranging from ultra-luxurious vacations to personalized celebrity experiences. For more information or tickets, call 800-441-CURE.

Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and Oscar-winning screenwriter Larry McMurtry will be honored at the 13th annual Los Angeles Library Awards Dinner on April 30 in the Beverly Wilshire. He will receive the LAPL "Literary" award for his extensive contributions to literature and the next day (May 1) will deliver a free public lecture at noon in the Central Library downtown as party of the ALOUD series.

Besides McMurtry's, other awardees will be John Cooke, a founding member of the Library Foundation of Los Angeles board; and Wachovia.

Sam Cargill, Nancy Harahan and Brian Kaufman are dinner co-chairs with Veronique Peck as honorary chair.

For information about the awards dinner or to make reservations (\$750), the phone number is 213-228-7500.

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