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The Phoenix Theatre Company Announces Applause! Gala 2026: Where Dreams Begin

(PHOENIX, July 9, 2026) — The Phoenix Theatre Company proudly announces *Applause! Gala 2026: Where Dreams Begin* celebrating individuals and organizations whose commitment to the arts, humanitarian causes, and community has helped shape Phoenix for generations.

The gala takes place Friday, November 6, 2026, from 5:30-10 p.m. at the Dr. Stacie J. and Richard J Stephenson Theatre and Courtyard, 1825 N. Central Ave., Phoenix.

Honorary Chairs DeeDee Vecchione and Robert Meza will lead the evening which features a one-of-a-kind live musical production written and directed by Producing Artistic Director Michael Barnard. Guests will enjoy preshow a cocktail hour and a post-performance New York City-themed meal with dancing in the open-air courtyard underscored by Justin & the SwingBeats.

The 2026 honorees are Lauren Bailey (Humanitarian Award), Sally Pope (Woman Who Cares), John Graham (Man of Character), Stevie Eller (Lifetime Achievement), The David E. Reese Family Foundation (Angels of Our Art), and Rose Law Group (Company Who Cares).

“What the Applause! Gala makes possible reaches every corner of this company. It supports the productions audiences experience on our stages, but it also sustains the work that happens far beyond them, from our Partners That Heal to Summer Theatre Camp programs,” said The Phoenix Theatre Company Executive Director Vincent VanVleet.

Partners That Heal brings live performance to patients and families in hospitals across Arizona, and the inclusive Summer Theatre Camp serves children of all abilities through a partnership with the Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center.

As The Phoenix Theatre Company opens its 107th season, the Applause! Gala offers an opportunity to reflect on more than a century of storytelling, to celebrate the people who have ensured that legacy continues, and to envision the stories yet to be told. “This evening gives us the ability to dream bigger, serve more deeply, and continue building a theatre that belongs to this community,” VanVleet said.

“What moves me most about this evening is that we are not only celebrating a theatre. We are celebrating people who have spent their lives making Phoenix stronger, kinder, and more connected. Each honoree represents a different kind of generosity, and together they remind us what is possible when people care deeply about their community,” said Applause! Gala Honorary Chair DeeDee Vecchione.

Gala tickets and sponsorship opportunities are available. For information, contact Marisa Butler, Director of Development, at m.butler@phoenixtheatre.com.

Event Details

Date: Friday, November 6, 2026

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Dr. Stacie J. and Richard J Stephenson Theatre and Courtyard, The Phoenix Theatre Company, 1825 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85004

ABOUT THE PHOENIX THEATRE COMPANY

The Phoenix Theatre Company is not only the largest professional regional theatre company in the state, with over 600 performances each year on multiple stages, but it's also the first arts organization in Arizona and a founding member of the Central Arts District. Committed to advancing the performing arts in the Valley, The Phoenix Theatre Company's mission is to create exceptional theatrical experiences that inspire hope and understanding. For more information, visit phoenixtheatre.com.

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