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## Social Circuits

By ANN CONWAY

September 29 2002

Mamma Mia!

Call it a social triathlon: They wined and dined. They watched the opening night performance of "Mamma Mia!" They discoed at a post-performance cast party. And so it went for patrons of the Center Theatre Group who celebrated the launch of its 36th season at a sellout benefit that netted \$160,000 for its outreach programs. "This is our most successful gala ever," Betsy Applebaum, co-chairwoman, said as she welcomed hundreds of guests to a cocktail reception at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

The buzz (besides the one for the group's nostalgic new season at the Ahmanson Theatre, which includes Lily Tomlin in her Tony Award-winning performance in "The Search for Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe") was for the recent opening in New York of three productions first presented by Center Theatre Group--"My Old Lady," "In Real Life" and a new version of "Flower Drum Song." "They all started here," said Gordon Davidson, the group's artistic director and producer. "I present these primarily for our community, but the good stuff always moves on."

Tomlin was guest of honor at the formal dinner--with filet mignon and potatoes layered with artichokes--staged at tables topped with towering sprays of white orchids in the pavilion's Grand Hall. "It is fitting that we would bring 'Search for Signs' here because, as you know, L.A. is the center of the universe," said Tomlin, as she addressed guests such as gala co-chairs Harold Applebaum and Sheri and Les Biller. "The Music Center is always a good place to find intelligent life, and it wouldn't be possible without generous people like you."

Also on the guest list at the Sept. 20 gala: Judi Davidson, Richard Kagan, Julie Hagerty, Patty Glaser, Lainie Kazan, Piper Laurie, Corina and Antonio Villaraigosa, Shelly Freeman, Brian Hargrove, Adela and John Ohanesian and Mara Brock Akil.

Moving Forward

Standing in for her late husband, beloved L.A. Laker announcer Chick Hearn, Marge Hearn took the spotlight at a gala netting \$200,000 for the Dorr Institute for Arthritis Research & Education and Operation Walk, a surgical outreach program for disadvantaged arthritis patients. "We planned for this to be a celebration with Chick. This was something he really wanted to do," said orthopedic surgeon Lawrence D. Dorr, the institute's medical director. "We are so grateful that Marge is here--she's had a lot of requests" for appearances.

Dressed in a glittering jacket for the gala at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, Hearn said it felt "strange" to be without the man to whom she was married "a couple of days short of 64 years." "This is my first experience of being alone [in public], but I feel very much at home with this group," she

said.

Her husband, who had hip-replacement surgery earlier this year, believed in Operation Walk's outreach to the underserved, she said. "He loved the fact that it helped people who couldn't afford the surgery." Also honored was orthopedic nurse Jeri Ward, winner of the inaugural Audrey Skirball Kenis Community Service Award.

Founded in 1994, Operation Walk has provided hip- and knee-replacement surgery for about 250 people in developing nations and the U.S., Dorr said. "These are crippled people who can't walk because they have such severe arthritis," he said. "Since they have no medical insurance, the surgery is like a miracle that drops out of the sky for them."

During the Sept. 21 festivities, Dorr announced that the Audrey Skirball Kenis Foundation had recently given a \$1-million grant to Operation Walk. "In some ways, we have called it Audrey's walk," Dorr said of the late philanthropist for whom the foundation is named. "Audrey, her husband, Charles Kenis, and the foundation have been the biggest supporters of these trips."

On the guest list: Bob Steiner, Bill Bertka, Judy and Buddy Litten, Linda and Harvey Vechery, Linda and Stu Lantz, Arnie and Carol Cohen, Kathy and Rich Cardarette, Elgin Baylor, Jamal Wilkes and Ruben Bird.

### Komen Awards

A breast cancer survivor and a tireless health advocate, Sandy Finestone was presented with two awards at a Sept. 19 reception honoring sponsors of the Komen Orange County Race for the Cure: Volunteer of the Year (from the local affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation) and the National Komen Outstanding Volunteer of the Year for Lifetime Achievement.

"I got involved with this group because I like the Komen philosophy," said Finestone, a psychologist who underwent a double mastectomy when she was diagnosed with multifocal breast cancer 19 years ago. "Twenty-five percent of all funds we raise goes to the national office and 100% of that goes to cancer research. Seventy-five percent stays in the local community and we can use it for what needs to be done."

Also receiving awards for their work on behalf of the foundation were Marie Blash and Bill Saksa.

Finestone advises women not to be afraid of breast cancer. "I tell them to take good care of themselves and do regular breast self-exams and yearly mammograms," Finestone said during the event at the Turnip Rose in Costa Mesa. "The most important thing now is that women don't have to lose their breasts--and with detection, they absolutely don't have to lose their lives."

Last Sunday, about 30,000 people participated in the Newport Beach race, which raised about \$1.5 million. Since it was founded in 1992, the Orange County chapter of the Komen Foundation has raised more than \$7.7 million for cancer research.

### Starry Night

Celebrating the museum's new exhibit, "George Romney, 1734-1802: British Art's Forgotten Genius," patrons of the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens in San Marino gathered for an alfresco benefit on Sept. 21 that raised more than \$200,000 for operations and programs.

"Grandeur in the Gardens" also marked the unveiling of the facility's Rose Hills Foundation Conservatory for Botanical Science, due to open in 2004. During the event, library board chairman Robert Wycoff announced that the National Science Foundation had donated a \$1.4 million grant to create the conservatory's botanical and educational components. Ruth and Ed Shannon were gala co-chairpersons.

## Mac Tonight

Dining on burgers and fries under glass, supporters of the Los Angeles Ronald McDonald House attended a bash in the City of Industry on Sept. 14 that raised \$235,000 for its residential facility for children with life-threatening illnesses and their families. The house provides free or low-cost accommodations for families with children who are hospitalized and outpatients who are away from home. Dick Hale and Barbara Vanderhoop were co-chairpersons.

### Coming Up:

\* Opening night gala for the Los Angeles Art Show on Thursday benefits Music Center Spotlight Awards at the Barker Hangar at the Santa Monica Airport. Tickets: \$100. Call (213) 202-6288.

\* Cattle Baron's Ball on Saturday at the Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort in Newport Beach benefits the American Cancer Society. Tickets: \$150. Call (949) 567-0616.

\* Asians for Miracle Marrow Matches features a dinner and concert starring jazz artist Keiko Matsui on Oct. 6 at the Grove of Anaheim. Tickets: \$75. Concert only: \$37.50. Call (714) 712-2700.

\* Music Theatre West benefits from the 50th anniversary gala performance on Oct. 6 at the Carpenter Performing Arts Center in Long Beach. Tickets: \$35 to \$50 for show. Reception and show: \$95. Call (562) 430-2324.

Cancer survivor Engelbert Humperdinck will be honored at a dinner presented by the Associates for Breast & Prostate Cancer Oct. 11 at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. Proceeds benefit the John Wayne Research Center. Tickets: \$250. Call (310) 553-9007.

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