



October 11, 2006

Triple Tony Winner Gene Saks To Receive PlayMaker Award at 19th Annual Gala

CHAPEL HILL —At the 19th annual PlayMakers Ball on Saturday, November 4th, PlayMakers Repertory Company will honor director and actor Gene Saks with the PlayMaker Award for Lifetime Achievement. Saks, a triple Tony Award winner, is directing "The Underpants" for PlayMakers, and previously directed "The Front Page" for the company. Saks joins a distinguished group of honorees representing all disciplines in the theatre arts including actors Jack Palance, Eva Marie Saint, Faye Dunaway and Hume Cronyn, New York Times critic Frank Rich, costumer designer William Ivey Long, and Broadway composer and lyricist Richard Adler. The PlayMakers Ball is the largest fund-raising gala in the state. While the lavish black-tie event is a fixture on the social calendar, its very serious purpose is to underwrite production costs and artist and designer salaries for the nonprofit, professional theatre in residence at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Gene Saks is a veteran of World War II and was in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, which he says was less hazardous than his career in the theatre. He began as an actor playing a butler in Marcel Pagnol's *Topaze* at the Morosco Theatre in 1947.

After five years playing off-Broadway he toured with Henry Fonda in *Mr. Roberts*, played in "South Pacific" on Broadway and replaced Martin Balsam in "Middle of the Night", which starred Edward G. Robinson. He originated his first Broadway role in Paddy Chayefsky's "The Tenth Man", directed by Tyrone Guthrie in 1959, acted with Julie Harris in "A Shot in the Dark" and "A Thousand Clowns" with Jason Robards. In 1963 he was asked to direct "Enter Laughing", his first hit, as well as his first play on Broadway. This was followed by "Nobody Loves an Albatross" with Robert Preston, the musical "Half A Sixpence", "Generation" with Henry Fonda, Angela Lansbury in "Mame", Christopher Plummer in "Barrymore" and seven plays by Neil Simon, "Brighton Beach Memoirs" and "Biloxi Blues", both with Matthew Broderick, "California Suite", "Broadway Bound", "Rumors", the female "Odd Couple" with Rita Moreno and Sally Struthers and "Lost in Yonkers" with Irene Worth, Kevin Spacey and Mercedes Ruehl, which won the Pulitzer Prize. He also directed Alan Alda in "Jake's Women".

Saks' work in film included acting in "A Thousand Clowns" (1965) with Jason Robards, "The Prisoner of Second Avenue" (1975) with Jack Lemmon and Anne Bancroft, and "Nobody's Fool" (1994) with Paul Newman; and directing "Barefoot in the Park" (1967), "The Odd Couple" (1968), "Last of the Red Hot Lovers" (1972), "Brighton Beach Memoirs" (1986), "A Fine Romance." (1992).

In 1990 he received the George Abbott Award for Lifetime Achievement in Theatre, and in 1991 was elected to The American Theatre Hall of Fame, in 1994 to Guild Hall's Life Achievement in the Arts, and in 2001 Cornell University Alumni Award for Distinction in the Arts. Saks won the Tony in 1977 for directing the musical "I Love My Wife" and in 1983 and 1985, respectively, for the plays "Brighton Beach Memoirs" and *Biloxi Blues*."

The 2006 PlayMakers Ball theme is "Great Journeys." A limited number of tickets are still

available by contacting 919-843-9666 or Playmakers_ball@hotmail.com.

Guests will dance to the music of Peter Duchin and his orchestra and savor a gourmet meal created by Chef Brian Stapleton of the Carolina Inn. PlayMakers Ball designers include Giorgios Bakatsias, Giorgios Hospitality Group, Durham; Kathy Buck, Purple Puddle, Chapel Hill; McKay Coble, assisted by the PlayMakers Repertory Company Production Shops, Chapel Hill; Barrie Gibby, barrettdesign events, Burlington; Bitty Holton, Chapel Hill; J. W. Walton, The Catering Company, Chapel Hill; and Melanie Woods, MW Design, Chapel Hill.

Organizations interested in contributing to next year's PlayMakers Ball fundraiser should contact Stacy Payne, Associate Development Director, at 919-962-2481 or shpayne@email.unc.edu.

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Photo of Saks available upon request.

For more information about PlayMakers, visit <http://www.playmakersrep.org>

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