

For immediate release
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Theatre Communications Group's
***Free Night of Theater* blasts off in New York City!**

100 theaters offer over 5,000 FREE tickets

“We welcome ***Free Night of Theater*** to Off-Broadway and look forward to celebrating this event. “ --- Barry Grove, executive producer, Manhattan Theatre Club

New York - Theatre Communications Group (TCG) is pleased to announce that the fourth annual ***Free Night of Theater*** will have its New York City launch on Thursday, October 16, 2008. The program was introduced as a three-city pilot program in 2005 to raise the general awareness of America's not-for-profit theatres and attract new and non-traditional audiences. This year the national program includes more than 600 theatres in over 120 cities. A complete list of the 120 participating cities and theatres is available at www.freenightoftheater.net.

“It is exciting to have New York City join TCG’s successfully evolving audience development awareness program,” said Teresa Eyring, TCG executive director. “When Free Night began, we were in just three cities across the country. All regions of the country are now fully engaged in ***Free Night of Theater*** and the program continues to gain momentum.”

Free Night of Theater New York City (Free Night NYC) will seek out new audiences and invite current theatergoers to try new theater venues, as well as ignite interest in and create awareness about the incredible variety of live theater options across all five boroughs.

Free Night NYC will offer 5,000 free tickets to over 100 theaters across the city in addition to hosting parties, pre and post-show discussions, and ***Free Night*** special events designed to increase word of mouth about the program and to celebrate the work. ***Free Night NYC*** is working closely with The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs on a number of initiatives including a press launch in Union Square on October 16 at 11:00 am with city government and special performances, a mayoral proclamation, PSAs from a celebrity spokes panel, and innovative community outreach.

“I am pleased that this outstanding program, which my colleagues across the country have been successfully promoting for the past several years, has finally landed in New York,” said Barry Grove, executive producer, Manhattan Theatre Club. “We welcome ***Free Night of Theater*** to Off-Broadway and look forward to celebrating this event. “

Free Night NYC is a joint initiative of the Arts & Business Council of New York, The Alliance of Resident Theatres/New York (A.R.T./New York), The League of Off-Broadway Theatres and Producers, the League of Independent Theater, The New York State Council on the Arts, and Theatre Development Fund brought together under Theatre Communication Group's national program.

"A.R.T./New York is thrilled to participate in TCG's 2008 **Free Night of Theater**, because we want ALL New Yorkers and tourists to experience the one thing that distinguishes New York City from any other place in the world – the breath, depth and diversity of Live Theatre," said Ginny Louloudes, executive director of A.R.T./New York.

The 2007 program research -- gathered by Shugoll Research of Bethesda, MD -- reports that of those patrons who attended a theatre they had never been to before, 41% returned to that theater and purchased a ticket and 49% of those attendees bought a full price ticket. For the full Shugoll Research report, please visit ... <http://www.tcg.org/events/freenight/2008/research.cfm>

In addition, **Free Night** has a proven track record of attracting non-traditional theatre audiences. Specifically in 2007, 65% attended a theatre they had never been to before, 28% are under the age of 35, 21% have less than a college degree, 28% are non-white, and 35% have combined household incomes under \$50,000.

According to Brad Erickson, executive director of Theatre Bay Area and participant since the program's inception in 2005, "We have seen an extraordinary response from theatres, audiences and the whole community. The demand for live theatre—when it's made accessible to all—is overwhelming. We're bringing in new audiences—young people, people of color, people from all walks of life—and the research tells us they are going back for more. **Free Night of Theater** has thrown the doors of our theatres open wide."

Tickets for **Free Night of Theater NYC** are available October 1, 2008. In the event that tickets sell out in one day, a special group of tickets will be available October 2 to accommodate potential post Rosh Hashanah audience. Performances will run from October 16 – October 30th. For tickets and more information on the **Free Night** program, please visit the national website, www.freenightoftheater.net or www.freenightnyc.net. Details on theatre participation and specific performances will be posted on the site in mid-August.

For further information on the program in New York City contact:
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Theatre Communications Group's (TCG) mission is to strengthen, nurture and promote the professional, not-for-profit American theatre. TCG initiatives include a variety of artistic, management, international and advocacy programs. Its many publications offer a national resource for reference, opinion and debate on theatre and the performing arts today. TCG serves nearly 500 member theatres nationwide and has 17,000 individual members and university, business and trustee affiliates. More information about TCG is available at www.tcg.org.