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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Aurora Theatre raises more than \$100,000 during \$96,000 Challenge, May 23- August 28**

*Community comes together to support art programs and initiatives*

**LAWRENCEVILLE, Ga. (September 7, 2016)** – As the state’s second largest professional theater, **Aurora Theatre** kicked off its 2016-17 season by hosting the **\$96,000 Challenge, May 3 – August 28**, in correlation with its opening production of *In the Heights*! Through individual donations, new grants and increased sponsorships, Aurora Theatre is proud to announce the challenge raised **\$106,000** for community arts support, exceeding its original goal by \$10,000. These generous proceeds directly support the theater’s more than 650 programs on stage, in the classroom and throughout the community!

“Through the \$96,000 Challenge, we were able to tell our community that anyone can be a philanthropist,” said Ann-Carol Pence, Co-Founder and Associate Producer. “It is not always about the ability to make a large gift, but rather we want to continually inspire our patrons to invest in the quality of life initiatives that strengthen our community at a level that is meaningful for each person.”

In addition to the generous funds raised, one of the most important goals of the **\$96,000 Challenge** was to inspire new donors to support Aurora Theatre’s tremendous contribution to the community through the arts. By the numbers, 60 percent of individual donors were new, making first-time gifts to the theatre. 69 percent of these individual donations were under \$100, significantly increasing the base of donors giving at a low level. The \$96,000 Challenge not only inspired community engagement in a very meaningful way, but it demonstrated how a community can come together and make a tremendous impact through a series of smaller gifts. The success of this fundraiser sets the stage for a new generation of patrons of the arts.

“It means the world to us that our community rallies around Aurora like this,” said Anthony Rodriguez, Co-Founder and Producing Artistic Director. “We have received many messages from patrons about why they give, including one personal story from Matt Hyatt, CEO and Founder of Rocket IT, who exclaimed, ‘you accomplished something that has eluded so many others. You brought a diverse group of people together and created empathy, enthusiasm and excitement around a dazzling display of talent. Wonderful! Keep doing that and you will create precious opportunities for new conversations, new relationships and new thinking!’ Multiply this comment by a hundred and this means we are indeed changing our community. We really couldn’t ask for better patrons!”

For more information or to support Aurora Theatre, please visit [www.auroratheatre.com](http://www.auroratheatre.com).

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*Under the artistic leadership of Co-Founders and Artistic Directors Anthony Rodriguez and Ann-Carol Pence, now in its 21st Season, Aurora Theatre produces professional live entertainment to suit everyone’s taste. Aurora Theatre is home to over 650 events each year. Two series of theatrical productions, the Peach State Federal Credit Union Signature Series and the GGC Harvel Lab Series, are comprised of the biggest Broadway plays and musicals alongside exciting contemporary theatre. Additionally, Aurora produces concerts, stand-up comedy, children’s programs, metro Atlanta’s top haunted attraction Lawrenceville Ghost Tours, as well as Atlanta’s only professional Spanish-language theatre series, Teatro Aurora. Aurora Theatre is a world-class theatrical facility with two performance venues. Nestled on the square in historic downtown Lawrenceville, Aurora has FREE attached covered parking and is surrounded by restaurants and shops. Aurora Theatre has garnered numerous accolades highlighted by recent achievements that include winner of five 2015 Suzi Bass Awards, Creative Loafing’s “2010 Best Theatre Company,” Georgia Trend Magazine’s “2011 Best Places to Work in Georgia,” Atlanta Business Chronicle’s “2012 Best Places to Work”, Atlanta Magazine’s “Best of Atlanta 2013”, Georgia His-*

*panic Chamber of Commerce's 2014 President and CEO Award for Excellence in Arts, and Gwinnett Chamber's 2015 IMPACT Regional Business Award for Hospitality .*