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Center Theatre Group raises \$700,000 on Zoom with RWQuarantunes party



Lin-Manuel Miranda appearing in RWQuarantunes benefit for Center Theatre Group. (Center Theatre Group)

By JESSICA GELT | STAFF WRITER

FEB. 4, 2021 7 AM PT



If cash-strapped theater companies can make it to summer, maybe, just maybe, they can reopen the door to the joys of a live, in-person audience. Until then, stages that have been dark since the pandemic began almost a year ago [have some serious financial catching-up to do](#).

So it was with no small amount of happiness that Center Theatre Group this week said it had generated more than \$700,000 through a single fundraising event: a boisterous Zoom party featuring an impressive list of theater makers and celebrities. The event was part of the RWQuarantunes program, launched last year by WME partner Richard Weitz and his teenage daughter, Demi, to raise money for groups devastated by coronavirus shutdowns.

They [started RWQuarantunes last April](#) from their kitchen table. Celebrities performed stripped-down sets from their living rooms; [one event streamed](#) from the [closed Hollywood Bowl](#) benefited the Los Angeles Philharmonic and its youth orchestra program. The parties, often attended by as many celebrities as were hosting, soon became a hot Zoom ticket in town and proved a formidable fundraising tool that has lasted into this year.

The Center Theatre Group event on Friday featured appearances and performances by Lin-Manuel Miranda, John Legend, John Leguizamo, Sting, Allison Janney, Mike Birbiglia, Andrew Lloyd Webber, Matthew Bourne, Lena Hall, Robert Lopez, Josh Gad and Dolly Parton, among others.

During the five-hour-plus event, the theater said it saw more than 3,800 viewers between Zoom and YouTube.

“As we struggle through this unprecedented moment and dream of how we will come out the other side as a stronger, more responsive company, it is heartening to see the support from so many friends from both sides of the stage,” Managing Director and Chief Executive Meghan Pressman said in a statement to The Times. “The artists and performers who came together to make this special night and our patrons and supporters are helping to make sure that theater remains a vital part of our community as we move forward.”

Like most arts organizations in the pandemic era, Center Theatre Group has had its share of pain and struggle. [Last March it postponed](#) all of its programming until the fall and furloughed half its staff. [By June it acquiesced](#) to the reality that it would remain dark through at least April; [and in September the company announced](#) that it had been forced to lay off more than half of its full- and part-time workforce. [November brought hope](#) for an August reopening, but the previously announced schedule had to be reshuffled significantly.

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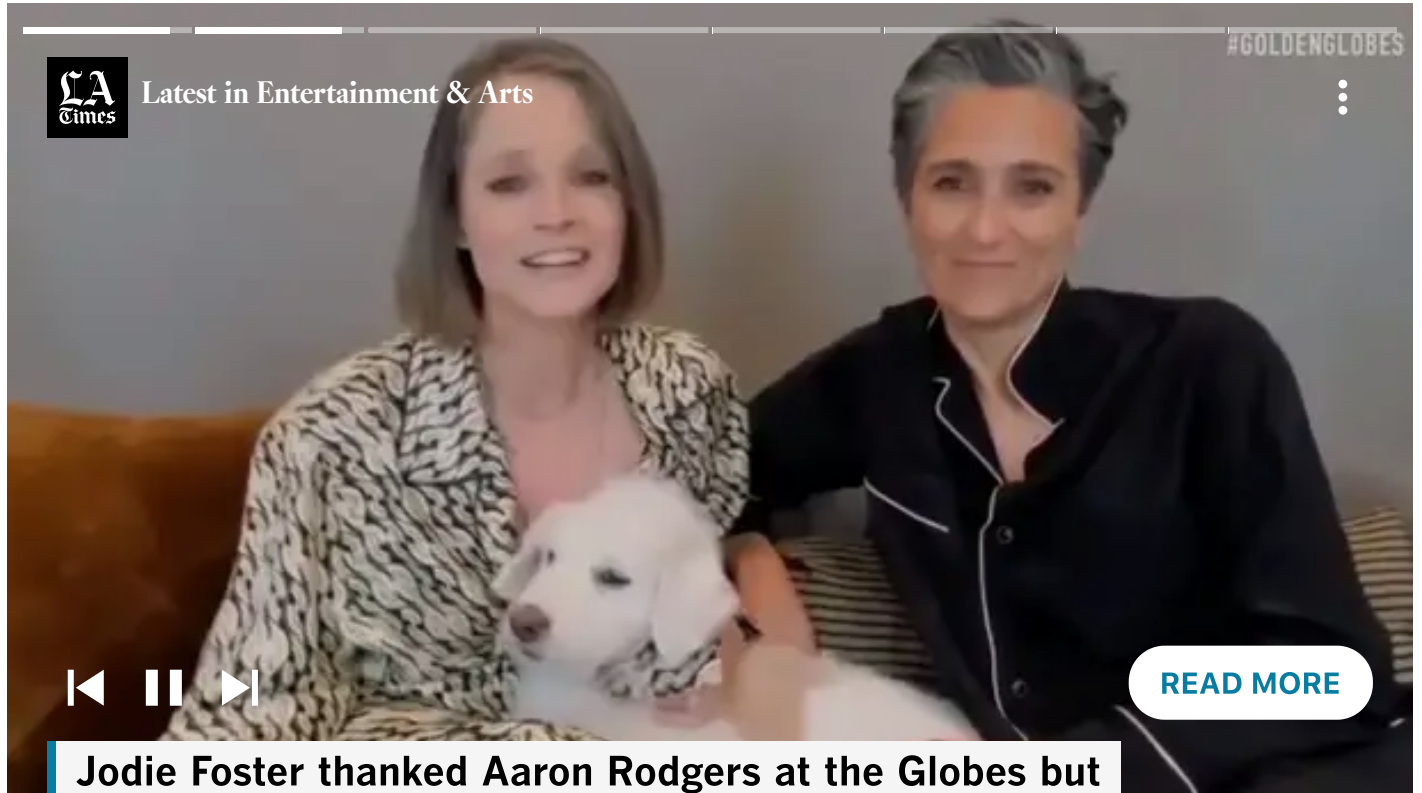
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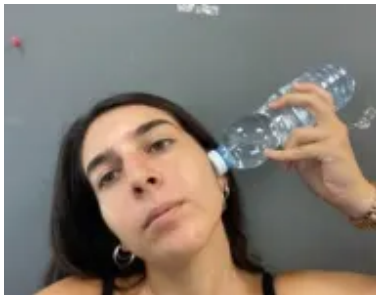
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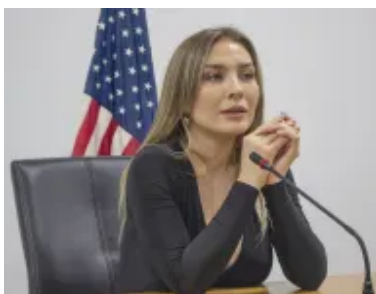
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