Dinner with the Stars

Thanks to a friend of VEPC who was in New York attending a number of Broadway shows, VEPC has the honour of auctioning off a series of plates created by Hollywood stars in support of Parkinson’s awareness. These five individual plates signed by actors Ben Stiller, Geoffrey Rush, Jane Fonda, Angela Lansbury, and Susan Sarandon as well as one group plate signed by James Gandolfini, Marsha Gay Hardin and Jeff Daniels will have your friends talking and give you an opportunity to raise awareness of Parkinson’s. The plates will be available to bid on at www.gobid.ca from September 10 to October 15, 2011.

Geoffrey Rush

Born on July 6, 1951, in Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia, Rush is known for his outstanding acting beginning with the role of a lifetime as the highly dysfunctional piano prodigy David Helfgott in *Shine* (1996). Rush’s astonishing tour-de-force performance won him every conceivable award imaginable, including the Oscar, Golden Globe, British Film Award and Australian Film Institute Award. Since then, Rush has played Walsingham in *Elizabeth* (1998), the Marquis de Sade in *Quills* (2000), and Leon Trotsky in *Frida* (2002). He’s also allowed himself to have a bit of hammy fun in such box office escapism as *Mystery Men* (1999), *House on Haunted Hill* (1999), *The Banger Sisters* (2002), *Finding Nemo* (2003) and the *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series (2003-2011). More than validating his early film success, two more Oscar nominations came his way in the same year for *Quills* (2000) (best actor) and *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) (support actor) in 2000. In 2011, Rush was nominated for an Oscar in *The King’s Speech*. Rush’s amazing versatility continues to impress, more recently as the manic, volatile comedy genius Peter Sellers in the biopic *The Life and Death of Peter Sellers* (2004). Rush’s intermittent returns to the stage have included productions of “Marat-Sade,” “Uncle Vanya,” “Oleanna,” “Hamlet” and “The Small Poppies”. In 2009 he made his Broadway debut in “Exit the King” co-starring Susan Sarandon. This small plate autographed by Rush to support Parkinson’s was signed while Rush was starring in “Exit the King.”
Jane Fonda

Born in New York City in 1937 to legendary screen star Henry Fonda and New York socialite Frances Seymour Brokaw, Jane Seymour Fonda was destined early to an uncommon and influential life in the limelight. Her screen debut in Tall Story (1960) opposite Anthony Perkins marked the beginning of a highly successful and respected acting career highlighted by two Academy Awards (for her performances in Klute (1971) and Coming Home (1978)) and five Oscar nominations (for Best Actress in They Shoot Horses, Don't They? (1969), Julia (1977), The Morning After (1986) and On Golden Pond (1981), which was the only film she made with her father). Her professional success contrasted with her personal life, which was at time controversial. During the 1960s Fonda protested the Vietnam War earning her the nickname Hanoi Jane and as recent as 2004, she protested alongside fellow actresses Sally Field and Christine Lahti, and playwright Eve Ensler, urging the Mexican government to re-investigate the slayings of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juarez, on the Mexico-Texas border. In the 1980s she started the aerobic exercise craze with the publication of the "Jane Fonda's Workout Book". In recent years, Fonda has taken on comedy with Monster-in-Law (2005) and Georgia Rule (2007). This dinner plate was signed by Fonda in support of Parkinson’s when she returned to Broadway for the play “33 Variations.”

Ben Stiller

Ben Stiller was born on November 30, 1965, in New York, New York to legendary comedians Jerry Stiller and Anne Meara. Before he even got his start in Hollywood, Stiller put in several consistently solid years in the theater. After dropping out of UCLA, he performed in the Tony Award winner, "The House of Blue Leaves". While working on the play, Stiller shot a short spoof of The Color of Money (1986) starring him (in the Tom Cruise role) and his The House of Blue Leaves (1987) (TV) costar John Mahoney (in the Paul Newman role). The short film was so funny that Lorne Michaels purchased it and aired it on "Saturday Night Live" (1975). This led to Stiller spending a year on the show in 1989. Stiller made his big screen debut in Steven Spielberg's Empire of the Sun (1987). However for a while, he had to settle for guest appearance work. While he was doing this, he saved up his cash and in the end was able to scrape enough together to make Reality Bites (1994), now a cult classic. His first big budget directing job was Jim Carrey’s The Cable Guy (1996). In 1998, There's Something About Mary (1998) propelled Stiller into the mainstream spotlight. With his wince-inducing turn in the Farrelly brothers’ gross-out film, he struck a nerve with mainstream America. In recent years, he has starred in such hit movies as Keeping the Faith (2000), Meet the Parents (2000), Madagascar (2005) and Night at the Museum (2006).
**Angela Lansbury**

The daughter of an actress and the granddaughter of a high-ranking politician, British actress Angela Lansbury studied acting from her youth, departing for the United States as the Second World War began. She was contracted by MGM while still a teenager and nominated for an Academy Award for her first film, *Gaslight* (1944). Two pictures later, she was again nominated for Best Supporting Actress, this time for *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1945). Now established as a supporting player of quality, she began a long film career in such films as *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Bedknobs and Broomsticks* (1971), and *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). She concentrated more and more on stage work, achieving notable success in a number of Broadway plays and musicals, winning four Tony Awards in sixteen years. Although active in television since the early 1950s, she obtained her greatest fame in the 1980s by starring in the mystery program "Murder, She Wrote" (1984). As Jessica Fletcher, she became known and loved by millions for well over a decade. She also became known for the odd fact of almost annual Emmy Award nominations for the role without ever winning for it.

**Susan Sarandon**

It was after the 1968 Democratic convention and there was a casting call for a film with several roles for the kind of young people who had disrupted the convention. Susan Sarandon was chosen to play Susan Compton in the movie *Dad Bill* and her career began. In 1975, Sarandon made the film where fans of cult classics have come to know her as "Janet", who gets entangled with transvestite "Dr. Frank 'n' Furter" in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). Nearly 20 years after beginning her career, Sarandon starred as Annie in *Bull Durham* (1988), flying at her own expense from Rome to Los Angeles. The role put Sarandon in the position of being offered roles that really challenged her. The result was four Academy Award nominations in the 1990s and best actress for *Dead Man Walking* (1995). Other notable movies include *Atlantic City*, USA (1980), *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987), *Thelma and Louise* (1991). Sarandon starred in the Broadway production of "Exit the King" with Geoffrey Rush in 2009 when she signed this small plate in support of Parkinson's.
Marcia Gay Harden was born on August 14, 1959, in La Jolla, California, the third of five children. Her father was in the military, and the family relocated often — she first became interested in the theater when the family was living in Greece, and she had attended plays in Athens. Harden began her college education at American universities in Europe and returned to the US to complete her studies at the University of Texas in 1983; went on to earn an MFA at NYU, and, thereafter, embarked on her acting career. Although she had acted in a movie as early as 1986, in the little-known The Imagemaker (1986), her first mainstream role, coming alongside some TV movie work, was as a sultry femme fatale in the Coen Brothers’ cleverly offbeat homage to the gangster movie, Miller’s Crossing (1990). Harden received good reviews for her sultry performance as Verna, a seductive, trouble-making moll. Other films of note include Mystic River (2003) and Into the Wild (2007). Harden won a Tony Award for Best Actress in “God of Carnage” in 2009.

Jeff Daniels was born February 19, 1955 in the U.S. and founded a non-profit theatre company, the Purple Rose Theatre Company, in his home state of Michigan. He has performed in a number of stage productions, both on and off Broadway and was nominated for the Tony Award as Best Actor for the Broadway play God of Carnage (2009), along with his other three cast-mates. Daniels has had a thriving film career, from his debut in 1981 in Ragtime, through State of Play in 2009. For his film work, he has received three Golden Globe Award nominations, including as Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture – Comedy/Musical for Woody Allen’s The Purple Rose of Cairo (1985) (hence the name of his theatre company). He has also received nominations by the Screen Actors Guild, Satellite Awards, and several for his work in The Squid and the Whale (London Critics Circle Awards, Independent Spirit Awards, Chlotrudis Awards and Gotham Awards).

James Gandolfini

New Jersey-born James Gandolfini began acting in the New York theater. His Broadway debut was in the 1992 revival of "A Streetcar Named Desire" with Jessica Lange and Alec Baldwin. Gandolfini’s breakthrough role was his portrayal of Virgil the hitman in Tony Scott's True Romance (1993), but the role that brought him worldwide fame and accolades was as complex Mafia boss Tony Soprano in HBO’s smash hit series "The Sopranos" (1999). Other notable films of note include The Last Castle (2001), All the King’s Men (2006), and Where the Wild Things Are (2009).