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**Director of Hit Television Series *Empire* and  
Films *Precious* and *The Butler*  
Comes to Houston for Houston Arts Alliance's  
Dinner Fundraiser  
*An Intimate Evening with Lee Daniels***

**HOUSTON, TX** – Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) hosts *An Intimate Evening with Lee Daniels* on Thursday, April 23, 2015, at Hotel ZaZA. Mr. Daniels, a versatile and dynamic talent, will share his life stories based on his vast experience as a film and television director, producer and writer.

Led by Event Chair Philamena Baird with Honorary Chair Marie Bosarge, this special evening begins with an opening reception and dinner at 7:15 p.m. Following dinner, Lee Daniels, director of the hit television series *Empire* and films *Precious* and *The Butler* (which he also produced), will share his life experiences—from founding his own health care agency at age 21 to managing actors to becoming the first sole African-American producer of an Academy Award-winning film (*Monster's Ball*).

Following *Monster's Ball*, he made his directorial debut with *Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire*. The film received a total of six Academy Award nominations including Best Director, marking only the second time an African-American director had been nominated. Lee produced and directed *The Butler*, a story following the life of a White House butler who served eight U.S. presidents over three decades. The film was well received, earning numerous Critics' Choice, Screen Actors Guild and NAACP Image Award nominations. Daniels's latest creative project is the hit musical drama television series *Empire*, starring Terrence Howard as hip-hop mogul Lucious Lyons. Daniels makes his television directorial debut with the show, and after just three episodes, the series was renewed for a second season.

MORE

*An Intimate Evening with Lee Daniels* is just one way in which HAA leverages public investment with philanthropic support to advance Houston's arts. When HAA was formed in 2006 as a 501 c 3 nonprofit, the vision was to create a public/private partnership to promote the growth and visibility of the arts sector in Houston. Public funding includes city revenues from Hotel Occupancy Taxes (which fund grants to nonprofit arts organizations and individual artists) and the City of Houston's Percent for Art Ordinance (which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks).

However, many of HAA's extraordinary public engagement projects (such as *The Blue Trees*, the recent *Transported + Renewed*, and *Stories of a Workforce: Celebrating the Centennial of the Houston Ship Channel*) are made possible through private funds. Public engagement projects and capacity building initiatives are designed to leverage public funds. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

In total, 15% of HAA's budget (grants/Contributions/Other Revenue) comes from private fundraising for general operating and special projects. These funds leverage the public funding portion of the budget which include approximately 55% from municipal funding (HOT) and 30% for the City of Houston's Civic Art funding, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks.

HAA invites you to support the programs of Houston Arts Alliance through this thoroughly engaging special event. Take advantage of this special opportunity to hear from one of the leading film directors and producers of our time. Visit [houstonartsalliance.com](http://houstonartsalliance.com) for more information.

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### **About Lee Daniels**

Lee Daniels's background is filled with bold stories as real and gritty as the narratives of the films he creates. By the age of 21, Daniels founded and ran his own health care agency, providing nurses to private homes and hospitals; he was simultaneously trying to be a screenwriter. After selling his health care business and giving up screenwriting, he began managing actors such as Loretta Divine, Michael Shannon, Natasha Kinsky and Aishwarya Rai. Daniels turned to producing as a natural result of trying to find and create great material for his clients; the organic leap to directing came soon after.

Daniels's latest creative project is the hit musical drama television series *Empire* starring Terrence Howard as hip-hop mogul Lucious Lyons. Daniels makes his television directorial debut with the show, and after just three episodes, the series was renewed for a second season.

Daniels produced and directed *The Butler*, a story following the life of a White House butler who served eight different U.S. presidents over three decades. The film was well received by critics and earned numerous Critics Choice, Screen Actors Guild and NAACP Image Award nominations.

Daniels's previous project, *Precious: Based on the Novel "Push" by Sapphire*, is the story of an overweight, illiterate girl raised in Harlem, sexually abused by her father and about to give birth to her second child, who salvages her future at an alternative school. *Precious* won two Academy Awards in 2010: Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress. The film received a total of six Academy Award nominations including Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Editing, with Daniels nominated as Best Director, making him the second African-American director to be nominated for an Oscar. Daniels also received a historic nomination as the first African-American director to be nominated by the Directors Guild of America.

Following the success of *Precious*, Daniels next directed *The Paperboy* starring Nicole Kidman, John Cusack, Matthew McConaughey and Zac Efron. Based on the best-selling novel of the same name, *The Paperboy* revolves around a reporter and his brother who investigate the events surrounding a murder in order to exonerate an accused man on death row.

*Monster's Ball* was the first film from Daniels's production company, Lee Daniels Entertainment. The film marked Daniels as the first sole African-American producer of an Oscar-winning and -nominated film. Daniels also produced *The Woodsman*, which premiered at the 2004 Sundance Film Festival. Nominated for three Independent Spirit Awards, the film received the CICAIE Arthouse Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Deauville International Film Festival and Special Mention for Excellence in Filmmaking from the National Board of Review.

Daniels's other film credits include *Shadowboxer* and *Tennessee*.

### **About Houston Arts Alliance**

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit organization established by the City of Houston to enhance the quality of life and tourism in the Houston region by advancing the arts on its behalf. HAA distributes grants to more than 225 nonprofit arts organizations and individual artists each year. In addition, HAA invests in and nurtures Houston's thriving creative community by commissioning the work of artists for public spaces, managing the city's civic art collection, showcasing Houston's rich folklife traditions, cultivating business volunteers, and empowering arts organizations to become sustainable and reach new audiences through business incubation and other services. For information on Houston-area arts and culture events, visit HAA's online resources at [Artshound.com](http://Artshound.com). For more information on HAA, visit [houstonartsalliance.com](http://houstonartsalliance.com).