



Contact: Joe Martin  
530.754.5428

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<http://www.MondaviArts.org/pressroom>

For immediate release:

## **L.A. Theatre Works Brings Drama of the ‘Pentagon Papers’ to Mondavi Center**

*October 3, 2007; Davis, California*—**L.A. Theatre Works**, the nation’s premiere radio theater company, will present its touring stage production of *Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers*, a riveting dramatization of *The Washington Post*’s controversial decision to publish top-secret information regarding the Vietnam War, at the **Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts**. Featuring a cast of well-known stage and screen actors including **Susan Sullivan, Gregory Harrison, John Heard, and John Vickery**, the play is a potent examination of this crucial event in American history and the legal issues surrounding the First Amendment and government power.

The event will begin at 8 pm on October 30 in the Mondavi Center’s Jackson Hall on the **UC Davis** campus. Tickets are available from the Mondavi Center Ticket Office at 530.754.ARTS (2787) or online at [MondaviArts.org](http://MondaviArts.org). The event is presented as part of the Mondavi Center’s **Theater Series**. There will be a **Post-performance Q&A** in which audiences members may ask questions of the cast.

A docudrama based on interviews with participants and court transcripts, *Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers* is a dramatization of the real-life events of June 1971, when President **Richard Nixon** and his administration battled first *The New York Times* and then *The Washington Post* over the newspapers’ right to publish a secret Pentagon assessment of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Written by **Geoffrey Cowan** and **Leroy Aarons**, the work won the **Corporation for Public Broadcasting**’s 1992 Gold Award for Outstanding Radio Production of the Year in its original staging directed by **Tom Moore** and starring **Edward Asner**.

The current LATW production features a cast of well-known actors including: Susan Sullivan, a two-time Emmy and Golden Globe nominee known to television audiences for her starring roles in several series including *It’s A Living*, *Rich Man, Poor Man*, *Julie Farr M.D.*, *The George Carlin Show*, *Dharma and Greg*, and *Falcon Crest*; Gregory Harrison, who has starred in more than 40 television movies of the week including *Breaking the Silence*, *For Ladies Only*, *Mortal Fear*, *Murder at 75 Birch*, and the mini-series *Centennial*, *Fresno*, and *Nothing Lasts Forever*; John Heard, who has appeared in films such as *Big*, *Home Alone 2*, and *After Hours*, as well as television programs including *The Sopranos*; and John Vickery (who has appeared in television programs including *Crime Story* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*).

*Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers* depicts a group of *Washington Post* journalists as they struggle to sort through the more than two millions words contained in the secret government report that came

to be known as the “Pentagon Papers” and debate the issues, problems, and potential consequences of publishing the information it contained.

The report was a secret study of U.S. involvement in Vietnam commissioned by U.S. Secretary of Defense **Robert McNamara** in 1966. In 1971, a copy of the report was leaked to *The New York Times* by **Daniel Ellsberg**, a former Defense Department employee, and on June 13, 1971, the *Times* published the first of what was to have been a series of stories. President **Richard Nixon** read the story, which included numerous revelations that were politically embarrassing to war supporters; U.S. Attorney General **John Mitchell** warned the *Times* on June 14 against further publication of information in the report, and the next day won a restraining order against the paper.

Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* had also received a copy of the Pentagon Papers. Because the paper was not covered by the injunction against the *Times*, its editors decided to read the voluminous report, consider the issues involved, and quickly debate whether or not to publish it before the Nixon administration could take legal action against them. The play follows their deliberations, played out in the home of **Ben Bradlee**, the paper’s editor, and includes both their decision and the legal ramifications that followed, including the ruling that many consider the most important First Amendment decision ever rendered by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Founded in 1971, L.A. Theatre Works was formed to bring high-quality, in-performance audio productions to the widest possible audience using available technologies. In its The Play’s the Thing series, the company presents 10 radio plays in “live” performances and broadcasts each season. Since 2005, the company has expanded its operation to include a national touring program, bringing a range of classic and contemporary plays to civic and university performing arts centers across the country, employing a slightly expanded staging (which includes costumes and minimal sets) of the same unique “live radio” style performance presented in The Play’s the Thing series.

The national touring program has delighted audiences in more than 100 small towns and major cities across the nation with theater that is immediate and spontaneous, with a first-rate cast, live sound effects, and a connection to the audience rarely felt in a traditional theatrical setting. In addition, L.A. Theatre Works collaborates with presenting venues and local public radio stations to provide additional outreach and special programming including one-time broadcasts of the performance, panel discussions with the actors, directors, writers, and leading subject experts, and performances for local area high school students.

“L.A. Theatre Works has a reputation for presenting theater that is well-acted, topical, and innovative, and we look forward to a provocative production of *Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers*,” said **Don Roth**, the Mondavi Center’s executive director.

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**What:** L.A. Theatre Works  
*Top Secret: The Battle for the Pentagon Papers*  
**When:** Tuesday, October 30 • 8 pm  
**Where:** Jackson Hall  
Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts  
University of California, Davis  
**Admission:** \$44/\$35/\$29 Adults • \$22/\$17.50/\$14.50 Students & Children  
**Tickets/Info:** 530.754.ARTS (2787)  
866.754.ARTS (toll-free)  
<http://www.MondaviArts.org>  
530.754.5402 [TDD]

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