



For Immediate Release: June 12, 2006
Headquarters Contact: Shawn Taylor Zelman, AWRT
Tel: 703-506-3290 ~ Fax: 703-506-3266 ~
szelman@awrt.org
PR Contact: JLM PR, Inc./Jody L. Miller
Tel: 212-431-5227 ~ Fax: 212-431-6818 ~
jody@jlmpr.com

**THE COLOR PURPLE'S ELISABETH WITHERS,
ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER'S
DWANA SMALLWOOD AND THE GIRL SCOUTS CHORUS OF
NASSAU COUNTY TO PERFORM AT THE
2006 AMERICAN WOMEN IN RADIO & TELEVISION'S
GRACIE ALLEN AWARDS GALA**

(McLean, VA – June 12, 2006) – American Women in Radio and Television (AWRT) will honor the 2006 National Gracie Allen Award winners at a celebrity gala at New York's Marriott Marquis Broadway Ballroom on Monday, June 19, 2006. The black-tie event will feature performances by **Tony Award-nominated actress/singer Elisabeth Withers**, appearing in *The Color Purple* on Broadway, **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Dwana Smallwood** and **The Girl Scouts Chorus of Nassau County**. The Gracie Allen Awards (also known as "the Gracies") recognizes exemplary programming created for, by and about women in all facets of electronic media including radio, television, cable and web-based media.

Each year, the Gracies Gala attracts the best and the brightest in radio, television and cable. From *Will & Grace* star soon to be talk show host, **Megan Mullally**, who will be this year's Host to CNN's **Larry King**; from **Lisa Kudrow** to **Les Moonves**, president and CEO, CBS Corporation, and from the NBC *Today Show's Ann Curry* to ABC *All My Children's Susan Lucci*, this year's Gracie's will honor its own with serious star power.

For **ELISABETH WITHERS**, it starts with the voice. A soulful instrument that is both powerful yet strikingly venerable; an engaging gift that transcends musical genres and industry trends. For acclaimed performer Elisabeth Withers, that *voice* and all-around talent has garnered her a prestigious **Tony Award** nomination for her role as the seductive scene-stealer Suge Avery in the Broadway mega-hit *The Color Purple*. Now the Joliet, Illinois-born singer/songwriter is set to release her debut solo album **Simple Things** on the legendary **Blue Note Records**. Like Elisabeth's much-lauded theatrical work, the album represents a labor of love for the vocalist, who in the past has performed with the diverse likes of the late great Luther Vandross, Mary J. Blige, Brenda Russell and Cher. "My goal is to change lives with my music," says a matter-of-fact Elisabeth of the release that effortlessly goes from R&B, gospel and pop to jazz, and rock. "Through my work I want people to know that with a strong self-love, work ethic and fearlessness, anything is possible." Indeed, *Simple Things* not only makes its case for the Berklee School of Music and NYU graduate, with its uplifting songs. The album is also a sensual record that is at times seriously sexy, unpredictable and just plain fun. With the release of *Simple Things* and her continued success on Broadway, there's no doubt Elisabeth Withers will be a shining star for years to come.

DWANA ADIAHA SMALLWOOD is a Brooklyn, New York native, and a member of The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's Ailey II since 1995. She trained at the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance, LaGuardia High School of the Performing Arts, Jubilation Dance Company and as a fellowship student at The Ailey School. Dwana will perform the ballet "Cry," choreographed by Alvin Ailey himself as a tribute to women everywhere. "Cry" has been performed all over the world since Mr. Ailey created it in 1971. Founded in 1958,

-- MORE --

Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (AAADT) is known as America's cultural ambassador to the world. Led by Artistic Director Judith Jamison, to date, AAADT has performed for more than 21 million people in 71 countries and on 6 continents. The *Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Inc.* is the umbrella organization which includes AAADT; *Ailey II*, founded in 1974 as a junior performing company of emerging young dancers and innovative choreographers; *The Ailey School*, founded in 1969 and currently offering some of the most extensive dance training programs in the world; *Ailey Arts In Education & Community Programs* which offers year-round activities and camps that benefit underserved youth in New York and cities across the country; and *The Ailey Extension*, a new program that offers dance and fitness classes to the general public.

For the last 17 years, the **GIRL SCOUTS CHORUS OF NASSAU COUNTY** has entertained and thrilled thousands of residents of Nassau County, N.Y., bringing a smile to their faces while reminding them about what is good about Girl Scouts. The Chorus is comprised of 50 young ladies who travel throughout Nassau County and the surrounding metropolitan area and range in age from Brownies to Senior Girl Scouts. Their repertoire includes Girl Scout songs, as well as, patriotic and holiday themed songs. The Girl Scouts of Nassau County Chorus is currently under the direction of Catherine Azzara. Azzara is a former member of the Chorus, a 2002 Gold Award recipient and Girl Scout Adult Volunteer. Her education and passion for music and her commitment to the Girl Scouts make her a great role model for all the girls in the Chorus. The Chorus has appeared at Shea Stadium, Madison Square Garden, Holiday Lights at Belmont Park and Jones Beach, Nassau Coliseum, St. John University, Hofstra University and numerous Girl Scout events and functions such as WORLDFEST II and Sing Out For America. They also performed at this year's Super Bowl.

The Gracies are presented by the Foundation of AWRT, the philanthropic arm of AWRT that supports educational programs, charitable activities, public service campaigns and scholarships to benefit the public, the electronic media and allied fields. The Gracie Allen Awards, established in 1975, honors programming and individuals of the highest caliber in all facets of electronic media, including news, drama, comedy, commercials, public service, documentary and sports.

Tickets for the Gala are \$275 for AWRT Members, \$300 for Non-Members, and \$350 (if available) at the door. Tickets for the Gala can be purchased online at www.awrt.org.

The event is made possible through the generous support of the 2006 title sponsor Dove and *The Campaign for Real Beauty* and the following additional sponsors: Wal-Mart Stores, Inc./SAM'S CLUB; Monica Horan; ABC Disney Television Group; ABC Radio Networks; Arbitron; CBS News; CBS Paramount Domestic Television; CBS Sports and WCBS-TV/CBS2; Clear Channel Radio; CNBC; CNN; Friends of Lesley Visser; HBO; Jones Radio Networks; Judge Judy; Katz Media Group; Lifetime Networks; NBC News; Oxygen Media LLC; The Kaplan Thaler Group; *The Suze Orman Show*; Interep; and Washington Mutual.

For more information about the Gracie Allen Awards, please visit www.awrt.org.

About AWRT: The year 2006 marks the 55th Anniversary of American Women in Radio & Television (AWRT), the longest established professional association dedicated to advancing women in media and entertainment. AWRT carries forth its mission by educating, advocating and acting as a resource to its members and the industry at large. Founded in 1951, AWRT works to improve the quality of electronic media; promote the entry, development and advancement of women in the field; foster communication and idea exchange; and give back to the community we serve.

About The Foundation of AWRT: The Foundation of AWRT is the philanthropic arm of American Women in Radio and Television, supporting educational programs, charitable activities, public service campaigns and scholarships to benefit the public, the electronic media, entertainment and allied fields. The Foundation of AWRT has created strategic alliances and joint-initiatives with the National Middle School Association, Emma Bowen Foundation, American Red Cross and other organizations that are philosophically aligned with the mission of the Foundation of AWRT. The Foundation of AWRT supports several public service campaigns including most recently AWRT Empowering America, a radio PSA campaign which pays tribute to many of America's most pioneering and inspiring women. Through this initiative, the Foundation of AWRT has adopted urban middle schools around the country and provided educational donations derived from collateral based on the Empowering America program. The Foundation also produces nationally acclaimed recognition programs including the Gracie Allen Awards®, a live, New York-based gala that recognizes exemplary programming created for, by, and about women.

For more information about AWRT and the Foundation of AWRT, including membership, call its headquarters at (703) 506-3290, or visit its web site at www.awrt.org.