

LAUGH OUT LOUD

presents

Wayne
Brady

television host, comedian and singer

story Laurie Wallace-Lynch photography Steve Uhraney

Emma award-winning comedian Wayne Brady had the audience literally laughing out loud at the 7th Annual *Laugh Out Loud* comedy gala—especially when an audience member wasn't quite following directions to make the “knock knock” sound to accompany his physical gestures of knocking on a door as part of an improv sketch.

“Never in my years has this happened,” laughed the good-natured comedian who took it in all in stride. After all, this is improv comedy and anything can happen on stage. No one knows this better than Wayne Brady. As a former star of the popular *Whose Line is it Anyway*, *The Wayne Brady Show*, *Don't Forget the Lyrics*, and *Let's Make a Deal*, he is renowned for hilarious improv.

The quick-witted comedian demonstrated his ability to give rapid fire responses as headliner of the Trillium Health Partners Foundation Laugh Out Loud comedy event held on

February 23rd at the Toronto Congress Centre.

Wayne asked the audience to shout out words that they had never before heard used in a rap song and he would write and perform the song. The audience eagerly shouted out words like fibromyalgia (try incorporating that in a rap song), Hazel (for former Mayor Hazel McCallion who was in the audience), McDadi (Mississauga realtor Sam McDadi—also present as a Gold Sponsor), along with Mississauga Library and Let's Make a Deal. The theme of the song was “Raising Money.” After all, proceeds from this year's event will support Trillium Health Partners' Advanced Diagnostic Imaging program. With the help of Jonathan Mangum, the announcer of *Let's Make a Deal*, who wrote the words on a flip chart, Wayne immediately launched into a catchy rap song worthy of air play!

In fact, Wayne is an accomplished recording artist, actor and comedian. He is currently starring as Aaron Burr in the

Wayne Brady hosts the 7th Annual
Laugh Out Loud Gala to support
Trillium Health Partners' My Hospital Fund





LOL events have raised over \$11 million in the last seven years, including 1.1 million from this year's event.

critically acclaimed, Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway production *Hamilton*. Wayne will also soon return for his eighth season as the host of *Let's Make a Deal*. As if he's not busy enough, Wayne has a recurring role on the daytime soap *The Bold and the Beautiful* which also features his 15 year old daughter Maile.

"Laugh Out Loud is becoming known for its commitment to partnering with top-tier comedic talent," says Wayne Brady. "I am proud to take to the stage with my troupe to create a memorable night for guests and to support Advanced Diagnostic Imaging for such a leading hospital as Trillium Health Partners." In an interview with etalk, Wayne added, "If you are tapped by an organization that helps other people and I can tie in my job and help others, it's a win-win. I know that my child is the most important thing in the world to me, and the fact that these are families, moms, dads, kids, and

the fact that they can get good health care and be diagnosed and not wonder what's going on, that's amazing."

Wayne grew up in Orlando, Florida and began acting at age 16 in high school and community theatre. He eventually moved to Los Angeles to pursue his acting career, guest starring on countless TV shows, as well as stage productions. Wayne made his Broadway debut playing the role of Bobby Flynn in the musical *Chicago*.

"*Whose Line* was wonderful and it jumpstarted my career, but I do Broadway and then record, and then go off and do this (LOL gala), so I like to look at the whole picture," said Wayne at the LOL event.

Wayne was joined on stage by fellow-comedian/actor Melissa Peterman who emceed the event. Melissa is best known for her role as Barbara Jean in the television comedy series *Reba*.

“Improv is about being in the moment and listening to what your partner is saying.”

Melissa Peterman

Melissa grew up in Minneapolis and studied theatre at university before hitting the boards professionally. She made her feature film debut as Hooker No. 2 in the Oscar-winning movie *Fargo*.

“I appeared in *Fargo* straight out of college and have spent most of my career in the sitcom, four-camera, live-audience world,” says Melissa. “I love working in front of a live audience as you can tell immediately if the joke works or not. It teaches you about timing.”

Melissa is currently auditioning for shows—something she “loves and hates at the same time.” She explains: “In an audition you have to impress the heck out of people, and sum up your entire career in less than two minutes.”

Her audition for the show *Reba* starring Reba McEntire landed her a co-starring role on the hit TV show.

“The character I play, Barbara Jean, didn’t understand why Reba can’t be her best friend, but BJ is ‘the other woman’ and Reba is never going to be her friend,” explains Melissa. “When I was reading for the audition I had this epiphany where I understood her innocence. The line was, ‘Is there a special pew in church for adulteresses?’ I improvised and replied; ‘No, I sit with the choir!’ When the audition was over, the producer followed me out of the room and asked me if I was leaving town. They never do that. When I was on my flight I got a message saying they wanted to me to test for the role of BJ.”

In real life, Melissa and Reba are BFF’s. “I learned so much from Reba; grace, humour, respect and a strong work ethic. She shows up and gives a hundred percent every day. Plus she taught me how to play backgammon!”

The secret to doing improv comedy is to just let loose, according to Melissa: “Improv is not thinking about how to be funny and not trying to plan things out in advance, but rather it is about being in the moment and listening to what your partner is saying.”

LOL events have raised over \$11 million in the last seven years, including 1.1 million from this year’s event. Proceeds support THP’s Diagnostic Imaging program which include a new CT scanner for Mississauga Hospital



and two new MRIs for Credit Valley Hospital.

“Our skilled physicians, technologists, nurses, and support staff complete over 700,000 scans each year across our three hospital sites,” says Steve Hoscheit, president and CEO of Trillium Health Partners Foundation. “We are incredibly grateful to our community for their overwhelming generosity which helps us continue to deliver exceptional patient care.”

For more information about LOL or to support Trillium Health Partners, please visit trilliumlol.ca. 📍