



## Joffrey Women's Board braves chill for 'Blue'

*Chicago Sun-Times*

January 19, 2005

The wonderful Women's Board of the Joffrey Ballet did it again! On a January night when temperatures fell far below freezing, the board managed to fill the Empire Room of the Palmer House Hilton with a crowd of 350 great-looking people who seemed to be determined to have a good time and raise a bundle of money as well.

The evening was called "Shades of Blue" and was chaired by three dynamos on Chicago's social scene: Marty Higgins, Maria Smithburg and Shauna Montgomery. And to make the evening more perfect, it included the stunning Shelley MacArthur in a cabaret performance with the Bradley Williams Quartet. Cocktails were served on the mezzanine, with lots of chatter. Julie and Fred Latsko received congratulations on their baby, due to arrive in June, and their newest piece of real estate, Oprah Winfrey's farm in Rolling Prairie, Ind. Maria Pinto was busy describing the wardrobe she designed for the lovely Michelle Obama to wear to the inauguration; Jack Ryan attended with lovely Amanda Klingman; Neil Bluhm with Joyce Johnston, and Desiree Rogers with **Neal Zucker**. Rogers wowed the crowd in her red velvet Zac Posen.

Ald. Edward Burke attended with his wife, Judge Anne Burke, and Pam Strobel, chair of the board of the Joffrey, couldn't say enough nice things of the group she manages in her spare time. "The Joffrey is coming off one of the best 'Nutcrackers' we have ever had," she said, "and the dancers are off to Amsterdam to tour. We're getting ready for the 50th anniversary season that starts in the fall, and everything is as good as it could be, including the best women's board in the city of Chicago." Renee Crown organized the dinner served in the elegant Empire Room, and it included corn and crab soup, lamb chops and a tasty chocolate tart.

Longtime Joffrey supporter Leslie Hindman took to the stage to conduct an exciting live auction of some sensational items, and she managed to wring big bucks from some good-natured bidders in the crowd. Chris Galvin spent \$6,000 to take 10 friends to a dinner created by Jewell Events in the Bulgari boutique; Jack Higgins paid \$7,000 for the chance to attend the Bill Blass fall fashion show in New York with a stay at the Four Seasons; Charles Freund spent \$9,000 for an Aspen, Colo., getaway with travel provided by American Airlines; Jay Jordan spent \$30,000 for a trip to the Masters golf tournament donated by Charles and Rebecca Besser, and Byron Trott paid \$55,000 for a Lexus RX 400h Hybrid SUV donated by McGrath Lexus in Chicago.

Lucky Jeff Baddeley won a Lexus SC430 convertible in a raffle drawn by Joffrey founder Gerald Arpino, who was serenaded by guests to celebrate his birthday.

Then MacArthur took to the stage in blue satin and sequins and kicked off her performance of songs with "blue" in the title with "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues," followed by "When Sunny Gets

Blue," "Blue Skies" and "Blue Moon." Needless to say, the crowd, which included Ramsey Lewis and Julie Wilson, gave her an extended standing ovation.

Maureen Dwyer Smith is chairman of the Women's Board, and Helen Melchior is president. The evening was expected to raise more than \$300,000, and the only suggestion I kept hearing on how to improve this wonderful evening was to find a larger venue to hold it in next year so more friends could attend!

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