



The Kennedy Center Honors

Press Release

FOR RELEASE

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The Kennedy Center Announces 47th Class of Honorees

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA, GRATEFUL DEAD, BONNIE RAITT, ARTURO SANDOVAL, AND THE APOLLO



AMERICA TO CELEBRATE HONOREES' LIFETIME ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

CBS to broadcast Kennedy Center Honors on Monday, December 23

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced the selection of five Honorees who will receive the 47th Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime artistic achievements. Recipients to be honored at the annual national celebration of the arts in Washington, D.C. this December are: acclaimed director and filmmaker **Francis Ford Coppola**; legendary American rock band the **Grateful Dead (Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh, Bobby Weir)**; blues rock singer-songwriter and guitarist **Bonnie Raitt**; jazz trumpeter, pianist, and composer **Arturo Sandoval**; and **The Apollo**, which will receive a special Honors as an iconic American institution. Done+Dusted are Executive Producers of the 47th annual Kennedy Center Honors, which airs on the CBS Television Network for the 47th year and will stream on Paramount+*.

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“The Kennedy Center Honors recognizes artists who have made an extraordinary impact on the cultural life of our nation and continue to have an immeasurable influence on new generations,” stated Kennedy Center Chairman David M. Rubenstein. “A brilliant and masterful storyteller with an unrelenting innovative spirit, **Francis Ford Coppola**’s films have become embedded in the very idea of American culture; a social and cultural phenomenon since 1965, the **Grateful Dead**’s music has never stopped being a true American original, while inspiring a fan culture like no other; **Bonnie Raitt** has made us love her again and again with her inimitable voice, slide guitar, and endless musical range encompassing blues, R&B, country rock, and folk; ‘an ambassador of both music and humanity,’ **Arturo Sandoval** transcended literal borders coming from Cuba 30-plus years ago and today continues to bridge cultures with his intoxicating blend of Afro Cuban rhythms and modern jazz; and on its 90th anniversary, **The Apollo**, one of the most consequential, influential institutions in history, has elevated the voices of Black entertainment in New York City, nationally, and around the world, and launched the careers of legions of artists.”

“Our Honorees this year have each played an invaluable, pioneering role in developing American culture—not with one act of art but with their decades-long devotion to pushing creative boundaries,” said Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “In December, we are thrilled to pay special tribute to New York City’s renowned Apollo Theater on its 90th anniversary. Throughout its history, The Apollo has guided us and the world forward by discovering and nurturing raw talent, molding a unique cultural identity that still defines American culture today. Across Honors weekend, artists with special connections to The Apollo will serve as ambassadors of the institution’s legacy.”

Throughout its 46-year history, the annual Honors Gala has become the highlight of the Washington cultural and society calendar. On **Sunday, December 8**, in a star-studded celebration on the Kennedy Center Opera House stage, the 47th class of Kennedy Center Honorees will be saluted by today’s leading performers from New York, Hollywood, and the arts capitals of the world. Seated in the Box Tier of the iconic Kennedy Center Opera House, the Honorees will accept the recognition and gratitude of their peers through performances and tributes. The 47th Kennedy Center Honors Gala concludes with a post-performance party in the Grand Foyer.

The Kennedy Center Honors recognizes and celebrates individuals whose unique contributions have shaped the way we see ourselves, each other, and our world. Recipients have each had an impact on the rich tapestry of American life and culture through the performing arts. Whether in music, dance, theater, opera, motion pictures, or television, each Kennedy Center Honoree has a unique place in the national consciousness and their influence has inspired audiences from all walks of life.

Done+Dusted, a production company with a reputation for creating and capturing the moments that make headlines and shape culture, return to produce the event for a third year, in association with ROK Productions. The event will be Executive Produced by David Jammy and Elizabeth Kelly, and this year joined by Jack Sussman. The show will be directed by Alex Rudzinski.

Done+Dusted (D+D) is a multi-award-winning global entertainment group with offices in Los Angeles, London, and Abu Dhabi. The preeminent producer of live television events in the world, D+D has produced the previous five Mark Twain Prize shows at the Kennedy Center, and has reimagined and reinvigorated the country’s top recognition for humor, resulting in an Emmy®-nominated tent-pole on the Kennedy Center calendar.

CBS is the Exclusive Sponsor of the Kennedy Center Honors.
Boeing is the Exclusive Underwriter of the Kennedy Center Honors Gala.
Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of the Kennedy Center Honors.
Stephen and Christine Schwarzman are the Honors Gala Chairs.
The Kennedy Center Honors Founding Producer is George Stevens, Jr.

The Honoree selection process includes solicitation of recommendations from former Honorees, the artistic community, the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, and the general public. This year's selected Honorees were chosen based on the recommendation of the Center's Special Honors Advisory Committee, which is chaired by David Bohnett and includes past Honors recipients and distinguished artists Gloria Estefan, Sally Field, Renée Fleming, Herbie Hancock, Judith Jamison, Lionel Richie, and John Williams, as well as David M. Rubenstein, Deborah F. Rutter, Bryan Lourd, Cappy McGarr, Shonda Rhimes, and Daryl Roth. These individuals play a critical role in the evaluation and selection process, and the Kennedy Center is indebted to them for their involvement.

Each year, Honorees are confirmed by the Executive Committee of the Center's Board of Trustees. The Honors are not designated by art form or category of artistic achievement; over the years, the selection process has produced balance among the various arts and artistic disciplines.

*Paramount+ with Showtime subscribers will have access to stream live via the live feed of their local CBS affiliate on the service as well as on demand in the United States. Paramount+ Essential subscribers will not have the option to stream live, but will have access to on-demand the day after the special airs in the U.S. only.

47TH KENNEDY CENTER HONOREE STATEMENTS

"I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to collaborate with great artists and wonderful people throughout my career, and I have never stopped learning. There is no greater honor than to be included along with those who inspired me, who I looked up to, and who gave me encouragement when times were dim. I am grateful to the Kennedy Center, my beloved colleagues, to those who equate beauty and truth, and to all the children of the world."

—**Francis Ford Coppola**

"It goes without saying that the Kennedy Center Honors represents the highest of reaches for artistic achievement. To be recognized alongside the artists who have in the past received this honor is beyond humbling. The Grateful Dead has always been about community, creativity, and exploration in music and presentation. We've always felt that the music we make embodies and imparts something beyond the notes and phrases being played—and that is something we are privileged to share with all who are drawn to what we do—so it also must be said that our music belongs as much to our fans, the Dead Heads, as it does to us. This honor, then, is as much theirs as ours.

"From our earliest days in San Francisco and as far as our tours have taken us, it has been and still is an incredible ride. We've had the opportunity to play with many talented musicians, interact with many gifted people—and to be part of something much larger than ourselves. Our music has always been about exploration and breaking through or finding our way around barriers, not just musically but also in bringing people together. The energy, the love, the connection and sharing—once again, that's what it's all about. As we enter our 60th year of the Grateful Dead's journey in 2025, we're beyond grateful for this recognition and for the journey we are on together. This honor reminds us of all those moments and the people who helped us along the way.

“Thank you, Kennedy Center, and to all the folks who had a hand in bringing us here, for this incredible honor.”
—**Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann, Phil Lesh & Bobby Weir of the Grateful Dead**

“I am deeply honored and thrilled to have been chosen to receive one of this year’s Kennedy Center Honors. I have long been an admirer of the awards and have been so blessed to be able to participate in several shows honoring others. There is no higher level of esteem nor as delightful a celebration and I want to extend my sincere thanks to all who have chosen me to receive this honor. I look forward to the upcoming ceremony and festivities, which I know will be one of my life’s peak experiences.”

—**Bonnie Raitt**

“I am profoundly humbled and deeply honored to be selected as a recipient of the prestigious Kennedy Center Honors. This recognition is an extraordinary milestone in my career and a testament to the support and encouragement I have received from my family, friends, colleagues, and fans. Throughout my journey, I have strived to create, perform, and inspire with passion and integrity. Being acknowledged by such an esteemed institution validates my efforts and motivates me to continue pushing the boundaries of my art. I am incredibly grateful to the Kennedy Center for this honor, and I look forward to contributing further to the vibrant cultural tapestry that the Center celebrates and nurtures. Thank you once again for this incredible honor.”

—**Arturo Sandoval**

“We are thrilled to be the first organization honored in the history of the Kennedy Center Awards, emphasizing The Apollo’s impact on the past, present, and future of American culture and the performing arts. From the longest-running talent show in America with Amateur Night at The Apollo, which launched the careers of icons like Ella Fitzgerald and Lauryn Hill, to performances from beloved legends like Smokey Robinson and Lil’ Kim and today’s biggest stars like Drake, The Apollo has always been a home for artists to create and a home for audiences to see incredible music and art from legendary artists.”

—**Michelle Ebanks, President & CEO, on behalf of The Apollo**

ABOUT THE 47TH KENNEDY CENTER HONOREES

Francis Ford Coppola (director, producer, filmmaker)

Francis Ford Coppola is one of the most influential and acclaimed filmmakers of our time—a five-time Academy Award®-winning director, writer, and producer. Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1939, he grew up in Queens, New York. When paralyzed by polio at nine years old and bedridden for a year, he found solace in television and a toy 16mm movie projector, which developed into an interest in storytelling. He was soon writing short stories and plays and went on to study theater at Hofstra College, and then film at UCLA. At UCLA, he won the coveted Samuel Goldwyn Writing Award for his screenplay *Pilma Pilma*, which gave him the opportunity to be hired by Seven Arts as a screenwriter, his initiation into the film business.

In 1969, Coppola co-founded the pioneering film company American Zoetrope with fellow filmmaker George Lucas, which has initiated and nourished the careers of many prolific directors and actors. American Zoetrope-produced films have received 16 Academy Awards® and 70 nominations, with four included in the American Film Institute’s top 100 American films.

In 1970, Coppola won his first Oscar®, for Best Original Screenplay for *Patton*. That decade he would go on to write, direct, and/or produce *The Godfather*, *The Godfather Part II*, *American Graffiti*, *The Conversation*, and *Apocalypse Now*, resulting in two Cannes Palme d’Or Awards, 12 Academy Award® nominations, and five Academy Awards®, making the period arguably the most successful decade any filmmaker has ever had. In 2010, he received the Academy’s prestigious Irving G. Thalberg Memorial Award. As a writer, director, producer, and

technological pioneer, Coppola has created a body of work that has helped shape contemporary American cinema.

In addition to his prolific film career, Coppola has been producing wine for over 45 years at his Napa Valley winery, has luxury resorts in Central America, Argentina, and Italy, and runs an award-winning short story magazine, *Zoetrope: All-Story*.

Recent Kennedy Center history: *Francis Ford Coppola appeared in the Kennedy Center Honors tribute for Martin Scorsese in 2007; as one of two distributors that restored the original film, Coppola's presentation of Abel Gance's reconstructed epic film masterpiece, Napoleon, was performed live by the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra in February 1982 at the Kennedy Center Opera House. The score was conducted by Carmine Coppola, its composer, and organist Dennis James joined as part of these performances.*

The Grateful Dead (rock band)

The Grateful Dead is a social and musical phenomenon that grew into a genuine American treasure. Formed as a quintet in California in 1965, the Grateful Dead became as much a folktale as the story from which they drew their name. Fusing rock and roll, folk, and jazz with avant-garde, visual, and literary traditions—and virtually inventing a new way to play music in the process—they became one of the most popular, enduring, and influential bands in American history.

In 1965, an entire generation was linked together by common ideals, gathering by the hundreds and thousands. This movement created a seamless connection between the band and its fans, known as Dead Heads, who followed the band not because it was part of popular culture but because it was a true counterculture that exists to this day—one that earnestly believes in the value of its beliefs. By 1995, the Grateful Dead had attracted the most concertgoers in the history of the music business and today remains one of the all-time leaders in concert ticket sales. They created an unparalleled original songbook through 30 years of recording and touring, never playing the same setlist twice (except that once), making their musical legacy unfathomably rich, spread across a combined body of live and studio recordings.

Today, the connection between the band and its fans is as strong as ever. The band was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1994 and received a Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007. Their final tally of 2,318 total concerts remains a world record. In 2024, the Grateful Dead celebrated their 59th Top 40 album on the Billboard chart, a feat no other artist has achieved.

Emerging as a vessel for a vibrant global counterculture, the Grateful Dead created an artistic ecosystem all their own, transforming American music and arguably even America itself. Their influence on music and culture has been profound, and even after Jerry Garcia's death in 1995, the band's legacy has endured. Surviving members have continued to perform in various configurations ensuring that the music and spirit of the Grateful Dead live on.

Recent Kennedy Center history: *Mickey Hart's Drum Circle appeared as part of the Center's 2018 Sound Health: Music and the Mind initiative; Bobby Weir & Wolf Bros featuring The Wolfpack performed with the National Symphony Orchestra in October 2022.*

Bonnie Raitt (singer, songwriter, guitarist)

Bonnie Raitt is a singer, songwriter, and guitarist whose unique style blends blues, R&B, rock, and pop. After 20 years as a cult favorite, she broke through to the top in the early '90s with her Grammy Award®-winning albums *Nick of Time* and *Luck of the Draw*, which featured hits, "Something To Talk About" and "I Can't Make You Love Me," among others. The 13-time Grammy® winner was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2000, and

Rolling Stone named the slide guitar ace one of the “100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time” and one of the “100 Greatest Singers of All Time.”

2023 kicked off with Raitt earning three Grammy Awards® at the 65th Annual ceremony: Song of the Year and Best American Roots Song for the title track of her most recent album *Just Like That...* and Best Americana Performance for “Made Up Mind.” Raitt was also honored with the Recording Academy Lifetime Achievement Award in the year prior. Raitt has been on tour for most of 2023 and 2024 with stops in the U.S., Australia, the U.K., Ireland, and Canada.

2022 was an incredible year for Raitt who had a 75-date headlining U.S. tour; released her critically acclaimed, 21st album *Just Like That...* on her independent label, Redwing Records; received the Icon Award at the 2022’s Billboard Women In Music Awards; and saw her breakthrough album, *Nick of Time*, added to the Library of Congress’ National Recording Registry. *Just Like That...* was #1 on six Billboard charts the week of release and was perched at #1 on the Americana Radio Album Chart for 10 consecutive weeks. The album’s first single, “Made Up Mind,” remained in the top three spots on the Americana Radio Singles Chart for 17 weeks.

As known for her lifelong commitment to social activism as she is for her music, Raitt has long been involved with the environmental movement, performing concerts around oil, nuclear power, mining, water, and forest protection since the mid-70s. She was a founding member of MUSE (Musicians United for Safe Energy), which produced the historic concerts, album and film all known as *No Nukes* as well as a founding member of The Rhythm and Blues Foundation, which works for royalty reform and recognition of generations of pioneer R&B artists. She continues to work on safe energy issues in addition to environmental protection, social justice, Native American and human rights, artists’ rights, and music education.

Recent Kennedy Center history: *Bonnie Raitt made cast appearances for Kennedy Center Honors tributes for Mavis Staples (2016) and Buddy Guy (2012).*

Arturo Sandoval (jazz trumpeter, pianist, composer)

Arturo Sandoval is one of the most brilliant, multifaceted, and renowned musicians of our time. Although he is an acknowledged virtuoso of jazz trumpet and flugelhorn, he is just as dynamic and vivacious on the piano, timbales, vocals, and keyboard. He delights in presenting a diverse and exhilarating show featuring Afro-Cuban jazz, bebop, straight ahead jazz, and so much more.

Sandoval is of the greatest trumpet players in the world due to his exceptional technical skills, virtuosic performances, and profound musicality. He possesses a remarkable range, agility, and control over the instrument, allowing him to execute intricate passages efficiently and expressively. Sandoval’s ability to blend various styles, including jazz, classical, and Latin music, further adds to his versatility and appeal. Moreover, Sandoval’s contributions to the music world extend beyond his prowess as a performer. He is also a prolific composer, arranger, and educator, inspiring countless musicians with his innovative approach and dedication to his craft.

Additionally, his remarkable life story, overcoming political oppression in Cuba and finding success on the international stage, adds depth to his legacy and serves as an inspiration to many. While opinions on who the “best” trumpet player in the world may vary depending on personal preferences and criteria, Arturo Sandoval undoubtedly ranks among the most respected and admired musicians in his field.

He is by far one of the world’s foremost entertainers, having been seen by millions performing live at the Oscars®, the Grammys®, the White House, and the industry’s most esteemed performing arts centers and festivals around the world. Sandoval is a celebrated classical artist as well as composer who has been awarded

10 Grammy Awards®, six Billboard Awards, an Emmy®, the Hispanic Heritage Award, the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Obama, and a Doctorate in Fine Arts from the prestigious University of Notre Dame. He was also recently honored with a Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award.

Recent Kennedy Center history: *Arturo Sandoval performed the national anthem at the 2013 Kennedy Center Honors; in June 1998, he performed alongside Paquito D’Rivera as part of the National Symphony Orchestra’s Caribbean Festival; he performed a session as part of Billy Taylor’s Jazz at the Kennedy Center in 1994, which was recorded and later aired by NPR.*

The Apollo (iconic arts institution)

For nine decades, the legendary Apollo—the soul of American culture—has played a vital role in cultivating emerging artists, launching legends, and serving as a center of innovation for Harlem, the city of New York, and the world. The largest performing arts institution committed to Black culture and creativity, The Apollo is a beacon of the Harlem community recognized for celebrating, creating, and presenting performances inspired by Black American culture, which has shaped popular culture globally. The Apollo redefines contemporary American culture through its roles as a partner and collaborator with artists; as a commissioner of new work, producer, presenter, arts educator, and incubator; and as a catalyst for social and civic advocacy.

With music at its core, The Apollo’s programming extends to dance, theater, spoken word, comedy, festivals, and more, including special programs and blockbuster concert performances by artists ranging from Drake, Bruno Mars, and Alicia Keys to U2, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Lady Gaga; from premieres of a musical homage to Amiri Baraka’s *The Blues and Its People*, the theatrical adaptation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’s *Between the World and Me*, and the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved*; to *The Gathering*, which was recently presented at the Kennedy Center. For 90 years, The Apollo has served as a testing ground for new artists working across a variety of art forms and ushering in the emergence of musical genres including jazz, swing, bebop, R&B, gospel, blues, soul, and hip hop. The countless legendary artists who launched their careers at The Apollo’s Amateur Night, the original, large-scale talent show and one of the longest-running continuous events in New York City, include Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Billie Holiday, James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Gladys Knight, Luther Vandross, H.E.R., D’Angelo, Lauryn Hill, Machine Gun Kelly, and Miri Ben-Ari. The Apollo’s forward-looking artistic vision continues to build on this legacy.

During its 90th anniversary season, the organization opened The Apollo Stages at the Victoria Theater, marking the first-ever major expansion and renovation of the institution, and began its plans to restore and renovate its historic theater. This will allow The Apollo to increase performances, and educational and community programs, as well as expand its support for artists and other cultural organizations.

For more information, visit www.ApolloTheater.org.

Recent Kennedy Center history: *The Apollo has collaborated with the Kennedy Center several times in recent years –The Gathering, a collaboration with the Kennedy Center, National Black Theatre, and The Apollo Theater, in June 2024; an April 2018 co-commission and presentation of Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Between the World and Me, directed by The Apollo’s Kamilah Forbes; Harlem Light/U Street Nights in May 2015; and a 2010 Millennium Stage performance by The Apollo Theater house band member Candido Camero in association with the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture and its exhibition, “Ain’t Nothing Like the Real Thing: How The Apollo Theater Shaped American Entertainment.” In 2021, The Apollo’s Executive Producer Kamilah Forbes was recognized as a Kennedy Center Next 50 artist and visionary leader.*

Kennedy Center Honors Ticket Information:

For ticket inquiries, please visit www.kennedy-center.org/honorsinfo.

For more information about the Kennedy Center, please visit our [website](#).

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