Press Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL:
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CARMEN de LAVALLADE, GLORIA ESTEFAN, LL COOL J, NORMAN LEAR, AND LIONEL RICHIE

TO RECEIVE 40TH ANNUAL KENNEDY CENTER HONORS

America to Celebrate Honorees' Lifetime Artistic Achievements
Sunday, December 3, 2017

Gala will be broadcast on CBS on December 26, 9 p.m. ET

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced the selection of five Honorees who will receive the 2017 Kennedy Center Honors. Recipients to be honored at the 40th annual national celebration of the arts are: American dancer and choreographer **Carmen de Lavallade**, Cuban American singer-songwriter and actress **Gloria Estefan**, American Hip Hop artist and entertainment icon **LL COOL J**, American television writer and producer **Norman Lear**, and American musician and record producer **Lionel Richie**.

"The Kennedy Center Honors spotlights the extraordinary careers of five artists whose talent and ingenuity have enriched and shaped cultural life in America," stated Kennedy Center Chairman David M. Rubenstein. "Carmen de Lavallade is a national treasure whose elegance and talent as a dancer led to a career touching many art forms; international superstar Gloria Estefan has influenced American music through her infectious Miami Sound; landmark rap artist LL COOL J taught the world how to rhyme as one of the pioneers of the Hip Hop phenomenon; Norman Lear spoke to the human condition and sparked poignant cultural conversations with some of the most epochal TV sitcoms of the 20th century; and Lionel Richie's irresistibly recognizable melodies capture the heart and transcend generations."

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“This is a truly exceptional slate of Honorees—made even more special by the fact that we will honor these artists as we also celebrate four decades of the Kennedy Center Honors,” said Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “Each of this year’s Honorees became known to and loved by the world because of their complete originality and bold genius. They are creators of the highest order, and as President Kennedy’s living memorial, the Kennedy Center is so proud to shine a light on their boundless ‘contributions to the human spirit.’”

Throughout its 40-year history, the annual Honors Gala has become the highlight of the Washington cultural and society calendar, and its national broadcast on CBS is a high point of the television season. On Sunday, December 3, in a star-studded celebration on the Kennedy Center Opera House stage, produced by Ricky Kirshner and Glenn Weiss of White Cherry Entertainment, the 2017 Honorees will be saluted by today’s leading performers from New York, Hollywood, and the arts capitals of the world. Seated with the President of the United States and the First Lady, the Honorees will accept the recognition and gratitude of their peers through performances and tributes.

The President and the First Lady will receive the Honorees, distinguished former Honorees and members of the cast, along with the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, at the White House prior to the gala performance. The 2017 Kennedy Center Honors Gala, chaired by Boeing Chairman, President, and CEO Dennis Muilenburg, concludes with a dinner in the Grand Foyer. The Honorary Chairs of the 2017 Honors Gala are Buffy Cafritz and Ann D. Jordan.

The Kennedy Center Honors medallions will be presented on Saturday, December 2, the night before the Gala, at a State Department dinner hosted by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. The Co-Chairs of the State Department dinner are Noémi and Michael Neidorff. The Founding Chair of the State Department dinner is Elizabeth Stevens.

The Honors Gala will be recorded for broadcast on the CBS Network for the 40th consecutive year as a two-hour primetime special on Tuesday, December 26 at 9 p.m. ET.

White Cherry Entertainment is well-known for producing the perennial award-winning Tony Awards® for the last 16 consecutive years, and also for producing the Primetime Emmy Awards®, NFL Opening Kickoff and Super Bowl Halftime Shows, the Democratic National Convention, Presidential Inaugural Galas, and many other special events. To date, White Cherry Entertainment has won 8 Emmy Awards®, while Kirshner and Weiss have individually received an additional 4 Emmy Awards®, 7 Directors Guild Awards, a Peabody Award, and more than 33 Emmy® nominations. This is the third consecutive year White Cherry will produce the Kennedy Center Honors.

For the third year, the Kennedy Center will launch a contest on social media in which one winner will receive two tickets to attend the 2017 Honors Gala on December 3. Additional details will be announced at a later date.

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.

The Kennedy Center Honors Founding Producer is George Stevens, Jr.

The Honors recipients recognized for their lifetime contributions to American culture through the performing arts—whether in music, dance, theater, opera, motion pictures, or television—are confirmed by the Executive Committee of the Center's Board of Trustees. The primary criterion in the selection process is excellence. The Honors are not designated by art form or category of artistic achievement; the selection process, over the years, has produced balance among the various arts and artistic disciplines.

The Honoree selection process includes solicitation of recommendations from the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, the artistic community, 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 Elaine Wynn and includes Shonda Rhimes, David Bohnett, and Cappy McGarr, along with past Honors recipients and distinguished artists Julie Andrews, Martina Arroyo, Herbie Hancock, Yo-Yo Ma, Chita Rivera, and Twyla

Tharp. These individuals play a critical role in the evaluation and selection process and the Kennedy Center is indebted to them for their involvement.

ABOUT THE HONOREES

Carmen de Lavallade (actress, dancer, choreographer)

An accomplished actor, dancer, and choreographer, Carmen de Lavallade has amassed more than six decades of professional experience in the performing arts.

The Los Angeles native made her debut at the age of 17 with the Lester Horton Dance Theater in the role of Salome and she appeared in four films, including *Carmen Jones* (1954) with Dorothy Dandridge and *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959) with Harry Belafonte. In 1954, she made her Broadway debut in *House of Flowers,* written by Truman Capote with music by Harold Arlen. Her dance career includes having ballets created for her by Lester Horton, Geoffrey Holder, Alvin Ailey, Glen Tetley, John Butler, and Agnes de Mille.

Carmen succeeded her cousin Janet Collins as the principal dancer with the Metropolitan Opera and was a guest artist with American Ballet Theatre. She has choreographed for Dance Theatre of Harlem, Philadanco, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the productions of *Porgy and Bess* and *Die Meistersinger* at the Metropolitan Opera. She has also had an extensive acting career performing in numerous off-Broadway productions, including *Death of a Salesman* and *Othello*, taught movement for actors at Yale, and became a member of the Yale Repertory Company and the American Repertory Theatre at Harvard.

Carmen and her late husband, Geoffrey Holder, were the subjects of the film *Carmen & Geoffrey* (2005), which chronicled their 60-year partnership and artistic legacy. Her most recent work includes 651 ARTS's *FLY: Five First Ladies of Dance* (2009), *Step-Mother* by Ruby Dee (2009), *Post Black* by Regina Taylor (2011), and the Broadway production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* (2012). She is currently touring a dance/theater work about her life entitled *As I Remember It*, which premiered in June 2014.

Lauded by numerous institutions, Carmen received the Dance Magazine Award in 1964, an honorary doctorate of Fine Arts from the Juilliard School in 2007, the Duke Ellington Fellowship Award, and the Dance USA Award in 2010. Now in her eighties, Carmen de Lavallade continues to inspire generations of artists and audiences alike.

Gloria Estefan (singer, songwriter, actress)

International superstar Gloria Estefan is a Grammy Award®–winning singer, actress, songwriter, author of two *New York Times* best-selling children's books, philanthropist, and humanitarian. She is considered one of the world's most recognizable and beloved performers. *Billboard* Magazine considers her the single most successful Latin crossover artist in music history.

She's been awarded with seven Grammy Awards®, an Oscar®–nominated performance for

the song “Music of My Heart,” a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, an American Music Award for Lifetime Achievement, an induction into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame, an Ellis Island Medal of Honor, a National Artistic Achievement Award from the U.S. Congress, among many others. Most recently, President Obama honored Emilio and Gloria Estefan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor, presented to individuals who have made meritorious contributions to the United States, to world peace, and to cultural endeavors.

On Your Feet! is the Tony Award®–nominated Broadway musical based on the lives and music of Emilio and Gloria Estefan. As Executive Producers, it is the story of two people who—through an unwavering dedication to one another and their pursuit of the American dream—showcased their talent, their music, and their heritage to the world in a remarkable rise to global superstardom. Since opening, *On Your Feet!* has received rave critical reviews and nominations for Tony Awards®, Outer Critics Circle Awards, and Drama League Awards.

Having sold more than 100 million records worldwide, Gloria along with her husband Emilio, are successful entrepreneurs owning and operating several business, which include a globally recognized music publishing company and a hospitality division that includes seven restaurants and two hotels (the Cardozo Hotel on South Beach and Costa d’Este Beach Resort in Vero Beach). The Estefans are also the first Cuban American couple to own a minority share in a major NFL franchise, the Miami Dolphins.

LL COOL J (Hip Hop artist, actor)

LL COOL J is an entertainment icon who has found great success crossing into multiple mediums. A two-time Grammy Award® winner, recording artist, talented actor, author, NAACP Image Award winner, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, LL continues to display his wide range of talents with every project.

First introduced to the world in 1984 as a Def Jam Records flagship artist, LL is the first rap artist to amass 10 consecutive platinum–plus selling albums. The multi-platinum artist and two-time Rock and Roll Hall of Fame nominee is currently tied for third place for most *Billboard* chart debuts by a rapper. In 2016, LL received a star on the legendary Hollywood Walk of Fame for his achievement in music.

As an actor, LL COOL J has successfully transitioned to one of the consistently highest rated shows on television. He currently stars in the CBS hit primetime drama series, *NCIS: Los Angeles*. His performance on the show garnered him six NAACP Image Award nominations for his role of Special Agent Sam Hanna.

LL can currently be seen hosting and producing *Lip Sync Battle* on Spike TV, which premiered April 2, 2015, as Spike TV’s most-watched original program ever. The series, which will premiere its fourth season in 2018, has amassed more than half a billion video streams since its launch. In 2016 and 2017, the show was nominated for an Emmy® in the category of “Outstanding Structured Reality Program.”

LL has always been an avid philanthropist involved in numerous causes including literacy for kids as well as music and arts programs in schools. Celebrating its 13th Anniversary this year, LL's charity "Jump & Ball"—which takes place every August in his hometown of Queens, New York—aims to give back to his local community by offering a five-week athletic and team-building program dedicated to bringing wholesome fun to young people.

Norman Lear (television writer and producer)

At 95, Norman Lear has enjoyed a long career in television and film, and as a political and social activist and philanthropist. His latest show, a reimagined Cuban American version of the iconic *One Day at a Time* for NETFLIX, was rated among the top 10 new shows of 2017 and is now entering its second season. Lear's new podcast, *All of the Above with Norman Lear*, is available on PodcastOne.

Born in 1922 in New Haven, Connecticut, Lear flew 52 combat missions in World War II with the 15th Air Force out of Foggia, Italy, before beginning his television writing career. Lear's iconic shows of the 1970s and 1980s—*All in the Family*, *Maude*, *Good Times*, *The Jeffersons*, *Sanford and Son*, and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, among others—collectively reached as many as 120 million viewers per week and are said to have transformed the American cultural landscape, bringing the social and political issues of the day into American living rooms.

People for the American Way, the nonprofit organization Lear founded in 1980, remains an influential voice against the radical religious right—and is as relevant and effective as ever.

In 1999, President Clinton bestowed the National Medal of Arts on Mr. Lear, noting that "Norman Lear has held up a mirror to American society and changed the way we look at it." He also has the distinction of being among the first seven television pioneers inducted in 1984 into the Television Academy Hall of Fame. In 2017, he was awarded a Peabody Lifetime Achievement Award.

Norman is a husband to Lyn Davis Lear, a father of six, and a grandfather of four.

Lionel Richie (singer-songwriter, record producer)

International superstar Lionel Richie has a discography of albums and singles that are second to none. His music is part of the fabric of pop music; in fact, Richie is one of only two songwriters in history to achieve the honor of having #1 records for nine consecutive years. With more than 100 million albums sold worldwide, an Oscar®, a Golden Globe®, four Grammy Awards®, and the distinction of MusicCares person of the year in 2016, the Tuskegee, Alabama native is a true music icon.

Lionel Richie is known for his mega-hits such as "Endless Love," "Lady," "Truly," "All Night Long," "Penny Lover," "Stuck on You," "Hello," "Say You, Say Me," "Dancing on the Ceiling," and one of the most important pop songs in history, "We Are the World," written with Michael Jackson for USA for Africa. His song catalog also includes his early work with

The Commodores, where he developed a groundbreaking style that defied genre categories, penning smashes such as “Three Times a Lady,” “Still,” and “Easy.”

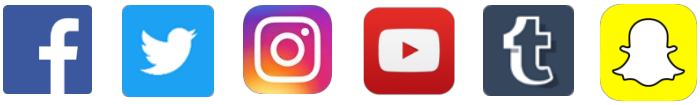
Richie launched his Las Vegas headlining residency show, *Lionel Richie—All the Hits*, at The AXIS at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino in April 2016. In an unforgettable evening featuring his brightest and best anthems which have defined the music icon’s unparalleled career, Richie takes his fans on a spectacular musical journey, performing a variety of his seminal hits.

With his most recent *All the Hits, All Night Long* Tour, Richie sold out arenas worldwide with a set list of his brightest and best anthems. In recent years, he also headlined festivals including Bonnaroo, Outside Lands, and Glastonbury, drawing the festival’s biggest crowd ever with more than 200,000 attendees.

Statements, full bios, and photos of the 2017 Kennedy Center Honorees are available to media upon request.

For more information about the Kennedy Center, please visit our website.

Discover the Kennedy Center Honors on social media:



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PRESS CONTACT
Eileen Andrews (Kennedy Center)
(202) 416-8448
etandrews@kennedy-center.org

Kate Fisher (CBS)
(212) 975-3818
khfisher@cbs.com