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The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
announces

Sound Health

A new partnership with the National Institutes of Health
to encourage research into the links between music and wellness

Collaboration forged by Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor at Large
Renée Fleming

Launch events set for June 2–3, 2017, at the Kennedy Center

More wellness events scheduled at the Kennedy Center
include yoga sessions, improv for anxiety, interactive dance classes,
a 5K run/walk, and more

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Deborah F. Rutter, President; the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., Director; and renowned soprano and Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor at Large Renée Fleming have launched a new partnership, entitled Sound Health, designed to explore the connections between music, health, and wellness.

This new collaboration, spearheaded by Fleming, builds upon the performances that the National Symphony Orchestra has given at the NIH Clinical Center over the past several years, broadening the scope and bringing together the diverse artistic resources of the Kennedy Center with the scientific, clinical, and research expertise of the NIH.
Through this partnership, both institutions will create opportunities to:

- expand current levels of knowledge and understanding of how listening, performing, or creating music involves intricate circuitry in the brain that could be harnessed for health and wellness applications in daily life;
- explore ways to enhance the potential for music as therapy for neurological disorders across the human lifespan;
- identify future opportunities for research, and;
- create public awareness about how the brain functions and interacts with music.

“The Kennedy Center is honored to collaborate with the NIH in such a meaningful way,” said Deborah F. Rutter, Kennedy Center President. “Seeing the potential for this extraordinary work to occur in the coming months and years is truly inspiring. I hope that through this partnership, we can all learn more about the science of music, and in turn, learn how it can help us all have a more healthy daily life.”

“Using new imaging technologies, scientists have documented how early musical training produces actual anatomic changes in the brain,” said Dr. Francis S. Collins, NIH Director. “And a growing number of reports are appearing where music therapy has provided benefit to individuals with medical conditions as diverse as autism, chronic pain, and stroke. But there is so much we still don’t know about the effects of music in health broadly, and this partnership aims to explore this uncharted territory.”

“A tremendous wealth of knowledge exists between the nation’s largest performing arts center and our largest health research institute,” said Renée Fleming, “I hoped we could share and amplify the exciting work being done where science and music intersect, by bringing these two great institutions together for this initiative. There are ramifications here for a host of health topics: childhood development, autism, pain management, Alzheimer’s, PTSD—the list goes on and on, because music’s impact on the brain can be so powerful.”
This in-depth collaboration was launched by a two-day workshop on January 26 and 27 at the NIH. Twenty-five leading researchers, clinicians, and music therapists working in music and neuroscience from 24 institutions in three different countries gathered to evaluate the state of the field, to identify gaps in knowledge, and to inspire future research.

These leaders in the field discussed the current understanding and recent discoveries about how music is processed in the brain—how the neural pathways that are uniquely engaged by music and networks connect the brain’s sound processing system with movement, emotion, and language. The workshop also examined how this growing body of research is being applied in clinical settings; for example, how the beat of a metronome can steady the gait of someone with Parkinson’s disease; how music’s effect on the brain may help manage pain for cancer patients or reduce anxiety in adolescents; and how music’s neural connection to language regions may help children with autism communicate.

With findings from this workshop, which sparked enthusiasm for further inquiry and collaboration, the NIH and the Kennedy Center will identify areas of science that require deeper levels of investigation in order to validate current findings and explore new research opportunities to determine when and how music can be an effective treatment. They will also identify topics to explore during a public event at the Kennedy Center in June.

The event—Sound Health: Music and the Mind—takes place at the Kennedy Center on June 2 and 3, and will feature performances, as well as interactive presentations and discussions with some of the leading minds working at the intersection of neuroscience and music from around the world. A performance by the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) kicks off the event on June 2, with a program demonstrating, among other things, that the simple act of listening to music is closely related to brain function and structure.
In addition, this partnership with the NIH has inspired the Kennedy Center to expand its programming to include opportunities for incorporating music and art in a healthy lifestyle as a part of its regular offerings and daily Millennium Stage programming:

- noted improv/comedy troupe Second City will engage with audiences to teach Improv for Anxiety on February 18;
- dance and movement lessons led by Joy of Motion will take place monthly beginning February 26;
- “Sound Health: Community Yoga,” free public yoga sessions in the Kennedy Center’s Grand Foyer, will take place biweekly on Saturday mornings beginning March 4;
- electronic musician Yoko K. Sen, who creates individual harmonic soundscapes for hospital patients, performs on April 16; and
- Stic, of the Hip Hop group Dead Prez, brings his focus on healthy living to the Kennedy Center with a performance and a healthy food demonstration on April 28, and a group 5K run/walk on April 29.

The NSO also continues its work with NIH through Sound Health, performing regularly for patients, doctors, nurses, and staff at the NIH Clinical Center. A complete list of arts and wellness offerings at the Kennedy Center can be found here.

ABOUT THE JOHN F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President Kennedy. Under the guidance of Chairman David M. Rubenstein, and President Deborah F. Rutter, the nine theaters and stages of the nation’s busiest performing arts facility attract more than three million visitors to more than 3,000 performances each year, while center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts reach 40 million more around the world.

The Center produces and presents performances of music, dance, comedy, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera, the Center has produced more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works, in addition to hosting numerous international cultural festivals. The Center’s Emmy® and Peabody Award-winning The Kennedy Center Honors is broadcast annually on CBS and annual The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor is broadcast on PBS.
The education programs of the Kennedy Center, including those of its affiliate VSA, the international organization on arts and disability, have become models for communities across the country and have unlocked the door to learning for millions of young people. Education at the Kennedy Center produces and presents age appropriate performances and educational events, and fosters innovative programming, curriculum, and professional development for students, teachers, and families.

The Center and its affiliates stage more than 400 free performances by artists from throughout the world each year on the Center’s main stages, and every day of the year at 6 p.m. on its Millennium Stages, which are also streamed live, online. The Center also offers reduced and complimentary tickets to young people, active members of the military, and the underserved through its MyTix program and offers a Specially Priced Tickets program for students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others with fixed low incomes.

To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit kennedy-center.org.

ABOUT NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH
NIH, the nation’s medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

#SoundHealth

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