

# THE KENNEDY CENTER

Press Release

For Immediate Release:

July 20, 2017

Jimmy Kimmel  
Steve Martin  
John Mulaney  
Bill Murray  
Paul Shaffer  
Martin Short  
Sarah Silverman  
Eddie Vedder  
*and*  
Other Special Guests

Celebrate the Humor Of

## **DAVID LETTERMAN**

**Recipient of the 20th Annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in the  
Kennedy Center Concert Hall  
October 22, 2017 at 8 p.m.**

**Program to be broadcast nationally on PBS November 20 at 9 p.m.  
*As David Letterman: The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize***

(WASHINGTON)—A lineup of leading performers, including Jimmy Kimmel, Steve Martin, John Mulaney, Bill Murray, Paul Shaffer, Martin Short, Sarah Silverman, Eddie Vedder, and others will salute David Letterman at the 20th annual Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor on Sunday, October 22, 2017 at 8 p.m. The 20th Anniversary program will pay tribute to the humor and accomplishments of Letterman, and will be taped by WETA Washington, D.C. The program will air on PBS stations as *David Letterman: The Kennedy*

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*Center Mark Twain Prize* nationwide on Monday, November 20 at 9 p.m. (check local listings). Artists are subject to change.

The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize, sponsored by Capital One®, celebrates the achievements of American comedic artists. The proceeds from the evening's event are used to support the Kennedy Center's programs, performances, and outreach. As the recipient of the 2017 Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, David Letterman will receive a copy of an 1884 bronze portrait bust of Mark Twain sculpted by Karl Gerhardt (1853–1940). The bust and images of it are courtesy of the Mark Twain House and Museum in Hartford, Connecticut.

As a social commentator, satirist, and creator of characters, Samuel Clemens—the distinguished 19th-century novelist and essayist also known as Mark Twain—was a fearless observer of society who startled many while delighting and informing many more with his uncompromising perspective of social injustice and personal folly. He revealed the great truth of humor when he said, “against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.”

Along with the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the creators and executive producers of the Mark Twain Prize are Bob Kaminsky, Peter Kaminsky, Mark Krantz, and Cappy McGarr. The WETA Washington, D.C. executive producer for *David Letterman: The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize* is Dalton Delan. The co-chairs for the event are Jane Watson Stetson and E. William Stetson III from Norwich, Vermont and Washington, D.C.

The Kennedy Center Celebration of American Humor was instituted as an annual event in October 1998, and this year, will mark its 20th anniversary. Past recipients of the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize have been Richard Pryor (1998), Jonathan Winters (1999), Carl Reiner (2000), Whoopi Goldberg (2001), Bob Newhart (2002), Lily Tomlin (2003), Lorne Michaels (2004), Steve Martin (2005), Neil Simon (2006), Billy Crystal (2007), George Carlin (2008), Bill Cosby (2009), Tina Fey (2010), Will Ferrell (2011), Ellen DeGeneres (2012), Carol Burnett (2013), Jay Leno (2014), Eddie Murphy (2015), and Bill Murray (2016).

### **ABOUT DAVID LETTERMAN**

Over 33 years on late-night television, David Letterman hosted 6,028 episodes of *Late Night* (NBC) and *The Late Show* (CBS), and was the longest-running late-night broadcaster in American history. As a writer, performer, and producer, Letterman is one of the most-nominated individuals in Emmy Award® history, with 52 nominations, resulting in 10 wins. Letterman is also a two-time Peabody Award winner and a Kennedy Center Honoree.

Born and raised in Indianapolis, Letterman's first network break came as a writer in 1978 on the CBS variety series *Mary*, starring Mary Tyler Moore. In November of that year, he made the first of his 22 appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, which he also guest-hosted numerous times. In 1980, Letterman began hosting a morning comedy-variety program, *The David Letterman Show*, which ran for three months on NBC. His groundbreaking show *Late Night with David Letterman* premiered in February 1982. Throughout its 11 years, *Late Night* earned five Emmys® and 35 Emmy® nominations. It was recently named as one of the top 20 greatest TV shows of all time by *Rolling Stone*.

On August 30, 1993, the *Late Show with David Letterman* made its debut on CBS, establishing itself as the first successful comedy/variety show in late night, outside of NBC. In its 22 years at CBS, *Late Show* launched the careers of countless comedians and musical acts. From his roots in comedy, Letterman also distinguished himself as an interviewer, sharing the stage with U.S. Presidents, Cabinet officials, Medal of Honor recipients, and virtually every Presidential candidate for more than 20 years. Through his guest interviews, Letterman also brought to light important global issues such as world hunger and climate change.

Letterman announced his departure from *Late Show* in 2014, and aired his final episode on May 20, 2015, to an audience of 13.76 million people.

David Letterman is 70, and resides in New York with his wife Regina and son Harry.

### **About Comedy at the Kennedy Center**

Capital One® is the Presenting Sponsor of this year's Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, as part of the bank's five-year, \$5 million gift to fund *Comedy at the Kennedy Center*, a signature program at the Center focused on elevating comedy as an art form and uniting the local community together through laughter.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Tickets go on sale to Kennedy Center Members on Tuesday, August 8, 2017, and will go on sale to the general public on Wednesday, August 9, 2017. Tickets will be available for purchase at the Kennedy Center Box Office, by calling InstantCharge at (202) 467-4600, or through the Kennedy Center website at [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org).

Capital One® is the Presenting Sponsor of the  
20th annual Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

Major support is also provided by American Airlines.

For more information, please visit the [Mark Twain Prize website](#).

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