



Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

October 30, 2017

## **The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**

**Announces**

### **The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards Nominations Now Accepted**

#### **\$10,000 Awards Named for Broadway Legend Honoring Teachers in all Fields of Education**

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is seeking nominations for the 2018 Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards, a series of annual grants that recognize inspiring teachers in any field of education across the United States. Now entering their eighth year, the awards were created in honor of iconic composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim's 80th birthday in 2010. The program was initiated and funded through the generous support of arts philanthropists and friends of Mr. Sondheim, Myrna and Freddie Gershon.

The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards seek to spotlight teachers and to recognize them publicly for their significant place in their students's lives and society. Broadway legend Stephen Sondheim frequently attributes his success to the teachers in his life. The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards are presented each year on Sondheim's birthday, March 22, to outstanding teachers, living or deceased, kindergarten through college, in all areas of education. Nominations are accepted via the Kennedy Center [website](#).

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Most people have at least one teacher who made an impact on their life. These inspirational individuals are rarely recognized for the life-changing role they have played in the lives of their students. The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher homepage features leaders and celebrities, including Warren Buffett, Dr. Jill Biden, J. J. Abrams, Bill Bradley, and many others describing their favorite teachers and the lasting influence good teachers have on communities and schools.

“Teachers define us,” Stephen Sondheim has said. “In our early years, when we are still being formed, they often see in us more than we see in ourselves, more even than our families see and, as a result, help us to evolve into what we ultimately become. Good teachers are touchstones to paths of achieving more than we might have otherwise accomplished, in directions we might not have gone.”

Winner of the Special Tony Award® for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre, **Stephen Sondheim** has received more Tony Awards® than any other composer. Mr. Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics for *Saturday Night*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Anyone Can Whistle*, *Company*, *Follies*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Frogs*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Merrily We Roll Along*, *Sunday in the Park With George* (for which he also received a Pulitzer Prize), *Into the Woods*, *Assassins*, *Passion*, and *Road Show*, as well as lyrics for *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, and *Do I Hear a Waltz?* and additional lyrics for *Candide*. Revues of his work include *Sondheim on Sondheim*, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, *Marry Me a Little*, *You’re Gonna Love Tomorrow*, and *Putting It Together*. For films and television, he composed the scores of *Stavisky* and *Reds* and wrote songs for *Dick Tracy*, for which he received an Academy Award®, and *Evening Primrose*. He is also a 1993 recipient of a Kennedy Center Honor. Mr. Sondheim is on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, having served as its president from 1973 to 1981.

To nominate a teacher for the award, visit the Kennedy Center [website](#). The nomination deadline is December 31, 2017.

A total of 71 teachers from across the nation have been recognized over seven years for their outstanding influence on students in a wide variety of disciplines, in addition to the arts. Recipients each receive a \$10,000 prize and their stories, as told by the nominating student, are featured on a [website](#) dedicated to inspirational teachers. To date, \$710,000 has been bestowed since the awards' inception. Previous winning nominations have included submissions by composer, lyricist, actor, and creator of the Tony Award®-winning musical *Hamilton*, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and founder of Yahoo Tech, best-selling author, and correspondent for *CBS Sunday Morning*, David Pogue.

Nominators for posthumous recognition of a teacher must designate a 501(c)3 organization or fund within a K–12 school, school system, college, or university in the United States to receive the \$10,000 award in the deceased teacher's name.

### **FUNDING CREDIT:**

The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards are made possible in their entirety by Myrna and Freddie Gershon.

### **EDUCATION AT THE KENNEDY CENTER**

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is the national champion for arts learning and creativity. Committed to increasing opportunities for all people to participate in, learn about, and understand the arts, [Education at the Kennedy Center](#) offers programs and events that strive to reflect the nation and communities and that are accessible and inclusive for all. From performances and exhibits on the Center's stages and in the community, to classroom and community partnerships, including the recent addition of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities Turnaround Arts initiative, to online resources accessible nearly anywhere, the Center serves the burgeoning artist, the exploring student of any age, the teacher and teaching artist, and even the local and national infrastructure—any person interested in arts learning and utilizing the arts for positive change. As an essential component of the living memorial to President Kennedy, the Center's Education utilizes the arts to embrace the ideals of service, justice, freedom, courage, and gratitude, and to activate and support the Citizen Artists in all our audiences. For more information, please visit [kennedy-center.org/education/](http://kennedy-center.org/education/).

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For more information about the Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards, please visit [kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards](https://www.kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards)  
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