

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
announces a**

National competition for design proposals for the renovation of the Israeli Lounge

*Design competition and reimagining of space are made possible
by a \$1.25 million gift from LetterOne*

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced that it will undertake a full-scale renovation of its Israeli Lounge, located on the Box Tier level of the Concert Hall. The renovation is made possible by a \$1.25 million gift from **LetterOne**, the international investment firm co-founded by businessman and philanthropist **Mikhail Fridman**. Through a competitive design process, a selection panel will identify a winning design that celebrates the spirit of modern-day Israel as well as the richness and vibrancy of Jewish culture. The competition launches on December 14, 2017.

“The Kennedy Center is grateful for Mikhail Fridman’s vision and generous gift,” stated Kennedy Center Chairman **David M. Rubenstein**. “The renovation of the Israeli Lounge is an opportunity to refresh an important space and reflect on the cultural connections that shape our nation’s performing arts center. Mr. Fridman shares the Kennedy Center’s vision for a reimagined Israeli Lounge that honors Israel’s rich cultural legacy while looking toward the future.”

“When I first visited the Kennedy Center last spring, I was inspired by the Center’s dynamic, creative energy. As an Israeli citizen, I thought it was important for the Israeli Lounge to project that same dynamism, so that it can reflect modern-day Israeli culture as well as the incredible diversity of the Jewish heritage,” said Mr. Fridman. “I hope we can tap the creativity of outstanding designers and inspire a modern interpretation of the Israeli Lounge through this

competitive design process, so when a member of the public enters the Israeli Lounge, they can get a better sense of the make-up of Jewish identity and experience a piece of Israel as it is today—culturally vibrant and forward-looking. I am honored to work with Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter and the selection committee to refresh this important space.”

The Israeli Lounge was a gift from the people of Israel in honor of President Kennedy presented during the Center’s opening in 1971. Practically, the Lounge, which accommodates up to 80 guests, serves as a space for patrons and guests to convene, entertain, and connect. The current design draws heavily on Old Testament imagery, with walnut paneling and painted overhead panels that feature musical moments from the Bible, and fabric walls with sepia ink drawings depicting the history of Israel. All artwork from the original Israeli Lounge will be preserved for future display at the Kennedy Center.

Kennedy Center staff will open a competitive design process that will result in a newly designed Israeli Lounge that invites visitors to contemplate contemporary Israeli culture and consider its significance within their own lives and experiences. The design selection committee includes His Excellency Ron Dermer, Israel’s Ambassador to the United States, Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter, and Fridman, among others. In adjudicating submissions, the team will consider each design’s celebration of Jewish culture, including philosophy, the arts, science, and religion.

The budget for the design competition and renovation will be fully underwritten by LetterOne’s \$1.25 million gift. Proposals will be accepted between December 14, 2017, and January 15, 2018, and the full proposal criteria will be available here: www.kennedy-center.org/pages/IsraeliLounge.

The design committee is expected to select a winning design in Spring 2018. Details regarding the renovation schedule will be announced at a later date.

ABOUT MIKHAIL FRIDMAN

Mikhail Fridman is an international businessman and co-founder of [LetterOne](http://LetterOne.com) (L1), the international investment business headquartered in Luxembourg, with offices in London and New York. L1 has approximately \$23 billion under management, and buys and builds investments internationally—in the energy, telecoms and technology, health, and retail sectors. L1 also invests in private equity funds.

Fridman was born on April 21, 1964 into a Jewish family in Lvov, Ukraine, which before WWII, was part of Poland. His parents now live in Cologne, Germany. He graduated from school in Lvov in 1980, where he won school Olympiads in physics and mathematics. After graduating from university with a first-class degree, he started as an entrepreneur.

Together with several partners he has built private businesses, from the bottom up, in retail banking, telecoms, insurance, and water. He is co-founder of the ABHH group based in Luxembourg, which invests in banking groups, providing retail banking services for more than five million people and 40,000 corporate customers. In 1995 he and his partners entered the food retail market, starting with a handful of retail stores. The company they created—today "X5 Retail Group," which is listed in London—is the #1 food retailer in Russia. In 2003, he completed a deal with BP to form the 50/50 TNK-BP joint venture, which was sold for \$56 billion in 2012.

Fridman is a member of the International Advisory Board of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations. He is also the founder of the international Jazz Festival in Lvov, which is now one of Europe's top 10 jazz festivals. He is an active supporter of Jewish initiatives worldwide, including co-founding the Genesis Prize, which is awarded annually in Jerusalem, and has been dubbed the Jewish Nobel by *TIME* magazine. He also co-founded the Genesis Philanthropy Group, which develops and enhances a sense of Jewish identity among Russian-speaking Jews worldwide.

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 2,000 performances each year, while center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts reach 40 million more around the world.

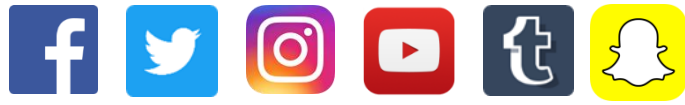
The Center produces and presents performances of music, dance, comedy, Hip Hop, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the [National Symphony Orchestra](#) and [Washington National Opera](#), the Center 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.

For more information about the Kennedy Center visit www.kennedy-center.org.

Discover the [Kennedy Center](#) on social media:



###

KENNEDY CENTER CONTACT:

Michelle Pendoley

202-416-8196

mapendoley@kennedy-center.org