



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

June 13, 2016

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Will Present
The 19th Annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor
to
BILL MURRAY**

**Prize Will Be Awarded at the Kennedy Center
At a Gala Performance on October 23, 2016**

Program to be broadcast nationally

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts will present the 19th annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor to Bill Murray on October 23, 2016 in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. The Prize, which is named to honor one of the world’s greatest humorists, will be given at a gala performance featuring some of the biggest names in comedy, and will be taped for broadcast nationwide. Event tickets will go on sale to members July 25 and to the public on August 1.

Capital One® is the presenting sponsor of this year’s Kennedy Center 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.

The Mark Twain Prize for American Humor recognizes people who have had an impact on American society in ways similar to the distinguished 19th-century novelist and essayist Samuel Clemens, best known as Mark Twain. As a social commentator, satirist, and creator of characters, Clemens was a fearless observer of society, who startled many while delighting and informing many more with his uncompromising perspective on social injustice and personal folly. He revealed the great truth of humor when he said “against the assault of laughter nothing can stand.”

“Since his first performances on *Saturday Night Live* more than three decades ago, Bill Murray has charmed us with unforgettable performances from an eclectic cast of characters that have become ingrained in our cultural vernacular,” said Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “An award-winning writer, actor and comedian, his brilliant wit and infectious spirit continue to inspire our laughter across generations both on and off the screen. His unique brand of humor seems to defy time itself—always remaining relevant and relatable to new audiences—much like our award’s namesake.”

Upon learning he will receive the Mark Twain Prize, Bill Murray commented, “I’m honored by this award and by its timing. I believe Mark Twain has rolled over in his grave so much for so long, that this news won’t disturb his peace.”

Each year the producers of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor cast a wide net for the next recipient. The Prize recognizes people who have had an impact on American society in ways similar to Mark Twain. Input is sought from prior recipients, distinguished members of the comedy community, and letters from the general public. A short list is compiled by the Executive Producers and presented to a group comprised of representatives from the Kennedy Center board of trustees, and Kennedy Center senior management.

As recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, Bill Murray will receive a copy of an 1884 bronze portrait bust of Mark Twain sculpted by Karl Gerhardt (1853–1940). Previous recipients of the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize are 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) and Eddie Murphy (2015). The event has been broadcast nationally every year since the Kennedy Center established the Prize in 1998. The event is created by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and executive producers Bob Kaminsky, Peter Kaminsky, Mark Krantz, and Cappy McGarr.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America’s living memorial to President Kennedy. It is the nation’s busiest performing arts facility and annually hosts more than 2,000 performances for audiences totaling nearly 2 million; Center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts welcome 40 million more. Now in its 45th season, the Center presents performances of music, dance, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education.

ABOUT BILL MURRAY

Actor and comedian Bill Murray was born William J. Murray on September 21, 1950, in Wilmette, Illinois. In an attempt to find direction in his life, he joined his older brother, Brian Doyle-Murray, in the cast of Chicago's Second City improvisational comedy troupe. Murray eventually relocated to New York City, where he took his comedic talents to radio's *National Lampoon Hour* (1973-74) alongside Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner, and John Belushi. In 1975, he was in an Off-Broadway spin-off of the comedy radio show when Howard Cosell recruited him for a show called *Saturday Night Live with Howard Cosell* (1975-1976). A year later, producer Lorne Michaels tapped Murray to replace Chevy Chase on a much bigger sensation, NBC's *Saturday Night Live* (SNL).

Ironically insincere and yet somehow soft-hearted, Murray is the best-known star to emerge from the cast of *Saturday Night Live*. On SNL from 1977-1980, he created the cheesy lounge crooner, Nick, and other lovably smarmy characters. It didn't take long for him to move from the small screen to the big screen, and his first major film role was in the 1979 box office hit *Meatballs*. He then starred in two of the top-grossing comedies of the 1980s: playing a woolly-headed groundskeeper in *Caddyshack* (1980) and a slick-talking investigator in *Ghostbusters* (1984, with fellow SNL alumnus Dan Aykroyd). Murray's comedy hits in the 1990s included *Groundhog Day* (1993) and the Amish bowling story *Kingpin* (1996). He also took more serious roles, playing a mobster in *Mad Dog and Glory* (1993, with Robert DeNiro) and an eccentric businessman in Wes Anderson's *Rushmore* (1998), for which he won Best Supporting Actor from both the New York Film Critics Circle and the National Society of Film Critics. He was nominated for a Best Actor Oscar for his seriocomic role as a jet-lagged movie star in Tokyo in Sofia Coppola's film *Lost in Translation* (2003).

More recently, Murray earned rave reviews for his portrayal of Franklin D. Roosevelt in *Hyde Park on Hudson* (2012) and he also reunited with Anderson for a role in *Moonrise Kingdom* that same year. Murray was also in Anderson's next film, *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), with Jude Law and Ralph Fiennes, as well as *The Monuments Men* (2014). He was nominated for a lead actor Golden Globe® for his role in the comedy *St. Vincent* (2014), co-starring Melissa McCarthy and Naomi Watts. That same year he starred as Jack Kennison in the acclaimed HBO miniseries *Olive Kitteridge*, for which he earned his second Emmy Award. In 2015, Murray was seen in the comedy *Rock the Kasbah* portraying a music manager who starts to handle the career of an Afghani teen. He recently voiced the character of Baloo in the Disney animated film, *The Jungle Book* (2016), and will have a cameo role in Danny McBride's new HBO comedy, *Vice Principals*.

Murray is an avid golfer and a particular fan favorite at the annual AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am.

Capital One® is the presenting sponsor of the
19th annual Kennedy Center *Mark Twain Prize for American Humor*.

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

###

PRESS CONTACT

Kelly Carnes

(202) 416-8441

kmcarnes@kennedy-center.org

EVENT PACKAGES & SPONSORSHIPS

(202) 416-8335

<http://www.kennedycenter.org/>

mtp@kennedy-center.org

PERFORMANCE-ONLY TICKETS

(202) 467-4600, (800) 444-1324

www.kennedy-center.org