

THE KENNEDY CENTER

Press Release

For Immediate Release:

July 20, 2017

UPDATED: October 12, 2017

Al Franken
Jimmy Kimmel
Norm Macdonald
Steve Martin
John Mulaney
Bill Murray
Amy Schumer
Paul Shaffer
Martin Short
Eddie Vedder
Jimmie Walker
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

Kennedy Center celebrates 20 years of the Mark Twain Prize with exhibit by caricaturist Robert Risko and week of comedy programming beginning with Whoopi Goldberg

-more-

(WASHINGTON)—A lineup of leading performers, including Senator Al Franken, Jimmy Kimmel, Norm Macdonald, Steve Martin, John Mulaney, Bill Murray, Amy Schumer, Paul Shaffer, Martin Short, Eddie Vedder, Jimmie Walker, 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 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.

In celebration of this year's 20th anniversary of the Mark Twain Prize, the Kennedy Center will display a sampling of iconic caricatures of past Mark Twain Prize winners that were created by today's most celebrated caricaturist, Robert Risko. The larger-than-life artwork will stand in the Hall of Nations October 4 – 29. Additional Mark Twain Prize 20th Anniversary Celebration programming includes a performance by acclaimed actress, stand-up comedian, and 2001 Mark Twain Prize winner Whoopi Goldberg; The Second City's *When*

Life Gives You Clemens, the lauded improv troupe's tribute to the great American satirist Samuel Clemens (better known as Mark Twain); and Robert Post's *Comedy Theatre for Kids*. Free Millennium Stage performances include the Underground Comedy Stand-Up Showcase and The Cooties. *A complete calendar of Mark Twain Prize 20th Anniversary Celebration events is below.*

The Kennedy Center Celebration of American Humor was instituted as an annual event in October 1998. 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.

MARK TWAIN PRIZE 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EVENTS

Performance Dates	Theater	Program
October 4 – 29	Hall of Nations	Exhibit: <i>The Art of Robert Risko</i>
October 13	Concert Hall	Whoopi Goldberg
October 19 – 20	Family Theater	The Second City's <i>When Life Gives You Clemens</i>
October 21	Millennium Stage/ Family Theater	Underground Comedy's Stand-Up Showcase (FREE)
October 21	Family Theater	Robert Post's <i>Comedy Theatre for Kids</i>
October 22	Millennium Stage/Family Theater	The Cooties (FREE)

TICKET INFORMATION

For ticket information for individual performances, please check [online](#), at the Kennedy Center box office or by calling Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600 or (800) 444-1324 for last minute availability. For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

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](#).

Discover the Kennedy Center on social media



#TwainPrize #KennedyCenter

###

PRESS CONTACT

Michelle Pendoley
(202) 416-8196
mapendoley@kennedy-center.org

EVENT PACKAGES & SPONSORSHIPS

(202) 416-8335
mtp@kennedy-center.org