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The Kennedy Center Announces the

2018 Kennedy Center Spring Gala
“An Evening with Mavis Staples and Special Guests”
Sunday, May 6, 2018 in the Concert Hall

Also Honoring Recipients of the
2018 Kennedy Center Award for the Human Spirit
Gary Sinise, Citizen Artist
Eli and Edythe Broad, Distinguished Philanthropists

Please click here for images.

(WASHINGTON)— Legendary singer and 2016 Kennedy Center Honoree Mavis Staples will headline and curate a special evening for the 2018 Kennedy Center Spring Gala on Sunday, May 6, 2018, in the Concert Hall. An Evening with Mavis Staples and Special Guests will lead guests through her 60-plus year catalog of genre-defying contributions to American music—seminal works that have woven Staples into the very fabric of gospel, soul, folk pop, R&B, Hip Hop, blues, and rock. The evening will include performances by Staples and additional talent to be announced at a later date. The event is chaired by Frances and Craig Lindner.

Since her first recording in 1954 at the age of 13, Chicago-born Mavis Staples has learned from, worked with, and influenced countless legends—from Bob Dylan to Prince—and has
brought her own timeless talent to every performance. From the Delta-inflected gospel sound she helped create in the 1950s with her father Pops and her siblings as The Staple Singers, to pop radio stardom during the Stax era with hits including “I’ll Take You There” and “Respect Yourself,” Staples has embraced her evolution. She has absorbed new sounds and ideas, rising to meet the challenges of longevity, and bringing her message of hope and positivity to new listeners show after show.

**Kennedy Center Human Spirit Award Recipients**

The Gala will also feature the third annual presentation of the **Kennedy Center Award for the Human Spirit**, commemorating the seminal contributions made by President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to cultural life in the United States. The award recognizes recipients who have had an enduring impact on the advancement of arts and culture: the **Distinguished Philanthropist Award** honors a lifetime commitment to and advocacy for the performing arts, recognizing individuals who have had a substantial influence on the broader cultural life of their community and country through both personal commitment and philanthropy; the **Citizen Artist Award** recognizes leaders who present and produce the arts in their communities, and deepen the effect of the arts and arts education in a demonstrated, transformational way at the local, state, or national level.

The 2018 recipients of the Award for the Human Spirit will be **Distinguished Philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad** for their commitment to making the arts accessible to as many people as possible, and **Citizen Artist Gary Sinise** for his work leading and founding the Gary Sinise Foundation, which has many outreach programs dedicated to honoring America’s defenders and their loved ones. Their Arts & Entertainment Outreach supports the “Vets Night” program at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, inviting local veterans to enjoy a dinner and attend a performance free of charge. Veterans Night was created by Sinise in the early 1980s and has become a tradition at Steppenwolf spanning nearly 35 years.

For the third year, artist and founder of Pioneer Works Dustin Yellin has been commissioned to create original works of art that will serve as the physical awards. The artist made a major
exhibition of 12 Psychogeographies at the Kennedy Center in April of 2015, one of which is part of the Kennedy Center’s permanent art collection and currently on display in the Center’s Hall of States.

The Spring Gala’s black-tie evening begins with a cocktail reception on the River Terrace level, followed by an elegant dinner on the Roof Terrace and the Gala performance. The evening concludes with dessert and dancing at the ‘Til Midnight Party for all event sponsors in the Nation’s Gallery. New this year, Spring Gala table buyers will receive access to the July 25 performance of Hamilton. As one of Washington’s leading benefit engagements, the annual Kennedy Center Spring Gala provides critical funding to support the Center’s performances, education programs, and outreach initiatives. To learn more about Spring Gala VIP packages, patrons can visit the Gala webpage, email springgala@kennedy-center.org, or call (202) 416-8338.

Concert-only tickets for the 2018 Spring Gala: An Evening with Mavis Staples and Special Guests start at $49 and will go on sale to Kennedy Center members on March 6, 2018 and to the general public on March 7, 2018. Tickets may be purchased at the Kennedy Center Box Office, online, or by calling Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600; patrons living outside the Washington, D.C. metropolitan calling area may dial toll-free at (800) 444-1324.

The Kennedy Center Spring Gala Premier Sponsor is Boeing, whose contributions play a crucial leadership role in supporting the presentation of the Kennedy Center’s artistic and educational programs throughout the year.

ELI AND EDYTHE BROAD
Eli and Edythe Broad, who came from humble backgrounds and went on to become two of the world’s leading philanthropists, have devoted their lives to giving back to the country that gave them the opportunity to live the American Dream. Growing up in Detroit and attending public schools, Eli and Edythe met in 1953 and married the next year. After graduating cum laude in three years from Michigan State University, Eli became the youngest certified public accountant in the state’s history, a record he held until 2010. Eli started a homebuilding business, KB Home, and soon acquired a small insurance company, later re-named SunAmerica, in 1971. After much success, Eli sold SunAmerica to AIG, and the Broads
began to devote their lives as well as lifetime earnings to philanthropy. Eli and Edythe devoted their giving to improving the human mind, body, and spirit by investing in improving K–12 public schools, advancing scientific and medical research, and expanding public access to the arts. Over the course of their lives, the Broads have invested more than $4 billion in these causes for the simple reason that they believe they have a moral obligation to work to make life better for people.

**GARY SINISE**
For nearly 40 years, Gary Sinise has stood as an advocate of America’s service members. It began in the early 1980s with his support of Vietnam Veterans groups and the creation of Veterans Night, a program offering free dinners and performances to veterans at the Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago. His commitment continued into the 1990s, working on behalf of the Disabled American Veterans organization which he continues to actively support. His portrayal of Lt. Dan Taylor in the landmark film *Forrest Gump* formed an enduring connection with servicemen and women throughout the military community. After several USO handshake tours in 2003, Sinise formed the Lt. Dan Band in early 2004, and began entertaining troops serving at home and abroad. The band now performs close to 30 shows a year for military bases, charities, and fundraisers supporting wounded heroes, Gold Star families, veterans, and troops around the world. In 2011, to expand upon his individual efforts, he established the Gary Sinise Foundation. Its mission is to serve and honor our nation’s defenders, veterans, first responders, their families, and those in need by creating and supporting unique programs that entertain, educate, inspire, strengthen, and build communities.

**ABOUT THE KENNEDY CENTER**
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.

To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit www.kennedy-center.org.

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

TICKETS & INFORMATION
(202) 467-4600; (800) 444-1324
kennedy-center.org