



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

May 23, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. EST

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Will Present
The 21st Annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor
to
JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS**

**Prize Will Be Awarded at the Kennedy Center
At a Gala Performance on October 21, 2018**

Program to Be Broadcast Nationally

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts will present the 21st annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor to Julia Louis-Dreyfus on Sunday, October 21, 2018 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. This year’s ceremony marks the 21st consecutive year that the Kennedy Center’s marquee comedy award will be presented and broadcast nationally. On-sale and ticketing information for this event will be available at a later date, and sponsorship packages for the Mark Twain Prize gala performance are on sale now.

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 community through laughter. The event will be co-chaired by Amra and Damir Fazlic.

The Mark Twain Prize for American Humor recognizes individuals 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.”

Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter praised Louis-Dreyfus for her remarkable career achievements. “Like Mark Twain, Julia has enriched American culture with her iconic, unforgettable, and outright hilarious brand of humor. Over four decades, her wildly original characters and her gift for physical comedy have left us in stitches. Julia is a role model for so many, and we look forward to honoring her on October 21.”

(more)

Commenting on the prize, Louis-Dreyfus said, “Merely to join the list of distinguished recipients of this award would be honor enough, but, as a student of both American history and literature, the fact that Mr. Twain himself will be presenting the award to me in person is particularly gratifying.”

As recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, Julia Louis-Dreyfus 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; rescinded in 2018), Tina Fey (2010), Will Ferrell (2011), Ellen DeGeneres (2012), Carol Burnett (2013), Jay Leno (2014), Eddie Murphy (2015), Bill Murray (2016), and David Letterman (2017). The event has been broadcast nationally every year since the Kennedy Center established the Prize in 1998. The event was created by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Bob Kaminsky, Peter Kaminsky, Mark Krantz, and John Schreiber. The Kennedy Center is grateful to Cappy McGarr for his steadfast support of the *Mark Twain Prize for American Humor* since its inception.

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 47th 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 JULIA LOUIS-DREYFUS

Julia Louis-Dreyfus earned worldwide acclaim for her portrayal of Elaine Benes in the hit NBC series “Seinfeld,” and as Christine Campbell in the CBS hit comedy “The New Adventures of Old Christine.” She currently stars in, and executive produces, the HBO series “Veep,” which will soon begin its seventh season.

Between all shows combined, she has received 11 Emmy awards (six consecutively for “Veep”) with 24 nominations, a Golden Globe award, nine Screen Actors Guild awards which makes her the most decorated actor in the history of the SAG awards, three Television Critics Association awards, five American Comedy Awards, a Peabody Award, and the Charlie Chaplin Britannia Award for Excellence in Comedy. She has broken the record for the most Emmy’s won by a single performer, as well as the most consecutive wins for a single role (“Veep”).

Louis-Dreyfus received critical acclaim for her starring role in Fox Searchlight’s “Enough Said,” written and directed by Nicole Holofcener. Playing opposite the late James Gandolfini, Louis-Dreyfus earned a Golden Globe nomination for the role, making her one of the elite few concurrently nominated for both a film and television role.

Additional television credits include multiple appearances on “Curb Your Enthusiasm;” a recurring role on “The Simpsons;” and a recurring role on “Arrested Development,” among

(more)

many others. Louis-Dreyfus first made her mark on television during a three-year stint (1982–1985) on “Saturday Night Live,” opposite the likes of Billy Crystal, Christopher Guest, and Eddie Murphy. She subsequently hosted the show twice, becoming the first female former cast member to return as host. Feature film credits include Disney’s “Planes;” Pixar’s animated hit “A Bug’s Life;” Woody Allen’s Academy Award–winning “Hannah and Her Sisters” and “Deconstructing Harry;” Rob Reiner’s “North;” and Ivan Reitman’s “Fathers’ Day.”

A steadfast defender of the environment, Louis-Dreyfus serves on the leadership council for the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC), the Board of Directors of Heal the Bay, and the Honorary Board of Heal the Ocean.

She studied theater at Northwestern University, where she was a member of *The Practical Theater Company*, and Chicago’s famed *Second City* comedy troupe. She currently resides in Los Angeles with her husband, Brad Hall, and their two sons, Charlie and Henry.

Capital One® is the Presenting Sponsor of the
21st 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