



Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Tuesday, May 7, 2019 at Noon EST  
For headshot, please click [here](#).

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
Will Present  
The 22nd Annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor  
to  
DAVE CHAPPELLE**

**Prize Will Be Awarded at the Kennedy Center  
At a Gala Performance on October 27, 2019**

**Program to Be Broadcast Nationally on PBS Stations January 6, 2020 at 9 p.m.**

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts will present the 22nd annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor to Dave Chappelle on Sunday, October 27, 2019 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. The program will be broadcast on PBS stations on January 6, 2020. *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 three-year, \$3 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 Tamia and Grant Hill.

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.

Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter reflected, “Dave is the embodiment of Mark Twain’s observation that ‘against the assault of humor, nothing can stand.’ For three decades, Dave has challenged us to see hot-button issues from his entirely original yet relatable perspective. Dave is a hometown hero here in Washington, D.C., where he grew up. We’re so looking forward to welcoming him back home.”

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As recipient of the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, Chappelle 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), David Letterman (2017), and Julia Louis-Dreyfus (2018).

The 22nd annual Mark Twain Prize for American Humor is under the direction of the creative team from Done + Dusted, the Kennedy Center’s producing partner for the Mark Twain Prize since 2018. This year’s ceremony marks the 22nd consecutive year that the Kennedy Center’s marquee comedy award will be broadcast nationally on PBS (January 6, 2020 at 9 p.m. ET; check local listings).

“As America’s largest stage for the arts, PBS is proud to continue our longstanding tradition of broadcasting The Mark Twain Prize to households across the country,” said Paula Kerger, PBS President and CEO. “We look forward to celebrating Dave Chappelle and his indelible contributions to American humor.”

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 48th 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 DAVE CHAPPELLE**

Dave Chappelle is an internationally recognized stand-up comedian and actor whose trademark wit and sharp, irreverent social commentary explores race, popular culture, sex, drugs, politics, and fame. Arguably the most-touring comic on the circuit, Chappelle has performed more than 1,600 concerts worldwide in the past four years, selling out shows within minutes of their announcements.

Dave Chappelle could always make people laugh. Once he realized the power of his natural talent, he set some ambitious goals for his art. As a 14-year-old student at Washington, D.C.’s Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Chappelle crafted his stand-up comedy act out of the realities of his life growing up Black in the nation’s capital.

Chappelle was the mastermind behind the 2003 sketch comedy hit, *The Chappelle Show*—one of the highest rated programs on Comedy Central. The show earned three Emmy® nominations and went on to become the best-selling TV show in DVD history. Feature film credits include Bradley Cooper’s award-winning remake of *A Star is Born*, Spike Lee’s *Chi-Raq*, *Undercover Brother*, *Screwed*, *Blue Streak*, *200 Cigarettes*, *You’ve Got Mail*, *Woo*, *Half Baked*, *The Real Blonde*, *Con Air*, *Joe’s Apartment*, *The Nutty Professor*, *Getting In*, *Undercover Blues*, and *Robin Hood: Men in Tights*. In 2000, Chappelle recorded his first hour-long

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special in Washington, D.C. for HBO, *Dave Chappelle: Killin' Them Softly*. Chappelle's second comedy special, *Dave Chappelle: For What It's Worth*, was filmed in San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium and aired on Showtime in 2004.

The past few years have been banner for Chappelle. In 2017, he received his first Emmy Award® for his debut episode on *Saturday Night Live*. His memorable, panoramic monologue was the comic relief the country needed following the 2016 Presidential election that reflected our nation's deep racial divide. Chappelle celebrated his 30th year in comedy by releasing not one, but four highly anticipated stand-up specials on Netflix. The first two specials, *The Age of Spin* and *Deep in the Heart of Texas*, were released in March 2017. That summer, Chappelle took up residency at New York's Radio City Music Hall, selling more than 90,000 tickets and performing 16 shows that included 58 guests representing the biggest names in comedy and music. He capped off the year by releasing the remaining two specials, *Equanimity* and *The Bird Revelations* on New Year's Eve. All four specials were delivered on vinyl as double-feature albums and received Grammy Awards® for Best Comedy Album in 2018 and 2019. Pollstar awarded Chappelle with Comedy Tour of The Year in 2014 and 2018 and he captured his second Emmy® for Outstanding Variety Special with *Equanimity* in 2018.

Capital One® is the Presenting Sponsor of the  
22nd 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](#).

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