



# The Kennedy Center Honors

Press Release

**FOR RELEASE:**

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## The Kennedy Center Announces 46th Class of Honorees

# BILLY CRYSTAL, RENÉE FLEMING, BARRY GIBB, QUEEN LATIFAH, AND DIONNE WARWICK



## AMERICA TO CELEBRATE HONOREES' LIFETIME ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENTS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2023

*Hosted by Gloria Estefan*

### Gala program to mark 50th anniversary of hip hop

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced the selection of five Honorees who will receive the 46th Kennedy Center Honors for lifetime artistic achievements. Recipients to be honored at the annual national celebration of the arts in Washington, D.C. this December are: actor and comedian **Billy Crystal**; acclaimed soprano **Renée Fleming**; British singer-songwriter producer, and member of the Bee Gees, **Barry Gibb**; rapper, singer, and actress **Queen Latifah**; and singer **Dionne Warwick**. Former Kennedy Center Honoree (2017) **Gloria Estefan** returns as host, marking her third time hosting the special. Done+Dusted are Executive Producers of the 46th annual Kennedy Center Honors. The 46th annual Kennedy Center Honors will air on the CBS Television Network for the 46th year and stream on Paramount+\*.

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“The Kennedy Center Honors recognizes artists who have made profound contributions to the cultural life of our nation,” stated Kennedy Center Chairman David M. Rubenstein. “A true comedic icon and multi-talented artist since the 1980s who has kept millions laughing around the world, **Billy Crystal** is responsible for some of the most memorable stand-up moments and hilarious Hollywood scenes in the last half-century; **Barry Gibb**, along with his late brothers Robin and Maurice, set the music world on fire in the ‘60s and later defined the modern dance era with their trademark falsetto sound and groove style, becoming a pop superstar group for the ages; fittingly known as ‘America’s soprano,’ the beloved opera star **Renée Fleming** has captivated audiences worldwide with her luminous voice, incomparable artistry, and a knack for bringing opera into the mainstream for more than four decades; as the ‘First Lady of Hip Hop,’ **Queen Latifah** shaped and innovated the art form in its earliest days, representing black women everywhere and using the idiom to become a powerful voice for change; and soulful songstress **Dionne Warwick** has blazed a trail with her signature voice, scintillating presence, and trove of hits that has become a soundtrack of inspiration for generations of artists and audiences.”

“This year’s slate represents an extraordinary mix of individuals who have redefined their art forms and demonstrated remarkable tenacity and authenticity in becoming an original. Each of them has explored new terrain, stretched artistic boundaries, and most importantly, committed to sharing their gifts with the world,” said Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “This year we pay special tribute to the 50th anniversary of hip hop, a uniquely American culture whose constant evolution is one of enduring relevance and impact, reflecting our society as it has grown into an international phenomenon. Hip hop has been an important, thriving art form here at the Center for a number of years; what a privilege it is to bestow an Honors to the First Lady of Hip Hop who has inspired us along the way.”

Throughout its 45-year history, the annual Honors Gala has become the highlight of the Washington cultural and society calendar. On **Sunday, December 3**, in a star-studded celebration on the Kennedy Center Opera House stage, the 46th class of Kennedy Center Honorees will be saluted by today’s leading performers from New York, Hollywood, and the arts capitals of the world. Seated in the Box Tier of the iconic Kennedy Center Opera House, the Honorees will accept the recognition and gratitude of their peers through performances and tributes. The 46th Kennedy Center Honors Gala concludes with a dinner in the Grand Foyer.

The Kennedy Center Honors recognizes and celebrates individuals whose unique contributions have shaped the way we see ourselves, each other, and our world. Recipients have each had an impact on the rich tapestry of American life and culture through the performing arts. Whether in music, dance, theater, opera, motion pictures, or television, each Kennedy Center Honoree has a unique place in the national consciousness and their influence has inspired audiences from all walks of life.

Done+Dusted, a production company with a reputation for creating and capturing the moments that make headlines and shape culture, returns as Executive Producers for a second year. The 46th annual Kennedy Center Honors will be produced by Done+Dusted in association with ROK Productions, represented by Elizabeth Kelly, who will executive produce alongside David Jammy. The show will be directed by Alex Rudzinski.

Done+Dusted (D+D) is a multi-award-winning global entertainment group with offices in Los Angeles, London, and Abu Dhabi. The preeminent producer of live television events in the world, D+D has produced the previous four Mark Twain Prize shows at the Kennedy Center, and has reimaged and reinvigorated the country’s top

recognition for humor, resulting in an Emmy®-nominated tent-pole on the Kennedy Center calendar. Whether it is producing the most-watched television event in history (the *London Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies*), the Apple TV+ world ratings blockbuster *Mariah Carey's Magical Christmas Special*, the ABC hit series of *Disney Singalongs*, multiple network “roadblocks” including *Stand Up To Cancer* and *Graduate Together*, YouTube Originals’ most watched live event ever, *Dear Class of 2020*, the last five Emmy Awards® (including two during the pandemic), or the ABC ratings sensation *Little Mermaid Live*, D+D’s work bears the distinct badge of quality, spectacle, and storytelling that makes it, unequivocally, “Done+Dusted.”

CBS is the Exclusive Sponsor of the Kennedy Center Honors.

Boeing is the Exclusive Underwriter of the Kennedy Center Honors Gala.

Delta Air Lines is the Official Airline of the Kennedy Center Honors.

The Kennedy Center Honors Founding Producer is George Stevens, Jr.

Each year, Honorees are confirmed by the Executive Committee of the Center’s Board of Trustees. The Honors are not designated by art form or category of artistic achievement; over the years, the selection process has produced balance among the various arts and artistic disciplines.

The Honoree selection process includes solicitation of recommendations from former Honorees, the artistic community, the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, and the general public. This year’s selected Honorees were chosen based on the recommendation of the Center’s Special Honors Advisory Committee, which is chaired by David Bohnett and includes past Honors recipients and distinguished artists Julie Andrews, Gloria Estefan, Herbie Hancock, Judith Jamison, Lionel Richie, and John Williams, as well as David M. Rubenstein, Deborah F. Rutter, Bryan Lourd, Cappy McGarr, Shonda Rhimes, and Daryl Roth. These individuals play a critical role in the evaluation and selection process, and the Kennedy Center is indebted to them for their involvement.

\*Paramount+ Premium subscribers will have access to stream live via the live feed of their local CBS affiliate on the service, as well as on demand. Essential-tier subscribers will not have the option to stream live, but will have access to on-demand the day after the special airs.

### **46TH KENNEDY CENTER HONOREE STATEMENTS**

“I am overwhelmed to be part of this fantastic group of artists. I started performing when I was five years old, making my parents and family laugh. Those laughs have carried me my entire life and career. I so wish they could be at the Kennedy Center for this glorious occasion. It has been a thrilling lifetime of performing in so many different arenas and my heart is full of gratitude to the Kennedy Center, my wife Janice, my children and grandchildren, our family and friends, and all the amazing people I’ve had the pleasure to work with. And finally, of course, my wonderful fans.” –**Billy Crystal**

“How thrilling to join the company of legendary artists who have received this recognition. This award demonstrates the richness and range of the performing arts in our country, and the Kennedy Center’s celebration is a powerful expression of our culture. Music has defined the arc of my life, giving voice to an introverted child, taking me to places I never dreamed of visiting and people I never dreamed of meeting. Most of all, it has shown me the enormous potential for healing and joy that the arts offer everyone. Having looked with awe at the Honorees in that box at the Kennedy Center Opera House, I’m incredibly grateful to think I will be among them.” –**Renée Fleming**

“This is a wonderful honor! It’s hard to be proud and humble at the same time. It is one of the most special moments in my life and something that I will always cherish. When I think back over 50 years to our beginnings in Redcliffe, Queensland, I could never have expected this to happen in my life. Receiving the Kennedy Center Honors is something that everyone hopes might happen one day. I’ve often thought about but never dreamed it could come true. Thank you to all those who made this dream a reality. I wish my brothers were here so that they could’ve shared in this special moment.” –**Barry Gibb**

“I’m humbled to be included in this incredible list of artists honored by the Kennedy Center. When we started on this journey decades ago, we were often told, ‘No’. No, you won’t be able to leave New Jersey. No, if you rap you can’t sing. No, singers can’t become actresses. No, actors can’t also produce. To now be recognized amongst so many multi-hyphenates feels unbelievable, not for just me and my team, but for our community. The work the Kennedy Center does is immeasurable so I’m beyond grateful for this recognition.” –**Queen Latifah**

“I’m exceptionally happy to be honored by the Kennedy Center. It’s very exciting to be recognized for my contributions to the music industry for the past 60 years.” –**Dionne Warwick**

## **ABOUT THE 46TH KENNEDY CENTER HONOREES**

### **Billy Crystal (actor, comedian, filmmaker)**

Tony® and Emmy Award®–winning comedian, actor, producer, writer, and director Billy Crystal is known around the world as the star of such feature films as *When Harry Met Sally...*, *City Slickers*, and *Analyze This*; as a cast member of NBC’s *Saturday Night Live*, which earned him his first Emmy® nomination; and as the acclaimed nine-time host of the Academy Awards®. Crystal has hosted the Grammy Awards® three times and earned five Emmys® for his work as host, writer, and producer on both shows. Crystal won his sixth Emmy® for the HBO Comedy Special *Billy Crystal: Midnight Train to Moscow*. His latest film work includes the 2020 friendship comedy *Standing Up, Falling Down* opposite Ben Schwartz and 2021’s *Here Today* in which Crystal directed, produced, and starred opposite Tiffany Haddish.

Crystal, alongside Robin Williams and Whoopi Goldberg, served as co-host of Comic Relief’s televised fundraising events on HBO. Through specials broadcast between 1986 and 2008, Comic Relief raised \$75 million to help supply medical aid to the homeless. He was the 2007 recipient of the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor and is a *New York Times* best-selling author of five books. In 2004, Crystal made his Broadway debut with the original production of his one-man show *700 Sundays*, for which he won a Tony Award®. The Broadway production was released as an HBO special, garnering four Emmy nominations. In 2022, Crystal returned to Broadway with *Mr. Saturday Night*, a musical adaptation of the 1992 classic film *Mr. Saturday Night*. The show received rave reviews along with five Tony® nominations including Best Musical; Best Leading Actor in a Musical for Crystal; and Best Book of a Musical which was written by Crystal, Lowell Ganz, and Babaloo Mandel; and one Grammy® nomination for Best Musical Theatre Album which featured eight songs sung by Crystal.

Crystal lives in Los Angeles and New York with Janice, his wife of 53 years. They have two daughters, Jennifer and Lindsay, and four grandchildren, Ella, Dylan, Hudson, and Griffin.

***Recent Kennedy Center history:*** Billy Crystal received the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in 2007.

### **Renée Fleming (soprano)**

Renée Fleming is one of the most highly acclaimed singers of our time, performing on the stages of the world's great opera houses and concert halls. Honored with five Grammy® Awards and the U.S. National Medal of Arts, she has sung for momentous occasions from the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the Diamond Jubilee Concert for Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace. In 2014, she brought her voice to a vast new audience when she became the first classical artist ever to sing the National Anthem at the Super Bowl. In May, Fleming was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health for the World Health Organization.

Fleming's current concert calendar includes appearances in Vienna, Amsterdam, Milan, Los Angeles, Chicago, and at Carnegie Hall. In November, she starred in the world premiere staging of *The Hours*, a new opera based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and award-winning film, at the Metropolitan Opera. In March, she appeared as Pat Nixon in a new production of *Nixon in China* at the Opéra de Paris.

Fleming's recording *Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene*, won the 2023 Grammy Award® for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album. Known as a genre-spanning musician, and for bringing new audiences to classical music and opera, she has recorded everything from complete operas and song recitals to indie rock and jazz. She has sung not only with Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli, but also with Elton John, Paul Simon, Sting, Josh Groban, and Joan Baez. She earned a Tony Award® nomination for her performance in *Carousel* on Broadway, and her voice is featured in two Best Picture Oscar®-winning films.

In recent years, Fleming has become a leading advocate for research at the intersection of arts, health, and neuroscience. She launched the first ongoing collaboration between the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Institutes of Health. She has presented her program *Music and the Mind* in more than 50 cities around the world.

Fleming's other awards include the 2023 Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum, the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal, and honorary doctorates from eight leading universities.

***Recent Kennedy Center history:*** *Renée Fleming has had a long-standing collaborative relationship with the Kennedy Center, including more than 25 performances in various capacities. Highlights include creating and hosting the 2013 American Voices Festival, curating Renée Fleming VOICES series since 2016, and launching a new Sound Health initiative with the Center and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in 2017. Joined by Vanessa Williams, she launched the Kennedy Center's "On Stage at the Opera House" series in September 2020 marking one of the first live streamed performances during the COVID-19 shutdown. Additionally, Fleming was appointed Artistic Advisor -at-Large for the Center in 2016. Most recently, she collaborated with award-winning children's book author and illustrator Mo Willems on a program to introduce young audiences to opera.*

### **Barry Gibb (singer, songwriter, record producer)**

Barry Gibb rates among the most prolific, influential, and acclaimed musicians ever to have lived. Guinness World Records and Billboard list him alongside only Paul McCartney as one of the two most successful popular songwriters of all time. As a member of the Bee Gees with his brothers Robin and Maurice, the trio sold over 220 million records, while writing 21 different songs to top the U.S. or U.K. charts.

Born on the Isle of Man in the U.K. in 1946, Gibb is a nine-time Grammy Award® winner and an inductee into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Songwriters Hall Of Fame. When Wayne Newton covered the 18-year-old Gibb's *They'll Never Know* in 1964, he became the first of hundreds of American artists to record Gibb-written songs—everyone from Al Green, the Foo Fighters, Snoop Dogg, Elvis Presley, and Destiny's Child.

The Bee Gees exploded internationally in 1967 with early classics like “To Love Somebody,” “Massachusetts,” and “Words.” What could have qualified as an entire career turned out to be merely a warmup for Gibb and his brothers’ culture-defining, empirical phase a decade later. With late ‘70s tracks like “Stayin’ Alive,” “Night Fever,” and “How Deep Is Your Love,” the Bee Gees combined harmony and melody with the rarest of abilities to move the heart as well as the feet.

Gibb was also unafraid to give away songs most performers wouldn’t dare part with, be it Frankie Valli’s “Grease” or younger brother Andy’s “I Just Want To Be Your Everything.” Both were solo compositions, both became U.S. number one’s. The hits continued in the ‘80s and ‘90s, as well as entire albums of platinum-coated, Gibb-crafted songs for the likes of Barbra Streisand (“Woman In Love”), Dionne Warwick (“Heartbreaker”), Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton (“Islands In The Stream”), and Diana Ross (“Chain Reaction”).

From equalling the Beatles’ six consecutive U.S. number one singles, to being the only songwriters to have five songs simultaneously in the U.S. top 10, the music of Sir Barry Gibb and his brothers is—and forever will be—etched into the very fabric of American life.

*Recent Kennedy Center history: This is Barry Gibb’s first association with the Kennedy Center.*

### **Queen Latifah (rapper, singer, and actress)**

Queen Latifah is a Grammy® and Emmy Award®–winning and Oscar®-nominated musician, actress, producer, label president, author, and entrepreneur. She has earned six Grammy Award® nominations, as well as a Grammy Award® for Best Solo Rap Performance in 1994. In 2004, she was nominated for Best Female Rap Solo Performance for “Go Head.” In 2005, she was nominated for Best Jazz Vocal Album for *The Dana Owens Album*, and in 2008, she was nominated for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album for *Trav’lin Light*.

Her previous film credits include *Jungle Fever*, *Set It Off*, *Chicago*, *Bringing Down the House*, *Beauty Shop*, *The Last Holiday*, *Life Support*, *Bessie*, *Girls Trip*, and *End of the Road*. Her television credits include *Living Single* and *Star*. Latifah starred in the live television adaptations of *The Wiz Live!* for NBC and *The Little Mermaid Live!* for ABC. Latifah can currently be seen in the hit CBS series *The Equalizer*, for which she is also an executive producer.

*Recent Kennedy Center history: Queen Latifah performed most recently at the Kennedy Center for a Bridge Concert series program in 2019. Additionally, she was among the guest cast for three prior Kennedy Center Honorees, a tribute to Tina Turner (2005), Barbra Streisand (2008), and LL Cool J (2017).*

### **Dionne Warwick (singer)**

Lifetime Grammy® music legend, Dionne Warwick continues to regale audiences internationally to this day. From the early 1960s on, her iconic sound set the bar in American pop music by earning more than 60 charted hit songs and selling over 100 million records. She has done more than entertain the world; as a humanitarian, she has advocated for global well-being through such efforts as AIDS awareness.

After teaming with renowned songwriters Burt Bacharach and Hal David, her first major release in 1962, “Don’t Make Me Over,” kicked off 18 more consecutive Top 100 singles. By the 1970s Warwick made the top of the pop charts with “Then Came You,” a million-selling duet with The Spinners in 1974. After a label switch to Arista Records, she entered her third decade of hit-making with a Platinum-selling album, *Dionne*, produced by Barry Manilow with its back-to-back hits “I’ll Never Love This Way Again” and “Déjà Vu.”

In using music to support her activism, Warwick performed in the all-star charity single, “We Are the World.” She also made recording history with Gladys Knight, Elton John, and Stevie Wonder with “That’s What Friends

Are For,” a number one hit from 1985 and the first recording dedicated to raising awareness for AIDS.

Twenty-plus years into the new century, Warwick continues to blaze the trail as the crowned Queen Of Twitter thanks to her constant communication on social media. She also made a surprise appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, which has been running “The Dionne Warwick Talk Show” skit for a few seasons. An upcoming Gospel album is in the works which features duets with Dolly Parton (“Peace Like A River”) and son/manager/producer Damon Elliott (“I Kneel”).

**Recent Kennedy Center history:** *Dionne Warwick has made cast appearances at two prior Kennedy Center Honors, paying tribute to Lena Horne (1984) and Elizabeth Taylor (2002). Beyond Honors, Warwick has performed five times at the Kennedy Center since 1984, including as soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra Pops in 1998.*

## **ABOUT THE HOST**

International superstar Gloria Estefan is a Grammy Award®-winning singer, actress, songwriter, a two-time *New York Times* bestselling author, philanthropist, and humanitarian. She is considered one of the world’s most recognizable performers and the most successful Latin crossover artist in music history, per *Billboard Magazine*. Having sold over 100 million records worldwide, Estefan has garnered eight Grammy Awards® and an Oscar nomination. She has received an American Music Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Gershwin Prize for Popular Song, and was inducted into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame. In 2015, President Obama honored Emilio and Gloria Estefan with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation’s highest civilian honor. In 2017, Estefan was the first Cuban-American singer-songwriter to receive a Kennedy Center Honors. *ON YOUR FEET!* is the Broadway musical based on the lives and music of the Estefans, receiving rave reviews and nominations for Tony Awards®, among others.

She is the founder of the Gloria Estefan Foundation whose mission is to support charitable programs for disadvantaged children and empower young people through education and opportunity. In 2020, her Grammy®-winning album, *Brazil305*, topped the charts worldwide while she served as one of three hosts for her Emmy®-winning Facebook Watch series, *Red Table Talk: The Estefans*. In 2021, she voiced the character of Marta in the critically-acclaimed animated film, *Vivo*. In 2022, Estefan starred in *Father of the Bride* opposite Andy Garcia on HBOMAX, receiving the biggest audience for a streaming-only film and soaring to the No. 1 spot. She also released the *Estefan Family Christmas* album featuring Estefan alongside her daughter Emily and grandson Sasha. It was one of the first albums of its kind to combine three generations. This year, she is the first Latina in history to be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, recognizing her for her iconic songs that have enriched and transformed music and listeners all over the world.

## **Kennedy Center Honors Ticket Information:**

For ticket inquiries, please visit [www.kennedy-center.org/honorsinfo](http://www.kennedy-center.org/honorsinfo).

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