The Kennedy Center Announces Star-Studded Talent Line-up for 2016 Kennedy Center Spring Gala “How Sweet It Is: A Tribute to Marvin Gaye”

Host Whoopi Goldberg and Singers Michael Bublé, Andra Day, Ledisi, and Jussie Smollett

Sunday, June 5, 2016 in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall

(WASHINGTON)—In one of D.C.’s social events of the year, the Kennedy Center pays tribute to America’s immortal Motown hit-maker, the late singer Marvin Gaye, at the 2016 Kennedy Center Spring Gala on Sunday, June 5, 2016 in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall. The evening’s program celebrates Gaye’s enigmatic and innovative contributions to the Motown sound during the peak of his career in the 1970s and 1980s, and his musical influence that spans generations. Hosted by actress, comedian, and television host Whoopi Goldberg, the gala performance is headlined by multi-Grammy® Award-winning artist Michael Bublé, and features a talented, all-star cast including Andra Day, Ledisi, and Jussie Smollett, star of the FOX hit show, Empire.

From “How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved By You)” to “I Heard It Through the Grapevine,” “What’s Going On” to “Sexual Healing,” Gaye’s classic R&B voice produced a wide range of hits—from soul standards to his late-career thematic music that stood as social commentary about the state of the world (the album What’s Going On). Upon his posthumous induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987, his incomparable vocals were described by the Hall of Fame as “edged with grit yet tempered with sweetness.” The co-chairs of the 2016 Spring Gala are Mr. Dale LeFebvre and Mr. and Mrs. Mark D. Ein.
In March, the Kennedy Center announced the establishment of a new award, the Kennedy Center Award for the Human Spirit, a national recognition to be presented annually to two individuals who have had an enduring impact on the advancement of the arts and culture. The awards are bestowed to commemorate the seminal contributions of both President John F. Kennedy and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy to the integration of arts in America. The inaugural recipients—philanthropist Wallis Annenberg (Distinguished Philanthropist Award) and Chicago-based conceptual artist Theaster Gates (Citizen Artist Award)—will be honored and presented their awards on stage at this year’s Spring Gala. Artist and founder of Pioneer Works in Red Hook, Brooklyn, Dustin Yellin has been commissioned to create an original work of art that will serve as the physical award. The artist made a major exhibition of 12 Psychogeographies at the Kennedy Center in April of 2015, one of which is permanently displayed in the Center’s Hall of States.

The Spring Gala’s black-tie evening begins with a reception on the River Terrace at 5 p.m. followed by an elegant dinner on the Roof Terrace at 6 p.m. The Gala performance begins at 8 p.m. in the Concert Hall and the evening concludes with a private, special recognition reception for patrons supporting the Gala at the Platinum and Gold levels. 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 inquire about Spring Gala VIP packages, patrons may email springgala@kennedy-center.org or call (202) 416-8338 for additional information.

Concert-only tickets for the 2016 Spring Gala “How Sweet It Is: A Tribute to Marvin Gaye” start at $45 and 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.

Whoopi Goldberg, host
In 2002, Whoopi Goldberg became one of a very elite group of artists who have won the Grammy® (Whoopi Goldberg, 1985), the Academy Award (Ghost, 1991), the Golden Globe (The Color Purple, 1985 and Ghost, 1991), the Emmy (as host of AMC’s Beyond Tara: The Extraordinary Life of Hattie McDaniel, 2002 and a Daytime Emmy for The View in 2009), and a Tony® (Producer of Thoroughly
Modern Millie, 2002). She is equally well-known for her humanitarian efforts on behalf of children, the homeless, human rights, education, substance abuse, and the battle against AIDS, as well as many other causes and charities. Among her many charitable activities, Goldberg is a Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations.

She has appeared in many films including Jumpin’ Jack Flash, Sister Act, Corrina, Corrina, Boys on the Side, Eddie, The Associate, How Stella Got Her Groove Back, Girl, Interrupted, and Rat Race. She has voiced characters in such animated features as The Lion King, Racing Stripes, Doogal, and Everyone’s Hero. She was part of the Tyler Perry’s all-star film adaptation of For Colored Girls..., a Lifetime Original Movie, A Day Late and A Dollar Short, which she also executive produced, as well as Paramount/Nickelodeon Movies’ Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and the upcoming feature film Big Stone Gap. On television she has appeared on Star Trek: The Next Generation, hosted her own syndicated late-night talk show, starred in the NBC sitcom Whoopee, which she executive produced, as well as the television movies, It’s A Very Muppet Christmas Movie and Showtime’s Good Fences, which she co-produced with co-star Danny Glover.

Michael Bublé
A singer, songwriter, and brilliant entertainer, Michael Bublé’s rich baritone voice, engaging humor, and ability to command a stage has made him one of the most sought-after performers in the world. A passion for the standards nurtured by his maternal grandfather set Bublé on an unprecedented musical course. With the release of his 2003 self-titled debut CD, he established himself not only as an interpreter of the American songbook but also as a showman. The album went Top 10 in Canada, the United Kingdom, and South Africa, and reached the #1 slot in Australia. In the U.S., the album obtained Gold status, and in Canada it would bring Bublé his first Juno Award for “Best New Artist.”

Bublé’s sophomore album, This Time (2005), would, however, be the game-changer. Containing his first breakthrough single, the Bublé-penned “Home,” the CD reached #1 in Canada, Italy, and Japan, and was Top 10 in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Norway, Austria, and Sweden. It spent 104 weeks on Billboard’s Top Jazz chart including a record 78 weeks in the #1 spot. In 2006, Bublé cleaned up with four Juno Awards and received two Grammy® nominations. For the next two years, the Canadian-born singer would circle the globe eight times, visiting and performing in 40 countries.

His success continued in 2007 with the release of Call Me Irresponsible, which debuted at #2 on the U.S. Billboard charts and quickly took the top spot the next week. After reaching #1 in seven countries, the recording brought Bublé his first Grammy® for Best Traditional Pop Vocal Album and sold over 5 million copies worldwide. His fourth CD, Crazy Love (2009), became his fastest-selling album after debuting #2 on Billboard and hitting #1 in both Canada and Australia. To date he has won four Grammy® Awards, 11 Juno Awards, a Gemini for Best Performance or Host in a Variety Program, and seven Smooth Jazz Awards.

Andra Day
Andra Day uses her songwriting and voice as vessels to freedom and redemption. The lyrics on her debut album Cheers to the Fall highlight the lessons learned through trial and error while rising to the occasion in the wake of those setbacks. For this woman with a throwback voice in a modern era, it’s her truth that may set you free. As a kid growing up in San Diego, she sang in the church choir and studied dance, theater, and music at the School of Creative and Performing Arts. By 16 years old, Day knew she wanted to sing professionally. Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Etta James, Lauryn Hill, and
Janis Joplin were the women whose voices spoke to her and to Day’s own raspy, full-bodied alto as they poured their very being into records.

The chanteuse has since gone on to bless audiences with show-stealing performances at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival, 2015 BET Awards, Cannes, ESSENCE Music Festival, McDonalds 365 Black Awards, the Closing Ceremonies of the 2016 Special Olympics, Good Morning America, Live with Jimmy Kimmel, Live with Kelly & Michael, Wendy Williams, the 89th Annual Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade, CNN Heroes: An All-Star Tribute, and more. She has performed around the world alongside artists like Common, Erykah Badu, Mary J. Blige, and Patti Labelle, and earned the praise of artists including Alicia Keys, Ryan Tedder, Jennifer Hudson, Aloe Blacc, diehard music fan Ellen DeGeneres, and famed director Spike Lee who directed Cheers to the Fall’s first video, “Forever Mine.” With its universal and uplifting message, her current single and the album’s crown jewel, “Rise Up,” continues to resonate with listeners from all walks of life. In the fall, Day appeared on tour with Lenny Kravitz for her first national tour run, completed her first sold-out headline tour, and provided the end title track for the climber drama, Meru.

Ledisi

Since she first came onto the R&B scene in 2000, Ledisi has been wowing fans and earning critical acclaim. In 2007, she caught the attention of Verve Music Group and recorded her third album, Lost and Found. The album earned her two Grammy® Award nominations, including “Best New Artist.” She continues to be acknowledged by her peers, receiving seven additional Grammy® nominations to date. Ledisi has performed at the White House for the President and Mrs. Obama no fewer than nine times, earning her a place in the pantheon of the best soul singers of her generation. She is much more than a singer – she is an advocate for the arts, an educator, entrepreneur, philanthropist, songwriter, producer, and innovator. Lauded by such music greats as Prince, Patti LaBelle, Bill Withers, Smokey Robinson, and Stevie Wonder, Ledisi is a “singer’s singer.” She proudly calls herself an R&B artist, but continues to step outside the genre-defining boxes set forth by the music industry. She has performed with country legend Vince Gill and blues icon Keb’ Mo’. She has also sung jazz with the best and recorded with the Count Basie Orchestra. Most recently she appeared as a special guest at the sold-out Soulful Symphony 15th Anniversary Concert at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore, where she performed a tribute to the great Nina Simone.

In 2014, Ledisi released her fifth studio album, The Truth, which spawned three singles: “I Blame You,” “Rock with You,” and Grammy®-nominated “Like This.” She also headlined two national sold-out tours and appeared onstage alongside Kelly Clarkson and Jill Scott on national television shows including Good Morning America, Late Night with Jimmy Fallon, and VH1’s Divas Live.

Jussie Smollett

Columbia Recording Artist Jussie Smollett stars as Jamal Lyon on the series Empire from producers Lee Daniels and Danny Strong. His role allows him to blend his acting, singing, and songwriting skills in this high-octane family drama, which is a historic hit on FOX. He recently guest starred as Josey in the new WGN thriller Underground, which stars his sister Jurnee Smollett-Bell. Smollett received the Outstanding New Artist and awards for Outstanding Song “You’re So Beautiful” which he co-wrote, and Outstanding Collaboration with Estelle “Conqueror” at the 2016 NAACP Image Awards. In 2015, it was announced that Smollett was named the new ambassador for Pepsi. Feature film credits include The Mighty Ducks, Rob Reiner’s North, and Alex Haley’s Queen. He also appeared in the telefilm A
Little Piece of Heaven, and went on to star with his five real-life siblings in the ABC comedy series On Our Own.

He guest starred on Revenge and The Mindy Project, and portrayed British racecar driver Tariq Hamilton in the independent film Born to Race: Fast Track. In the 2012 film, The Skinny, Smollett received raves for his portrayal as a medical student hosting his college friends for a wild weekend in New York City. On the music front, the singer/songwriter has been dubbed “…an urban Adam Levine brewed in a cup of MJ.” He is currently recording his own album for Columbia Records.

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**TICKETS & INFORMATION**

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