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**FORD'S THEATRE SOCIETY HONORS
PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S LEGACY
AT ANNUAL GALA**

**GEN. COLIN L. POWELL AND MRS. ALMA J. POWELL
AND MARK RUSSELL RECEIVE THE LINCOLN MEDAL**

**GALA PERFORMANCES BY
HOST LARRY GATLIN AND THE GATLIN BROTHERS,
SIERRA HULL AND JUSTIN MOSES, AND THE WALLS GROUP**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Ford's Theatre Society celebrated the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln at its Annual Gala on Sunday evening, June 2, 2019, at Ford's Theatre (511 10th Street NW). For more than 40 years, the Society has hosted this bipartisan event, which provides crucial support to the non-profit's theatrical and educational programs.

"Our annual gala is a celebration of Lincoln, his legacy and his love of the performing arts," said Paul R. Tetreault, director of Ford's Theatre Society. "For more than 50 years, Ford's Theatre has been a non-partisan gathering place where people with disparate points of view can come together and find common ground. The Annual Gala has traditionally been attended by representatives throughout the various branches of government and by each sitting president since Jimmy Carter. The recognition of our national leaders and the enduring support of our generous donors enable us to share the story of Lincoln's legacy with nearly 750,000 on-site visitors a year and many more around the world online."

The gala performance was attended by President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump and numerous dignitaries including: Senators Roy Blunt, John Cornyn, Deb Fischer, Ed Markey, Rand Paul, Jim Risch; House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy; Representatives Betty McCollum and Debbie Dingell; Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross; Secretary of Labor R. Alexander Acosta; and Kuwaiti Ambassador Shaikh Salem Adullah Al-Jaber.

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of the Lincoln Medal to **General Colin L. Powell and Alma J. Powell**, by Sheila C. Johnson, and to political humorist **Mark Russell**, by Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Senator Ed Markey. The recipients, through their achievements and personal attributes, exemplify the lasting legacy of Abraham Lincoln.

The *Ford's Theatre Annual Gala* benefits Ford's Theatre Society and its programming, including Ford's Theatre theatrical and education initiatives. This event is made possible by the generous support of Lead Underwriter **General Dynamics**. Ford's Theatre gratefully acknowledges **Marlene A. Malek** and the **Malek Family Charitable Trust** for their support of the 2019 Lincoln Medal Presentation, and **Ovation** as this year's Red Carpet Sponsor.

First Lady Melania Trump served as the honorary chair of the gala celebration. Honorary co-chairs were Mrs. Rima Al-Sabah, Mrs. Abigail P. Blunt, Hon. Muriel Bowser, Mrs. Candy Carson, Mrs. Sandy Cornyn, Mrs. Marlene A. Malek, Mrs. Gayle C. Manchin, Mrs. Judy McCarthy, Mr. Paul Pelosi, Mrs. Hilary Geary Ross and Ms. Iris Weinshall.

Performance

The event at historic Ford's Theatre included memorable performances such as "All the Gold in California" performed by The Gatlin Brothers and Sierra Hull, "Takin' A Slow Train" by Sierra Hull and Justin Moses, "My Life" by The Walls Group, "This Land Is Your Land" by The Gatlin Brothers and the Gala ensemble and "Seasons of Love" performed by the Gala ensemble.

The evening also included a moving tribute to **Scarlet and JT Lewis** and to **Sandy and Lonnie Phillips**, families of children who died from gun violence at Sandy Hook Elementary and the Aurora, Colorado, movie theatre. Inspired by her son's kitchen chalkboard message of "nurturing healing love," Scarlet Lewis and her older son JT created the Jesse Lewis *Choose Love Movement*, a nonprofit organization that advocates for the addition of social and emotional learning in schools. The Phillipses were recognized for their national non-profit organization, Survivors Empowered, which supports families who face similar tragedies by providing advice about grief, funeral arrangements, managing media attention, harassment and more.

Lincoln Medal

The Lincoln Medal, first bestowed in 1981 to Senator Milton R. Young, is an annual award given by the Ford's Theatre Society to a person or persons who, through their body of work, accomplishments or personal attributes, exemplify the lasting legacy and mettle of character embodied by the most beloved president in our nation's history, President Abraham Lincoln.

For more than 20 years, **General Colin L. Powell and Alma J. Powell** have supported our nation's young people in various ways, including through America's Promise Alliance. The Powells have channeled their significant talents into mobilizing individuals from every sector of American life toward strengthening the development of young people's competence and character. Their impressive body of work, investment in youth leadership and generous spirits transcend partisan politics. Programs that the Powells helped develop have led to increased high school graduation rates, improved college readiness and enhanced community support for children's social and emotional needs. These programs place an emphasis on providing children access to safe places to learn and grow, developing marketable skills through effective education and the opportunity for youth to give back to their communities.

Beginning in the days of the Eisenhower administration, American political humorist **Mark Russell** could be found joking and singing about the often absurd political process while accompanying himself on a flag-draped piano. With impeccable timing, twinkling eyes, shock-of-recognition insights and clean delivery, Russell drew merriment from the pomposity of public life. His headline-news parodies and encyclopedic knowledge of 20th-century political history that have earned him the title of dean of American political satirists. His ability to find humor in anything made him an immediate hit with Washington lobbyists, politicians and reporters during his 20-year stint at Washington's Shoreham Hotel. Russell continuously found plenty of comedic fodder for his 30-year run of the eponymous PBS *Mark Russell Comedy Specials*, regular appearances on NBC's *Meet the Press*, and tours throughout America at conventions, colleges and theatres, including frequently for Ford's Theatre.

Past recipients of the Lincoln Medal include philanthropist and businesswoman Sheila C. Johnson (2018) golf champion Jack Nicklaus (2018), former NFL player Peyton W. Manning (2017), businessman and philanthropist Ronald O. Perelman (2017), civil rights activist Diane Nash (2016); Former Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice (2015); Congressman John Lewis (2007); The Honorable John D. Dingell (2014); Holocaust survivor and author Elie Wiesel (2012); human rights activist Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (2010) and Justice Albie Sachs (2010); filmmaker George Lucas (2009); actors James Earl Jones (2014), Ruby Dee (2008) and Sidney Poitier (2009); Dr. Maya Angelou (2008); singer Aretha Franklin (2009); and Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (2008).

The gala performance was followed by a seated dinner at the National Portrait Gallery and Smithsonian American Art Museum (750 Ninth Street NW).

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