National Endowment for the Arts
&
National Council on the Arts
2001 National Medal of Arts recipient Judith Jamison, artistic director of the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation (which also received a National Medal of Arts in 2001), surrounded by dance students who performed at the Medals ceremony.

Photo by Neshan Nalchayan
What is the National Medal of Arts?

The National Medal of Arts is the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the United States government. These individuals, through their creativity, inspiration, and hard work, have significantly enriched the cultural life of our nation.

When the award program began in 1984, it was envisioned that the National Medal of Arts would honor the extraordinary accomplishments of those engaged in the creation and production of the arts in the United States. Looking at the list of those honored over the past 20 years, one can see the breadth of artistic endeavors in this country. From writers such as Saul Bellow, Richard Wilbur, and Ralph Ellison to visual artists such as Georgia O’Keeffe, Romare Bearden, and Roy Lichtenstein to musicians Dave Brubeck, Aaron Copland, and Ray Charles, the map of American artistic achievement is clearly drawn.

We at the Arts Endowment strive to support artistic excellence in the United States, and the National Medal of Arts recipients demonstrate that the arts are continuing to thrive. Dynamic, diverse, and original, the arts are an essential part of our American identity and civilization. As President Reagan stated at the 1987 ceremony, “The arts and humanities teach us who we are and what we can be. They lie at the very core of the culture of which we are a part, and they provide the foundation from which we may reach out to other cultures so that the great heritage that is ours may be enriched by—as well as itself enrich—other enduring traditions.”

Dana Gioia
Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts
National Council on the Arts
On May 31, 1984, President Reagan signed legislation creating the National Medal of Arts, authorizing the President to award up to 12 medals a year to “individuals or groups who in the President’s judgment are deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support, and availability of the arts in the United States.”

In 1983, prior to the official establishment of the National Medal of Arts, President Ronald Reagan presented a medal to the following artists and patrons at a White House luncheon arranged by the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities: (artists) Pinchas Zukerman, Frederica Von Stade, Czeslaw Milosz, Frank Stella, Philip Johnson, and Luis Valdez; (patrons) The Texaco Philanthropic Foundation, James Michener (considered a patron for the award), Philip Morris, Inc., The Cleveland Foundation, Elma Lewis, and The Dayton Hudson Foundation. This was the beginning step in creating a Presidential award for those who significantly contributed to the cultural life of our nation.
The National Council on the Arts, the advisory board for the National Endowment for the Arts, is responsible for recommending candidates for the medal to the President. Unlike other arts awards, the National Medal of Arts is not limited to a single field or area of artistic endeavor. It is designed to honor exemplary individuals and organizations that have encouraged the arts in America and offered inspiration to others through their distinguished achievement, support, or patronage.

The National Medal of Arts was designed by internationally renowned sculptor Robert Graham, whose design was chosen by a special committee of the National Council on the Arts from among 31 designs submitted in a national competition. Mr. Graham is known for creating the Gateway for the XXIII Olympiad in Los Angeles, California.

For 20 years, the recipients of the National Medal of Arts have touched every aspect of artistic life in the United States, from the fine arts to popular culture. The award has honored not only those whose vision and creativity provided the American public with their art work, but also those whose support of the arts has been crucial to its development.
How to Submit Nominations for the National Medal of Arts

Annually, the National Endowment for the Arts initiates the selection process for the National Medal of Arts by soliciting nominations from the public. The National Council on the Arts reviews the nominations and draws up a list of recommendations that it submits to the President. Typically, the announcement of the year’s awardees is made by the White House in the fall.

The period of nomination for the National Medal of Arts is January through April 11. To submit a nomination, please complete a nomination form, which includes a one-page biography of the nominee’s accomplishments. Because of difficulties with the receipt of mail, nominations are only accepted online at the Arts Endowment’s Web site: www.arts.gov. More information on the nomination process can be found on the Web site as well.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Who is eligible to receive the National Medal of Arts?
Nominees must be living U.S. citizens or permanent residents who have filed for naturalization and who are not ineligible to become U.S. citizens. Nominated organizations must be established or incorporated in the United States.

Can I submit more than one nomination?
Yes, but you must complete separate nomination forms for each nominee.

Where do I find detailed information to submit about my nominee?
If you do not personally know the nominee (or wish to keep your nomination a surprise), you may find information at your local library in the reference section. Who’s Who in America and other biographic reference books are often good sources of information.
Internet searches may also turn up good material. Ask your librarian for other suggestions. Check the list of previous awardees to ensure that your nomination has not already received a National Medal of Arts.

*What information must I submit for my nomination?*
Career highlights, not comprehensive biographies, are requested. Provide the source of the information if possible. This award is bestowed only to U.S. citizens who have made exceptional contributions to the arts so the most competitive nominees will be familiar to the reviewers. The purpose of your nomination is to remind the reviewers that your nominee should be considered.

The information requested on the “For All Nominations” section is the most important; any critical biographical material must be provided here. Brochures, books, or music samples will not be accepted.
National Medal of Arts Recipients

1985–2004

2004
Ray Bradbury, author
Carlisle Floyd, opera composer
Frederick Hart, sculptor
Anthony Hecht, poet
John Ruthven, wildlife artist
Vincent Scully, architectural historian and educator
Twyla Tharp, contemporary dance choreographer
Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, philanthropic foundation

2003
Austin City Limits, PBS television program
Beverly Cleary, writer
Rafe Esquith, arts educator
Suzanne Farrell, dancer, choreographer, company director, educator
Buddy Guy, blues musician
Ron Howard, actor, director, writer, producer
Mormon Tabernacle Choir, choral group
Leonard Slatkin, symphony orchestra conductor
George Strait, country singer, songwriter
Tommy Tune, dancer, actor, choreographer, director

2002
Florence Knoll Bassett, architect
Trisha Brown, artistic director, choreographer, dancer
Philippe de Montebello, museum director
Uta Hagen, actress, drama teacher
Lawrence Halprin, architect
Al Hirschfeld, artist, illustrator
George Jones, country music composer, performer
Ming Cho Lee, theater designer
William “Smokey” Robinson, songwriter, musician

2001
Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, modern dance company and school
Rudolfo Anaya, writer
Johnny Cash, singer, songwriter
Kirk Douglas, actor, producer
Helen Frankenthaler, painter
Judith Jamison, artistic director, choreographer, dancer
Yo-Yo Ma, cellist
Mike Nichols, director, producer

2000
Maya Angelou, poet, writer
Eddy Arnold, country singer
Mikhail Baryshnikov, dancer, director
Benny Carter, jazz musician
Chuck Close, painter
Horton Foote, playwright, screenwriter
National Public Radio, Cultural Programming Division, broadcaster
Claes Oldenburg, sculptor
Itzhak Perlman, violinist
Harold Prince, theater director, producer
Barbra Streisand, entertainer, filmmaker
Lewis Manilow, arts patron

1999
Aretha Franklin, singer
Michael Graves, architect, designer
Odetta, singer, music historian
The Juilliard School, performing arts school
Norman Lear, producer, writer, director, advocate
Rosetta LeNoire, actress, producer
Harvey Lichtenstein, arts administrator
Lydia Mendoza, singer
George Segal, sculptor
Maria Tallchief, ballerina
Irene Diamond, arts patron
1998
Jacques d’Amboise, dancer, choreographer, educator
Antoine “Fats” Domino, rock ‘n’ roll pianist, singer
Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, folk singer, songwriter
Frank Gehry, architect
Barbara Handman, arts advocate
Agnes Martin, visual artist
Gregory Peck, actor, producer
Roberta Peters, opera singer
Philip Roth, writer
Steppenwolf Theatre Company, arts organization
Gwen Verdon, actress, dancer
Sara Lee Corporation, corporate arts patron

1997
Louise Bourgeois, sculptor
Betty Carter, jazz vocalist
Daniel Urban Kiley, landscape architect
Angela Lansbury, actor
James Levine, opera conductor, pianist
Tito Puente, Latin percussionist, musician
Jason Robards, actor
Edward Villaume, dancer, choreographer
Doc Watson, bluegrass guitarist, vocalist
MacDowell Colony, artist colony
Agnes Gund, arts patron

1996
Edward Albee, playwright
Sarah Caldwell, opera conductor
Harry Callahan, photographer
Zelda Fichandler, theater director, founder
Eduardo “Lalo” Guerrero, composer, musician
Lionel Hampton, musician, bandleader
Bella Lewitzky, dancer, choreographer, teacher

President George W. Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush with 2004 Medalist Ray Bradbury in the Oval Office.
White House photo by Susan Sterner

Robert Redford, actor, director, producer
Maurice Sendak, writer, illustrator, designer
Stephen Sondheim, composer, lyricist
Boys Choir of Harlem, performing arts youth group
Vera List, arts patron

1995
Licia Albanese, opera singer
Gwendolyn Brooks, poet
Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, actors
David Diamond, composer
James Ingo Freed, architect
Bob Hope, entertainer
Roy Lichtenstein, painter, sculptor
Arthur Mitchell, dancer, choreographer
William S. Monroe, bluegrass musician
Urban Gateways, arts education organization
B. Gerald and Iris Cantor, arts patrons
**National Medal of Arts Recipients 1985-2004**

**1994**
- Harry Belafonte, singer, actor
- Dave Brubeck, pianist, bandleader, composer
- Celia Cruz, singer
- Dorothy DeLay, violin teacher
- Julie Harris, actress
- Erick Hawkins, dance choreographer
- Gene Kelly, dancer, singer, actor
- Pete Seeger, composer, lyricist, vocalist, banjo player
- Wayne Thiebaud, artist, teacher
- Richard Wilbur, poet, teacher, critic, literary translator
- Young Audiences, arts presenter
- Catherine Filene Shouse, arts patron

**1991**
- Maurice Abravanel, music director, conductor
- Roy Acuff, country singer, bandleader
- Pietro Belluschi, architect
- J. Carter Brown, museum director
- Charles "Honi" Coles, tap dancer
- John O. Crosby, opera director, conductor, administrator
- Richard Diebenkorn, painter
- Kitty Carlisle Hart, actress, singer, arts administrator, dancer
- Pearl Primus, choreographer, anthropologist
- Isaac Stern, violinst
- R. Philip Hanes, Jr., arts patron
- Texaco Inc., corporate arts patron

**1993**
- Cabell “Cab” Calloway, singer, bandleader
- Ray Charles, singer, musician
- Bess Lomax Hawes, folklorist
- Stanley Kunitz, poet, educator
- Robert Merrill, baritone
- Arthur Miller, playwright
- Robert Rauschenberg, artist
- Lloyd Richards, theatrical director
- William Styron, writer
- Paul Taylor, dancer, choreographer
- Billy Wilder, movie director, writer, producer
- Walter and Leonore Annenberg, arts patrons

**1992**
- Marilyn Horne, opera singer
- James Earl Jones, actor
- Allan Houser, sculptor
- Minnie Pearl, Grand Ole Opry performer
- Robert Saudek, television producer, Museum of Broadcasting founding director

**1990**
- George Francis Abbott, actor, playwright, producer, director
- Hume Cronyn, actor, director
- Jessica Tandy, actress
- Merce Cunningham, choreographer, dance company director
- Jasper Johns, painter, sculptor
- Jacob Lawrence, painter
- Riley “B.B.” King, blues musician, singer
- Ian McHarg, landscape architect
- Beverly Sills, opera singer, director
- David Lloyd Kreeger, arts patron
Harris & Carroll Sterling Masterson, arts patrons
Southeastern Bell Corporation, corporate arts patron

1989
Leopold Adler, preservationist, civic leader
Katherine Dunham, dancer, choreographer
Alfred Eisenstaedt, photographer
Martin Friedman, museum director
John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, jazz trumpeter
Walker Kirtland Hancock, sculptor
Vladimir Horowitz, pianist
Czelaw Milosz, writer
Robert Motherwell, painter
John Updike, writer
Dayton Hudson Corporation, corporate arts patron
Leigh Gerdine, arts patron

1988
Saul Bellow, writer
Sydney J. Freedberg, art historian, curator
Helen Hayes, actress
Gordon Parks, photographer, film director
I.M. Pei, architect
Jerome Robbins, dancer, choreographer
Rudolf Serkin, pianist
Roger L. Stevens, arts administrator
Virgil Thomson, composer, music critic
(Mrs. Vincent) Brooke Astor, arts patron
Francis Goelet, music patron
Obert C. Tanner, arts patron

1987
Romare Bearden, painter
Ella Fitzgerald, singer
Howard Nemerov, writer, scholar
Alwin Nikolais, dancer, choreographer
Isamu Noguchi, sculptor
William Schuman, composer
Robert Penn Warren, writer, poet
J. W. Fisher, arts patron
Dr. Armand Hammer, arts patron
Mr. and Mrs. Sydney Lewis, arts patrons

1986
Marian Anderson, opera singer
Frank Capra, film director
Aaron Copland, composer
Willem de Kooning, painter
Agnes de Mille, choreographer
Eva Le Gallienne, actress, author
Alan Lomax, folklorist, scholar
Lewis Mumford, philosopher, literary critic
Eudora Welty, writer
Dominique de Menil, arts patron
Exxon Corporation, corporate arts patron
Seymour H. Knox, arts patron

1985
Elliott Carter, Jr., composer
Ralph Ellison, writer
Jose Ferrer, actor
Martha Graham, dancer, choreographer
Louise Nevelson, sculptress
Georgia O’Keeffe, painter
Leontyne Price, soprano
Dorothy Buffum Chandler, arts patron
Hallmark Cards, Inc., corporate arts patron
Lincoln Kirstein, arts patron
Paul Mellon, arts patron
Alice Tully, arts patron

NOTE: Recipients are listed alphabetically, artists first and then arts patrons.
A Great Nation Deserves Great Art.

National Medal of Arts recipient Yo-Yo Ma performing with Dr. Condoleezza Rice at the 2001 Medals ceremony.

Photo by Neshan Naltchayan