

Americans for the Arts presents
The 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture
on Arts and Public Policy



Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts & Public Policy

An evening with

Rita Moreno

March 4, 2019

Concert Hall

*The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Washington, D.C.*

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OPENING REMARKS BY ROBERT L. LYNCH



Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch

Good evening, everyone. I want to welcome you all to the Americans for the Arts 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. I'm Bob Lynch, President and CEO of Americans for the Arts, and I want to thank you for joining us here tonight at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

We are joined on this auspicious occasion by several Members of Congress, including Representatives Suzanne Bonamici, David Cicilline, Betty McCollum, Chellie Pingree, and Carol Miller, as well as the head of the National Endowment for the Arts, Mary Anne Carter, and the head of the National Endowment for the Humanities, John Peede. Thank you all for being here. Several members of the Americans for the Arts Artists Committee are also with us tonight, including opera singer Carla Dirlikov Canales; musician Ben Folds; and Tony Award-winning Broadway star Brian Stokes Mitchell, who will also be performing on stage this evening. We are so pleased that they're all here with us tonight, but also all year round to help advance our mission to educate and promote the value of the arts as core to our society and as the essence of our individual creative spirit.

In order to achieve that vision, we realized that we needed to help the general public better understand the ways—the multiple ways—that the arts touch every aspect of their lives. And as a result, last year Americans for the Arts unveiled its engaging and very easy-to-use tool called the Arts and Social Impact Explorer. This award-winning interactive, online tool on the **AmericansForTheArts.org** website draws together over 1,000 data-points on how the arts integrate into and impact community life by showing a full range of how the arts support traditional non-arts sectors.

For instance, you can read about how arts therapy programs are assisting veterans recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or how urban neighborhoods dedicated as arts districts are economically and visually revitalizing previously blighted downtown areas and infusing them with energy and jobs. The Arts and Social Impact Explorer tool includes detailed citations of the research data documenting the effectiveness of the arts programs along with vivid stories of how local projects are making an impact in many different areas.

Because the truth is that the arts offer creative solutions to communities, from better education and meaningful health outcomes to a more civically engaged citizenry. It's just that people don't always see the connection to the arts—decision-makers don't always see that connection—and they don't necessarily see that the arts made that change happen.

So, what's the goal? Americans for the Arts wants to provide local, state, and federal decision-makers and arts leaders with



The Arts and Social Impact Explorer is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SocialImpact

...the arts offer creative solutions to communities, from better education and meaningful health outcomes to a more civically engaged citizenry.

the information and research that they need on the spot, in that moment, to make a visible impact and to encourage deeper investment in the arts through pro-arts policies and public and private funding. We also want you to use it often and well and in ways that surprise and open up opportunities to advance the arts in your community, state, and in this nation.

I am very honored to share that Americans for the Arts and its Arts Action Fund were recognized nationally with the 2019 Public Affairs Council Innovation Award because of the innovation, advocacy, and policy work that we are doing with the Arts and Social Impact Explorer. Thanks to the hardworking

staff that did it and to our hardworking board that enabled it.

In addition to collecting and documenting great research data and compelling art stories, we also regularly gauge the pulse of what Americans think about the arts through public opinion research. It not only gives us insight, but it also measures whether we're moving the needle in the right direction to advance the arts across America.

In 2018, Americans for the Arts interviewed 3,000 people and released one of the largest national public opinion surveys of American perceptions and attitudes towards the arts and art funding, entitled "Americans Speak Out About the Arts." And so, what did we learn? We learned that the great majority of Americans continue to be highly engaged in the arts. The great majority believe more strongly than ever that the arts promote personal well-being and agree that the arts help us understand other cultures. We know that the arts are valued as essential to a well-rounded education because a huge number—90 percent—of the public believes that. And they further believe that government has an important role in funding the arts.

As many of you know, tomorrow is Arts Advocacy Day and Americans for the Arts will be highlighting the top-line findings of this national survey. And this will be done in ads that are being placed in key newspapers here on Capitol Hill that decision-makers read.

TODAY IS ARTS ADVOCACY DAY! #ArtsAdvocacy #SAVEtheNEA

THE ARTS TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

Americans Agree:

- 86%** Believe the arts industry is good for the economy and supports jobs
- 94%** Believe the arts should be taught in grades K-12
- 72%** Believe the arts unify us regardless of age, race, and ethnicity

According to Americans Speak Out About the Arts in 2018, a public opinion poll by Ipsos and Americans for the Arts

PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS TRANSFORMS COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Learn more at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/PublicOpinion

AMERICANS for the ARTS

Americans for the Arts placed this full-page, color ad in all the major Capitol Hill newspapers on Arts Advocacy Day on March 5, 2019.

In a society struggling to find equity and social justice, Americans understand that even in challenging times, the arts make our communities healthier, stronger, and more unified.

Our message is simple, the arts transform communities, and more specifically, 86 percent of Americans believe that the arts are good for the economy and support jobs. A full 94 percent of Americans believe that the arts should be taught in K-12 education. And 72 percent of Americans across the country, across sectors, believe that the arts unify us regardless of race, age, or ethnicity. So, here's the bottom line, we are quite simply better people with the arts in our lives. We are healthier, we're more creative, and we're more actively engaged citizens who feel better about today and more optimistic about tomorrow. In a society struggling to find equity and social



Americans for the Arts ad placed in targeted newspapers across the country and online.

justice, Americans understand that even in challenging times, the arts make our communities healthier, stronger, and more unified.

And with that spirit of unity, Americans for the Arts has worked to promote more equitable access to a full, creative life for all people since its inception, some almost 60 years ago in 1960. While the type of work may have varied over time, our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion has not. Our commitment was shaped by the strong guidance of early board members Judy Baca, Harry Belafonte, Ralph Ellison, and Billy Taylor, who was also a previous Nancy Hanks lecturer. Ellison, who in 1968 was the first artist to join our board, famously said, "America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain... Our fate is to become one and yet many." That strong board guidance has continued through the years.

In 2016, the Americans for the Arts board of directors pushed further and unanimously adopted a more specific strategic and long-time commitment to cultural equity.

We are committed to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation

through the arts. We are also actively encouraging our local and state member organizations across America to adopt similar cultural equity policies in both their programming and their grant-making within their communities. And that work is going very, very well as I see it across the country.

But we also know that it's important to showcase great leaders of cultural equity to advance the arts, and that is just one reason why we are so thrilled to be presenting the incomparable Rita Moreno tonight. We've had the honor of working with her a bit in the past and honoring her once before, along with The United States Conference of Mayors. She is an absolute trailblazer for women, Hispanic heritage, and the arts. And you know what? Groundbreaking policies don't happen without risk-taking leaders behind them, like Rita Moreno. At Americans for the Arts, we seek out those leaders and we support them, and perhaps more importantly, we make sure that their own constituents, or using today's lexicon, their followers, understand the importance of what they do as well.

For instance, last week we wanted to showcase yet another great arts leader, Congresswoman Chellie Pingree of Maine who is here with us tonight. Congresswoman Pingree last year graciously agreed to fill the very big shoes left behind by the sudden passing of the legendary Congresswoman Louise Slaughter. Louise was a powerhouse who founded and led the Congressional Arts Caucus on Capitol Hill for over 20 years.

So, we got together last week with local and state arts leaders in Maine, like Julie Richard, head of the state arts



Americans for the Arts Action Fund Executive Director Nina Ozlu Tunceli, new Congressional Arts Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME), and Maine Arts Commission Executive Director Julie Richard at the ArtsEngageME conference where Americans for the Arts presented her with a full-page ad featured in the *Portland Press Herald* to honor her work.

council, to host a meeting about the arts with Congresswoman Pingree. And to commemorate the moment, we took out a full-page color ad in the A Section in the Sunday edition of Maine's largest newspaper to showcase and thank her for stepping into this new role as the head of the Congressional Arts Caucus.

I mentioned earlier that tomorrow is Arts Advocacy Day. Advocacy efforts take collaboration and I'd like to recognize our 85 national partners, our 50 state captains, and our 500 grassroots registrants who have flown in from every corner of the country. You can't read all the names up there, but you can see the back page of our Arts Advocacy Day Handbook filled with the names of our national partner organizations.

And I'd like to ask all these amazing Arts Advocacy Day participants in the audience to please now stand and be recognized. Thank you and good luck tomorrow.

And now, before we begin tonight's lecture program, please join me in thanking the sponsors who helped make this evening possible. First, thanks go to our long-time supporter and Americans for the Arts Board Member, Nancy Stephens, who chairs both The Rosenthal Family Foundation and our Americans for the Arts Action Fund. And thanks to Ovation, the nation's only television arts network, and finally, our two local sponsors, The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, Inc., as well as Newmark Knight Frank. Thank you to them. And thank you to all of you for being here tonight.

INTRODUCTION OF BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL

So now, to begin tonight's program, we kick things off with an artistic performance by Tony Award-winning actor and singer, and Americans for the Arts Board Member, Brian Stokes Mitchell. "Stokes" as he prefers to be called, has been dubbed the last leading man by *The New York Times*. He enjoys a rich and varied career on Broadway, in television and film, along with appearances in America's greatest concert halls.

His musical versatility has kept him in demand by some of the country's finest conductors and orchestras.

In 2005, he debuted Pulitzer Prize-winning composer David Del Tredici's *Rip Van Winkle* with the National Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Leonard Slatkin. He has been invited to the White House many times, including performances for Presidents Clinton and Obama. His Broadway career is rich and vast. He won a Tony and Drama Desk Award for Best Actor in a Musical for his iconic performance in *Kiss Me, Kate*. He's also earned several Tony nominations for *Man of La Mancha*, *Ragtime*, and August Wilson's *King Hedley II*. In 2000, Stokes returned to Broadway after a seven-year absence to do concerts, film, and television. The show was Lincoln Center Theater's production of *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, which also starred Patti Lupone. In 1998, he joined the likes of Helen Hayes, Sir John Gielgud, Sir Alec Guinness, and James Earl Jones when he became the sole recipient of that year's Distinguished Performance Award from the Drama League, the nation's oldest theatrical honor, for his performance in *Ragtime*.

Numerous film and television appearances include his roles on *Glee*, *One Last Thing*, recurring roles on *Crossing Jordan* and *Frasier*, PBS' *Great Performances*, DreamWorks' *The Prince of Egypt*, and his presidential debut in *The Singer and the Song* at the White House. In May of 2011, he appeared in the film *Jumping the Broom*, playing opposite Angela Bassett for the second time. He continues to perform in concerts all over the United States when he's not busy visiting Capitol Hill for us. Stokes also works closely with several other charitable organizations from the March of Dimes to the USO.

In addition to that and to serving on the Americans for the Arts Board of Directors, Stokes is currently serving his fourteenth term as chairman of the board of a great organization, The Actors Fund, and he received the 2016 Isabelle Stevenson Award at the Tony Awards ceremony in honor of his service to the arts. This evening, Stokes will perform three songs and he'll be accompanied by the wonderfully talented Tedd Firth on piano.

Please now welcome Brian Stokes Mitchell.

PERFORMANCE AND REMARKS BY BRIAN STOKES MITCHELL



Tony Award winner and Americans for the Arts Board Member Brian Stokes Mitchell presents a dedicated performance along with opening remarks.

Thank you so much, good evening. I am feeling good tonight, definitely. I hope you're feeling good, too. It feels good to be down here at this time with fellow arts makers and creators and supporters. And I'm glad we're all here together at the same time and in the same space trying to do something, help out the arts a little bit. So, thank you all so much for being here and being a part of this.

I've been doing this for a very long time now and the one thing I think keeps coming back to me is what a collaborative endeavor the arts all are. It's really obvious when you see a

movie or a TV show or a Broadway show, there's hundreds and hundreds of other artists and non-artists as well that are collaborating to make that art happen. But it even happens on a smaller scale, even the painter is collaborating with the canvas maker and the paint-maker and the arts dealer. The arts involve so many different people, seen and unseen. I'm just very happy that I am being seen here. I'd like to re-introduce my pianist collaborator for a long time and great friend, Mr. Tedd Firth on piano, a great artist. And for a singer, the unseen collaborators are many. We have lighting people, sound people, all the crew that make this happen as well and are part of this wonderful space here. But also, the songwriters, of course.

Stephen Sondheim's *Flag Song* tells us and reconnects us, and reminds me, how the arts can reconnect us to our beliefs, our passion, and is something that we may have lost touch with.

[“Feeling Good” song performed.]

That last song was written by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse. The next song I'm going to do, my unseen collaborator, my songwriter, is a gentleman by the name of Mr. Stephen Sondheim, a few of you might know that name. And the song I'm going to sing, though, is a song that probably very few of you know. It's a song that actually he wrote about 35 years ago and it was cut from a show that he was working on then. But one of the reasons I wanted to do this song tonight, I just kind of discovered it myself only about a year ago, is because it's a patriotic song, but it's a patriotic song coming from the mind of Stephen Sondheim, so you know that's going to be interesting. But also, I think if Stephen Sondheim were asked today to write a patriotic song for today, for what's going on not only in the world but particularly in our country, I think this is exactly the song that he would write. And it tells us and reconnects us, and reminds me, how the arts can reconnect us to our beliefs, our passion, and is something that we may have lost touch with.

Stephen Sondheim, what an incredible artist, right? That



Brian Stokes Mitchell is accompanied by his longtime pianist collaborator Tedd Firth in performing a medley of songs in honor of Rita Moreno and Americans for the Arts.

Art has this magical quality to make us hope, to put us in touch with something kind of special.

could have been written yesterday. Doesn't it make you feel good? It's about feeling good today, that's what we're here for, so we can pass some of that on tomorrow especially.

I was having a hard time deciding what to sing as the final song. I kind of kept going back and forth. And then Ms. Rita Moreno happened to walk on stage and I said, "Hey, what would you like to hear?" And I could sing this or this or this, and she said, "Oh, sing that one." So, I'm going to sing "that one" and it's actually two songs. One is from a show I did called *Ragtime*. The other one is a song that everybody likely knows and I'd like to combine these two songs together because they are essentially both songs of hope.

"Make Them Hear You" is the song that Coalhouse Walker sings when he holds his child in his arms for the very, very first time, and instead of being filled with fear and trepidation, he's filled with hope. He's filled with this vision for what the future could be. And at that time, his future didn't look too good, actually back then, when it took place in the early part of the last century. So, it's what I love about art, too. Art has this magical quality to make us hope, to put us in touch with something kind of special.

As I said about "Flag Song," it puts us in touch with something that we might have felt that we have lost. So, I'm going to leave you with these two favorite songs of hope of mine and take it out with you, when you leave this place as well. Wherever you go, take it to your families, your neighborhood, your work, and spread that joy or spread that feeling, spread that hope if you feel it as well.

Thank you again, Mr. Tedd Firth. God bless, thank you so much for being here.

INTRODUCTION OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SONIA SOTOMAYOR



United States Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor introduces her friend, Rita Moreno.

ROBERT L. LYNCH: Okay, wow. And he's our board member! Thank you, Stokes, and thank you, Tedd, for that spectacular performance and gift to all of us here.

And now I am extremely honored to welcome a friend of Rita's who also just happens to be an Associate Justice on The United States Supreme Court. Justice Sonia Sotomayor was born in the Bronx to Puerto Rican parents and appointed by President Barack Obama in 2009. Justice Sotomayor has the distinction of being the first Hispanic Supreme Court Associate Justice. In 1976, Justice Sotomayor earned a B.A. from Princeton University, where she graduated summa cum laude and received the university's highest academic honor. In 1979, she earned her Juris Doctorate from Yale Law School,

where she served as an editor of the *Yale Law Review* journal. And in 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated her to The United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, which she served on for six years. In addition to her stellar legal career, Justice Sotomayor is an author of two books, *Turning Pages: My Life Story* and *My Beloved World*. She not only appreciates the literary arts, but she can be regularly spotted at performing arts events and museums. She even has a magnet school in Los Angeles named after her as the Sonia Sotomayor Center for Arts and Sciences.

To introduce her friend, Rita Moreno, please join me in now welcoming friend of the arts, great friend to America, Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor.

INTRODUCTION OF RITA MORENO BY UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR



Justice Sonia Sotomayor introduces her friend and fellow Puerto Rican Rita Moreno as the 2019 Nancy Hanks Lecturer on Arts and Public Policy.

“**E**speró que hay mas de un aquí.” Thank you, Bob, for your kind welcome and thank you to Americans for the Arts for hosting this wonderful event. I will be dreaming about those songs tonight. Stokes and Tedd, that was just an extraordinary performance.

But we are here for a very special reason, it is to honor and learn from a dear friend and role model of mine, Rita Moreno.

Rita’s achievements as an actress and a performer are numerous, and they are dazzling. Over the course of her vibrant career, she has captivated audiences in countless films, plays, and TV shows. She danced with Gene Kelly in *Singin’ in the Rain*, she shared a steamy screen kiss with Marlon Brando—it was a real kiss. She cavorted with Miss Piggy on *The Muppet Show*, she made audiences laugh in *The Ritz*, and helped children learn on *The Electric Company*.

And she brought home an Oscar, the first ever awarded to a Latina actress, for her iconic portrayal of Anita in *West Side Story*. I was seven when I saw that film and I remember still how brilliant she was.

By the way, she did not stop with that Oscar. She went on to win a Tony, a Grammy, and two Emmys. That makes her one of only 15 quadruple-threat stars ever to win that coveted combination, which I am told is known as EGOT. When she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004 and a Kennedy Center Honor in 2015, she joined an even more exclusive club. Only two people have ever achieved all six. I will let you guess the other, but Bob Lynch mentioned one of the others’ name. How is all that for a career? At 87 she shows no signs of quitting with a hit show on Netflix, *One Day at a Time*, and a movie in the works. I have my share of life-tenured colleagues, but even I am amazed by Rita’s tireless devotion to her craft.

As we recognize tonight, however, Rita is much, much, much more than a star, she is also a guiding light. For more than half of a century now, Rita has broken barriers, advocated for equality, and supported causes and communities dear to her heart. She has always had the imagination to see possibilities others did not, and the grit and determination to make dreams reality. As a child she found her talents acting on Broadway and dancing under the instructor who taught Rita Hayworth, whose name she adopted when show business beckoned. Back when the big studios called all the shots and there were no Latina role models in Hollywood, she dared to imagine herself as a Puerto Rican version of her icon, Elizabeth Taylor. With talent and tenacity, she got her foot in the door.

Now, Hollywood in the 1950s was a tough place to be a trailblazer. At first, the roles available to Rita were mostly one-dimensional stereotypes—sexy Latina spitfires—she was very good at that—and generic ethnic damsels. Complex characters and leading roles were reserved for others, but she soon found ways out of those boxes and into the conversation, and she cultivated courage along the way. When asked to cut her

Rita was regularly typecast in Hollywood into one-dimensional roles in movies about Hispanic gangs and urban prostitutes. Rather than cash-in the easy way, she sacrificed, insisting on dignified and challenging roles. She also became a voice for change in the industry, decrying what she labeled “Hollywood Jim Crowism.”

curly, black hair for *Singin' in the Rain*, she had the chutzpah to respond, "I don't cut my hair, Mr. Kelly."

Acting alongside Marlon Brando hastened her professional and personal growth, and Brando's bravado for underdogs inspired Rita, no stranger to discrimination, to use her celebrity to raise awareness for civil rights and political causes. She advocated for Native Americans, she was one of a contingent of stars who lent their stature to the March on Washington, and she sat just a few feet from Martin Luther King, Jr., as he gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. *West Side Story* was a professional turning point. Even though the film was all about the lives of New York Puerto Ricans, the leading roles of Tony and Maria were played by non-Latinos. But Rita stole the show. She threw herself into the role of Anita, who according to Rita was the first Hispanic character she was able to play with dignity and a sense of self-respect. Her performance and the Oscar that it earned her were game changers.

But this being the 1960s, the professional opportunities that followed her triumph often remain disappointingly familiar. She didn't get any offers in the United States. She had to go abroad to perform. Rita was regularly typecast in Hollywood into one-dimensional roles in movies about Hispanic gangs and urban prostitutes. Rather than cash-in the easy way, she sacrificed, insisting on dignified and challenging roles. She also became a voice for change in the industry, decrying what she labeled "Hollywood Jim Crowism."

Rita's film career undoubtedly took a small hit for her principles, but she set a valuable example for the next generation. Latina actresses no longer have to reimagine being Elizabeth Taylor to picture themselves on the big screen. Jennifer Lopez has said that watching beautiful, strong Puerto Rican Rita Moreno made her feel that anything was possible. A principled pioneer showed that little girl that she had a place. She gave me the courage to imagine myself in impossible places.

Rita never stopped branching out. She satirized that tired, old, spitfire stereotype on her own terms as Googie Gomez in *The Ritz*. She became an educator and spokeswoman. She wrote a poignant and insightful autobiography and entered the streaming world with her current Netflix show; and I can't help but add with pride, a few years ago she narrated the audio tape of my own memoir. Through that process, I have made a dear friend. It is hard not to love Rita once you know her and her great generosity of spirit. Rita also has never stopped giving back. Her work with charitable and civic causes over the decades is too extensive to list, but let me briefly mention

just a few near to my heart. She has raised awareness about Type 2 diabetes, which is unfortunately all too prevalent in the Hispanic community. She has done extensive public service, including working with the National Endowment for the Arts, and she has inspired and educated both young children and young adults, particularly minority students pursuing higher education.

And do you remember I mentioned that she has an upcoming movie? It is a remake of *West Side Story*, this time with Latino actors in the lead roles. That is one small indication of the strides Rita helped us make towards a more inclusive world by working and advocating tirelessly throughout her career to make that new world a reality.

Now, I want to thank her and I think all of you should join me. I am a horrible singer but I am going to try my hand at something from her Netflix show.

(Sung in Spanish: "Dale, Rita, Dale! Dale, Rita, Dale! Cómo a hecho toda tu vida.")

Come on out, Rita.



Brian Stokes Mitchell, Justice Sonia Sotomayor and Robert L. Lynch welcome Rita to the stage of Concert Hall at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

LECTURE BY RITA MORENO



Rita Moreno delivers the Americans for the Arts 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy.

RITA MORENO: Wait a minute, I just have to say I need to say my thank you, Señora Justicia, and you said something that really shocked and alarmed me about me, about you and me. Were you really seven when you saw that?

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Yes.

RITA MORENO: That's interesting. But I need to say one more thing.

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But you were a baby when you played that role.

RITA MORENO: Well, if you call 27 a baby. And then I just want to say one more thing, other than just thank you, thank you, thank you. But I am so thrilled that I am able to stand in front of a Justice without feeling guilty about anything. You knew what I was going to ask her, didn't you? Wow, I'm sure you thought of that.

A Temple, A Sanctuary, A Cathedral: Reviving America's Soul Through the Arts

Okay, they say that there's nothing more American than baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie. Yet, when you think of it,

Germans gave us frankfurters, Egyptians created pie, apple trees were imported from Central Asia by way of Europe, and baseball, even our national pastime, is the conflation of two English games, Rounders and Cricket. So, what I'm really saying is that in every way, we are the melting pot, a fusion of the nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities that make up this extraordinary stew that we call America.

My "Mami," Rosa Maria, heard that America was a place that you could dream and your dreams could actually come true, which is why she packed a five-year-old me, Rosita Dolores Alverio, along with four shopping bags—poor people's matched luggage—and boarded a boat for America, the ship, the *SS Carabobo*, translated *cara bobo*, stupid face. I'm not kidding. A ship with a name like that is not a good omen. Of course, our best laid plans usually end up on the floor of God's very large editing room and almost as soon as we departed Puerto Rico, we hit a violent storm that threw everyone into a state of collective panic.

Now, Latino people have many natural talents but one area

in which we particularly excel is panicking. When it comes to panicking, we are the envy of the world. It's part of our world view. We are profoundly passionate people, pathologically passionate, everything in excess, nothing in moderation. Where other cultures believe in restraint and self-control, we believe in the principle of constant combustibility. When in doubt, flip out. And so we spent that storm-tossed passage to New York clinging to each other and our four shopping bags, and it wasn't until the morning of the sixth day that our voyage ended in the safety of New York Harbor.

Sometimes in life we fight so hard to get where we are going, we don't look back to appreciate where we've been. We are so busy striving to arrive that we lose sight of the waypoints, the stops and starts along the path, the hills and the valleys we've navigated. To forget those places, to lose our history, denies us the blessing of fully living in our present.

And suddenly, I look up and I see this enormous green lady shooting straight up from the middle of the ocean to the very top of the sky, wearing some kind of crown on her head and holding out a huge flaming ice cream cone.

"Mami, Quién es esa señora tan grande?" And my Mami tells me that lady is a very special lady, that she is inviting everyone from around the world to come to America, to come and live here, to come and be citizens of Los Estados Unidos, especialmente people who are pobres, cansados, hambrientos, sin hogar—the poor, tired, hungry, and homeless. We are definitely overqualified, but when I look up at that big green lady's face, all I can think is, oh my goodness, a lady runs this country. So there you have it, two more immigrants fleeing the poverty of a beloved homeland no longer able to sustain them, welcomed to America by a Frenchman's work of art, given voice by the poetry of a Sephardic Jew.

"Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, here at our sea-washed sunset gates shall stand a mighty woman with a torch. Mother of exiles, give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me.

I lift my lamp beside the golden door." (*Emma Lazarus-edited*)

Every day of my childhood, Rosa Maria walked me to school, then climbed the bus that carried her from 181st Street and Wadsworth Avenue to 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, the heart of the garment district where every day she pumped the treadle, wound the bobbins, and chopped the hems. That was my Mami, the sweatshop seamstress. It was backbreaking work, she knew the prick of every pin. It was a job, it paid the rent, we just got by. She made my clothes, she made my costumes. I was her little cookie. She put ribbons in my hair. This was art, this was her art, so that I could perform at every bar mitzvah or wedding reception that would book an eight-year-old artiste. She even made me a headdress with bogus fruit stitched on top that made me look like a little miniature Carmen Miranda.

My Mami, the sweatshop seamstress. No, my Mami, the artist. It gave her joy. It gave her joy, it made her proud, my Mami. Costume designer to a star, the Rita Moreno before I ever was. My fame is her fame. I'm reminded that it's just a short walk from right here to a very special place and it gives me goosebumps just remembering it, thinking of it. That was a place where I stood on the steps of a monument, a temple, in the shadow of two great men on a blistering August afternoon.

One, seated, chiseled in stone by the hands of an immigrant father and his six Italian sons; the other standing, resolved but not hardened, humbled but not bowed, the furrows on his brow shaped by the labor pains of immense struggle, not by a sculptor's will.

The first, the prophet, proclaimed that "Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth." (*Abraham Lincoln*) The second, a preacher, declares "We refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice." (*Martin Luther King Jr.*) To a congregation of over 250,000 souls, I added my voice that day: Hallelujah. That was 56 years ago. Now both prophet and preacher are effigies in stone, but the truths they spoke still live. Sometimes in life we fight so hard to get where we are going, we don't look back to appreciate where we've been. We are so busy striving to arrive that we lose sight of the waypoints, the stops and starts along the path, the hills and the valleys we've navigated. To forget those places, to lose our history, denies us the blessing of fully living in our present. I think that it robs us of our best and highest future. Just don't linger there too long.

Had it not been for a casting call that fundamentally changed how I felt about myself, I would never have been on



Rita Moreno shares personal stories of her trailblazing years to break through typecasting in Hollywood.

those steps in 1963. Up until that time in my career, the studios had cast me to play every kind of ethnic role, Polynesian girl, Indian princess, Arabian girl, or any dark-skinned girl they needed. I hated those parts. I now refer to them as my dusky maiden roles. I had to deliver lines to my white lover like, “Why you no love Ula no more?”

And then my character, Ula, the Indian maiden, is so distraught when my lover summarily rejects me that I fling myself off a cliff. And you know, my long-term memory kicked in as I was recalling this story to tell you and I remembered that at the end of that scene in the movie, the director cut to the waves lapping over Ula’s lifeless body on the beach at the bottom of the cliff, which in reality, of course, was me.

And in that water were thousands of tiny stinging jellyfish. I’m wiggling with discomfort. The director barks, “Stop twitching, damn it, you’re supposed to be dead.”

“But, sir, I’m getting stung by jellyfish.”

“Shut up and do what I say.”

And there you have it, he sees me as Ula. What was in the mind of these studio executives and writers? The parts they were creating for young minority actresses told a story. These roles objectified us, they almost always portrayed us as ignorant, uneducated, totally passive, unable to read and write, and morally bankrupt, usually some white man’s mistress. So, you may ask how does an Indian princess speak, or an Arabian girl for that matter? So I think to myself, what can I do to make

Unbelievable that at that point in my 22-year career, I had yet to encounter a single role model for a girl like me. They simply did not exist. To my absolute surprise, it was Anita in *West Side Story* who became my exemplar.

these terrible parts better? We were given no dialect coaches and the directors never seemed to care, so I decided to solve the problem myself. I gave accents to these characters that I thought they should have. Well, a while back I found a couple of my own movie clips on YouTube and started laughing out loud because the accents I created all sounded the same. If she was Arabian, she sounded “like this.” If she was American Indian, she sounded “like this.” Hawaiian, “like this.” I had created a universal ethnic accent. Not my finest hour, but hey, you have to pay the bills.

Unbelievable that at that point in my 22-year career, I had yet to encounter a single role model for a girl like me. They simply did not exist. To my absolute surprise, it was Anita in *West Side Story* who became my exemplar. She had precisely all the qualities I so longed to portray in films and desired to be a part of my life and character. She had a sense of dignity and of self-respect. That girl kicked ass. That girl took names. I had never, believe it or not, played a character, Hispanic or otherwise, until then who had any of those qualities ever.

It was Anita who taught me that I could actually be a person of strength, I could choose what was best for me, I could chart the course of my career. Come to think of it, I was at the March on Washington that day because of an artistic encounter. I learned that I could engage my energies in things that matter. I understood I was part of a much bigger picture and I decided to shoulder my part of the responsibility to help others, or at the very least to raise awareness.

And as Sonia told you, I'm 87 now and in the third act of my life, but that hasn't changed me one bit.

Tonight, in this sanctuary of the arts, we celebrate, and tomorrow we charge the Hill. That's it. And we say open the vaults of opportunity for all people and cash some checks for the arts. Now, it's usually at this point when someone raises their hand and says, 'Come on, Rita, why should the government do for people what they can do for themselves? Hey, listen, you did well enough on your own. You and your Mami made it just fine. After all, the arts have become the foie gras of the elite. They're for coast-dwellers, California, New York, Hollywood, Broadway.'

Yeah, right. Tell that to every parent all over this country that's worked a bake sale, held a car wash, sold a raffle ticket, or worked a silent auction to travel a choir, stage a play, equip an orchestra, or uniform a band. They get it, the people get it, that the arts are a critical part of education, personal development, social development, and not just for their own little Johnny. The arts build a community with a capital C and it rhymes with D and that stands for dough. The arts need dollars, moolah, green backs, bread, smackers, lettuce, Benjamins. Organizations like Americans for the Arts are critical for shaking the trees and all of us need to help advocates on the Hill like Congresswomen Bonamici and Stefanik of the Congressional STEAM Caucus to turn a trickle of arts education funding into a river.

Great art is powerful, it's transcendent, it lifts beyond the physical realm, it supersedes the moment. It does something special to your soul.

It is public funding of the arts that first made programs addressing early childhood development possible on television. Think PBS' *Mr. Rogers*, (I did that show as a guest once), and *The Electric Company*. Do you know that when my show business colleagues found out I was offered *The Electric Company* they were alarmed? 'Don't do it, Rita. You go on a children's television show and you'll never work as an adult again.' It happened to a lot of actors. Education, teaching kids to read in an entertaining way, and on television? What a high calling. Sometimes your heart tells you to take a risk. Mine did and so I took it. And for the next five years, those were some of the most fulfilling and my happiest. Listen to this, I love this.

Even my husband's Tanta Shirley learned how to read because of *The Electric Company*. She said to me one day, she called me and she said, "Rita, darling, I'm reading from a can of peas." She called me from the supermarket.

In that wonderful season of my career, I also had a whole new set of fans. One time I was having dinner at Sardi's in New York City and I had to go powder my nose. So there I am sitting on the commode with my knickers to my knees when this tiny little gentleman wearing a three-piece suit and tie appears looking up at me from the opening below the stall door.

"Hi."

"Well, hello, hello there."

And at that point, thank goodness, his mother rushes in, apparently frantic, and she says, "Jordy, there you are, come on."

And as he's leaving he says, "I can wash my hands."

He was so cute, three-piece suit, tiny little man. Another time I was going up the escalator at Bloomingdale's and a little girl is staring at me while she's holding her mommy's hand all the way to the top, just staring at me. And when I step off, she's still staring and she says, "electric cup of tea." And I said, "That's right, honey."

And then she says, "How did you get out?"

I was just charmed and I tried the best way I could to explain in a way that perhaps a little girl could understand. And I said, "Well, honey, you see, there is a big room with bright lights called a studio and they have a camera, like when your mommy takes pictures of you, but only this is a big camera and it takes pictures that move. And they take pictures of me and then they send the pictures on a special telephone wire to a big antenna up on the hill that sends the pictures to your TV in your house, and you see the picture of me in the box."

"But how did you get out?"

Great art is powerful, it's transcendent, it lifts beyond the physical realm, it supersedes the moment. It does something special to your soul.

Even today as people pass that enormous green lady that welcomed my Mami and me all those years ago, "they don't see oxidized copper in a museum, they see freedom, they see a beginning, they see a new life." (*Jeff Goins*)

Art. Art broadens perspective, fosters appreciation for beauty, lifts us above ourselves, enables us to project beyond our circumstances and gives us a common language to explore disparate ideas. Art fosters creativity, stretches our imagination, makes us laugh, elicits tears, excites, surprises, shocks, soothes, and sometimes makes us uncomfortable. Art confronts us with our humanity and introduces us to our better angels. In it, we experience harmony, discord, resolution, and sometimes it



Rita Moreno takes a bow as she receives a standing ovation for her inspiring Nancy Hanks speech to a packed audience of 2,000 guests.

leaves us in the air, right in mid-air. Art can paint stories in the movement of a score, the dialog of a play, the choice of a word, the selection of a color, the electricity of a dance. Art invites us out of our enclaves to talk across division, to tear down walls. It teaches us the discipline of listening. Art claims the dulcimer of Appalachia, the cello of Yo-Yo Ma, it's the poetry of Whitman and the rap of Chance, the step-ball-change of jazz and the en pointe of ballet, it's the opera of the Met and the Grand Ole Opry, the movie of a Steven Spielberg and the play of a Tony Kushner. It's a Louisiana gospel and a Chancel Choir uptown. The arts provide a smorgasbord of choices from high tea to a cup of joe. The "Hallelujah Chorus" and "We Shall Overcome." Art is nourishment for the soul, it's a mirror held up to show us who we are and who we can become.

Temples and sanctuaries are places of spiritual transformation, but for me transcendence happened near a cathedral. It didn't have massive stone columns, flying buttresses, or soaring spires. It sat on a side table in our apartment in the Heights. Our sofa was the pew that faced a table radio in the shape of a cathedral, remember those? Yes, we watched a radio. We saw the Joe Lewis fight, we saw it. Mami and I would attend service listening to shows like "Dragnet," the "Tommy Dorsey Orchestra," "Edgar Bergen," "Charlie McCarthy," and the "Ave Maria Hour." Sometimes I would stretch that cord of the radio as far as I could and move that magical box up close to the window. I would open the

window, use a can of Café Bustelo for a step up and climb over the sill onto the fire escape. I loved that fire escape, especially the fire escape at night. I would take my blanket, spread it over the steel rungs like a magic carpet, and that was my place to dream. I had listened to the artists of my day, Miguelito Valdés, Tito Puente, Celia Cruz, Xavier Cugat. These were my Shakira, my Ricky Martin, my Pitbull, my Gloria Estefan. But hey, I was already a convert, an American for the arts, because my favorite was a group called the Pied Pipers, a bunch of white guys and Jo Stafford. And when I laid down and closed my eyes, I'm transported, I can go anywhere, I can be anybody. I want so badly to be somebody, somebody special. And suddenly, it's as though the sky is filled with every star in the universe.

(Rita performs final words as a song a capella)

DREAM

Dream, when you're feelin' blue

Dream, that's the thing to do

Just watch the smoke rings rise in the air

You'll find your share of memories there

So dream, when the day is through

Dream, and they might come true

Things never are as bad as they seem

So dream, dream, dream.

CLOSING REMARKS BY AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS BOARD CHAIRMAN **JULIE C. MURACO**



Americans for the Arts Board Chair Julie C. Muraco thanks Rita for her speech titled, "A Temple, A Sanctuary, A Cathedral: Reviving America's Soul Through the Arts."

Double wow. Wasn't that a magnificent program tonight? So moving, so poignant, and so funny. Thank you so much for being here tonight. Thank you, Rita, for a truly inspiring and personal speech, appropriately titled "A Temple, A Sanctuary, A Cathedral: Reviving America's Soul Through the Arts." And after that moving speech, our souls are stirred and exalted and don't we all need a whole lot of that right now?

Good evening, everyone, my name is Julie Muraco and I'm the Chairman of Americans for the Arts Board of Directors. I'm so proud of the work of this organization, of our board, of our staff, and all the great work accomplished on behalf of the arts in this country. It is my great pleasure to once again thank all of our speakers tonight, beginning with Bob Lynch who has led this organization for more than 30 years.

And to Brian Stokes Mitchell, our Americans for the Arts board member, and Tedd Firth, for an amazing musical performance. And of course, to our two trailblazers, women, whose rich, cultural heritage from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico lifted us off of our seats tonight; Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor; and the incomparable Rita Moreno.

Please give them another round of applause.

And finally, I want to thank all of you for joining us here at the 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. For those of you who would like to watch this lecture over, it will be available on Americans for the Arts' YouTube channel next week. And for the hundreds of arts advocates in the audience tonight who have traveled long distances from across the country to participate in Arts Advocacy Day tomorrow, thank you for your passion, thank you for your commitment, and I want you to know that the nation thanks you for standing up for the arts.

We wish you all good luck and much success tomorrow.
Goodnight.

ABOUT THE LECTURER



RITA MORENO

Rita Moreno's journey from a child with simple beginnings in Puerto Rico to show business icon spans more than seven decades. At age 87, she remains one of the entertainment industry's busiest stars. Her work includes 40 films, several highly-rated television shows, landmark public television programs, critically acclaimed

Broadway shows, concert and lecture appearances, and a best-selling memoir.

Ms. Moreno's rise to stardom captured the experience of the many immigrants who sought better lives and opportunities in America. She was born Rosita Dolores Alverio in a small town near the Puerto Rican rain forest. At age five, she and her mother, a seamstress, moved to New York City to live with relatives in the Bronx.

The precocious child soon began dance lessons and made her Broadway debut at age 13. A talent scout spotted her and introduced her to MGM mogul Louis B. Mayer, who signed her to a film contract.

Ms. Moreno's movie career advanced steadily. Her early films included *Singin' in the Rain* with Gene Kelly, and she was featured as Tuptim in *The King and I* with Yul Brynner.

She is one of only 12 artists and the only Hispanic performer to have won all of show business' top competitive awards: an Oscar®, a Tony®, a Grammy®, and an Emmy® (she won two of the latter).

Ms. Moreno earned the Oscar in 1962 for heating up the screen in her portrayal of the Latina spitfire, Anita, in *West Side Story*, a role which drew on memories of the racial taunts she endured as a young Puerto Rican immigrant living in the Bronx barrio. The Tony win was for her 1975 comedic triumph as

Googie Gomez in Broadway's *The Ritz*. The Grammy was for her 1972 performance on *The Electric Company* album, based on her long-running children's television series. The Emmys were for appearances on *The Muppet Show* and *The Rockford Files*.

After winning the Oscar, Ms. Moreno was acknowledged as a major movie star and she used her celebrity to give voice to valuable causes. She was among the Hollywood luminaries recruited by Harry Belafonte to take part in the historic 1963 March on Washington. She was seated 12 feet away from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he gave his famed "I Have a Dream" speech.

Ms. Moreno has since been involved with many civic, cultural, and charitable events supporting racial equality, hunger, early childhood education, and higher education for minority students, as well as health issues, i.e., HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, heart disease, and diabetes.

She has served on the National Endowment for the Arts committee and as a commissioner for The President's White House Fellowships. Ms. Moreno was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W. Bush and the National Medal of the Arts by President Barack Obama. Her many other honors include the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award, the Kennedy Center Honor for her lifetime contributions to American culture, and the Latin Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award.

Ms. Moreno added *The New York Times* best-selling author to her list of accomplishments with her first book, *Rita Moreno: A Memoir*. Her friend, Supreme Court Associate Justice Sonia Sotomayor, asked her to record her memoir, *My Beloved World*.

Rita Moreno is still sizzling. Netflix has renewed her classic *One Day at a Time* series for a third season. She also completed a 30+ city concert and lecture tour around the country, appearing as a guest artist with symphony orchestras as well as in more intimate cabaret settings. She served as Grand Marshal of the National Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York and released her first all-Spanish language album, *Una Vez Mas*, produced by her good friend, Emilio Estefan.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

With more than 50 years of service, Americans for the Arts is dedicated to representing and serving local communities and creating opportunities for every American to participate in and appreciate all forms of the arts. From offices in Washington, D.C., and New York City, the organization provides programs designed to:

1. Help build environments in which the arts and arts education can thrive and contribute to more vibrant and creative communities.
2. Support the generation of meaningful public and private sector policies and increased resources for the arts and arts education.
3. Build individual awareness and appreciation of the value of the arts and arts education.

To achieve its goals, Americans for the Arts partners with local, state, and national arts organizations; government agencies; business leaders; individual philanthropists; educators; and funders. While local arts agencies comprise Americans for the Arts' core constituency, the organization also supports a variety of partner networks with particular interests in public art, united arts fundraising, arts education, local and state advocacy networks, and leadership development.

Through national visibility campaigns and local outreach, Americans for the Arts strives to motivate and mobilize opinion leaders and decision-makers. Americans for the Arts produces annual events that heighten national visibility for the arts, including the National Arts Awards; the Arts and Business Partnership Awards; and the Public Leadership in the Arts Awards (in cooperation with The United States Conference of Mayors), which honors elected officials in local, state, and federal government. Americans for the Arts also hosts Arts Advocacy Day annually on Capitol Hill, convening arts advocates from across the country to advance federal support of the arts and arts education. For more information, please visit AmericansForTheArts.org.



ABOUT OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

The Rosenthal Family Foundation (Jamie Rosenthal Wolf, David Wolf, Rick Rosenthal, and Nancy Stephens) are proud to support the Americans for the Arts 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy. Established by Richard and Hinda Rosenthal, the Foundation embodies the belief that individuals fortunate enough to receive unusual benefits from a society have the distinct obligation to return meaningful, tangible support to that society—in the form of creative energy as well as funding. The Foundation encourages activity and commentary concerned with constructive social change and recognizes and rewards excellence in individuals and organizations nationwide. Americans for the Arts is particularly grateful to Hinda Rosenthal, who approached the organization about her foundation becoming a sponsor of the Nancy Hanks Lecture 19 years ago, and whose extraordinary support helped the program to flourish and grow into a pre-eminent national forum for dialogue about arts policy.

THE AFTER PARTY



Rita Moreno with her daughter Fernanda Fisher.



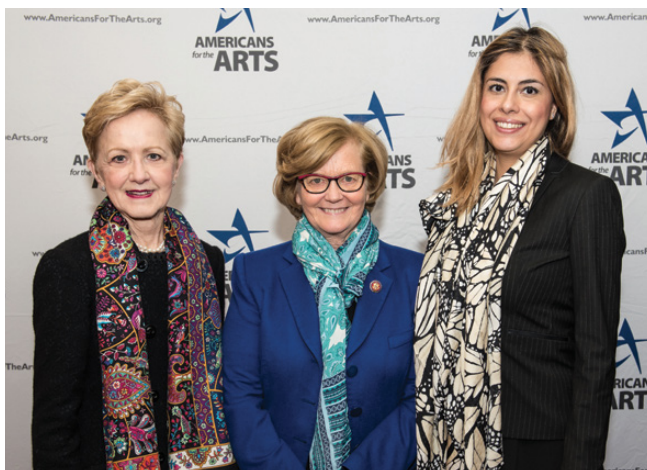
Rita Moreno with Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Mary Anne Carter.



(L-R) Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities Jon Peede, Co-Chair of the Congressional S.T.E.A.M. Caucus Representative Suzanne Bonamici, Americans for the Arts President and CEO Robert L. Lynch, and Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts Mary Anne Carter.



(L-R) Arts Action Fund Board Member and musician Ben Folds, Americans for the Arts and Arts Action Fund Board Member Ann Stock, Kennedy Center Trustee and philanthropist Adrienne Arsht, and Americans for the Arts Board Member and Tony Award-winning actor Brian Stokes Mitchell.



(L-R) Americans for the Arts and Arts Action Fund Board Member Ann Stock, Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus Representative Chellie Pingree, and Americans for the Arts Artist Committee Member and opera singer Carla Dirlikov.



(L-R) Arts Action Fund Chairman and Hanks Lecture sponsor Nancy Stephens, Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, Americans for the Arts Board Chairman Julie C. Muraco, and Arts Action Fund Executive Director Nina Ozlu Tunceli.

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS LEADERSHIP

Under the leadership of President and CEO Robert L. Lynch, Americans for the Arts' governing and advisory bodies are as follows:

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Skitch Henderson
Arthur Hiller
Arthur Mitchell
Paul Newman
Leonard Nimoy
Harold Prince
John Raitt
Lloyd Richards
Billy Taylor
Wendy Wasserstein

ABOUT THE NANCY HANKS LECTURE

Nancy Hanks was president of Americans for the Arts from 1968–1969, when she was appointed chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, a position she held for eight years. Until her death in 1983, she worked tirelessly to bring the arts to prominent national consciousness. During her tenure at the National Endowment for the Arts, the agency's budget grew 1,400 percent. This year marks the 32nd Annual Nancy Hanks Lecture on Arts and Public Policy, established to honor her memory and to provide an opportunity for public discourse at the highest levels on the importance of the arts and culture to our nation's well-being.

PAST NANCY HANKS LECTURERS

- 2019 Rita Moreno, Award-Winning Actor, Singer, Dancer, Author, Humanitarian, Civil Rights Activist, and Hispanic Heritage Trailblazer
- 2018 Lonnie G. Bunch III and Richard D. Parsons, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
- 2017 Darren Walker, President of the Ford Foundation
- 2016 John Maeda, American designer and technologist
- 2015 Norman Lear, groundbreaking television producer, author, and social activist
- 2014 Maureen Dowd, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2013 Yo-Yo Ma, acclaimed musician and arts educator
- 2012 Alec Baldwin, actor and arts advocate
- 2011 Kevin Spacey, actor and Artistic Director of the Old Vic Theatre
- 2010 Joseph P. Riley Jr., Mayor of Charleston, South Carolina
- 2009 Wynton Marsalis, Artistic Director, Jazz at Lincoln Center
- 2008 Daniel Pink, best-selling author and innovator
- 2007 Robert MacNeil, broadcast journalist and author
- 2006 William Safire, columnist and author
- 2005 Ken Burns, documentary filmmaker
- 2004 Doris Kearns Goodwin, journalist and author
- 2003 Robert Redford, artist and activist
- 2002 Zelda Fichandler, Founding Director of Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and Chair of the Graduate Acting Program at New York University
- 2001 Frank Rich, op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*
- 2000 Terry Semel, past Chairman and Co-CEO of Warner Bros. and Warner Music Group
- 1999 Wendy Wasserstein, playwright
- 1998 Dr. Billy Taylor, jazz musician and educator
- 1997 Alan K. Simpson, former U.S. Senator
- 1996 Carlos Fuentes, author
- 1995 Winton Malcolm Blount, Chairman of Blount, Inc., philanthropist, and former U.S. Postmaster General
- 1994 David McCullough, historian
- 1993 Barbara Jordan, former U.S. Congresswoman
- 1992 Franklin D. Murphy, former CEO of the Times Mirror Company
- 1991 John Brademas, former U.S. Congressman and President Emeritus of New York University
- 1990 Maya Angelou, poet
- 1989 Leonard Garment, Special Counsel to Presidents Nixon and Ford
- 1988 Arthur Schlesinger Jr., historian and special assistant to President Kennedy



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