



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **The Kennedy Center Announces Recipients of The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards**

### **10 Teachers Receive National Award for Excellence in the Program's First Year**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announced the 2011 winners of Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards – a series of annual grants which recognize inspiring teachers across the United States. After receiving hundreds of nominations through the Kennedy Center Web site, ten teachers were selected for their exceptional influence on their students. Award recipients each receive \$10,000 and are showcased, along with the people they inspired, on a Web site dedicated to inspirational teachers. The 10 teachers are: Christi Davis of Fayetteville, NC; Rafe Esquith of Los Angeles, CA; Paul Fry of New Haven, CT; Rembert Herbert of New York, NY; Bridget Lambright of Cleveland, OH; Melanie Mann of North Miami Beach, FL; Steven Miller of Rialto, CA; Tom Porton, of Bronx, NY; Evelys Ubiera of Miami, FL and Jacque Wheeler of Valdosta, GA.

In many people's lives there is at least one teacher who inspired, and helped them become who they are today. Although the range of subjects and grades taught spans widely, these teachers have one thing in common: each has overwhelmingly impacted his or her students' lives and encouraged them to reach their potential. "There are no shortcuts." "...changed my life." "...the possibilities were endless." "She is still changing my life." These are a few comments from students whose lives have been influenced by this group of teachers.

"The Kennedy Center Education Department is proud to administer this significant award focusing on the tremendous impact of teachers," said Darrell M. Ayers, Vice President of Education at the Kennedy Center. "After reading though hundreds of inspiring nominations, we are thrilled to recognize this outstanding group."

The awards were created in honor of Stephen Sondheim's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and were initiated and funded through the generous support of Freddie and Myrna Gershon. Broadway legend

Stephen Sondheim frequently attributes his success to the teachers in his life. The Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards are presented each year on Sondheim's birthday – March 22 – to a handful of teachers, kindergarten through college, who are nominated via the Kennedy Center Web site at ([kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards](http://kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards)). Nominators must be at least 18 years of age and have been a student of the nominee. Teacher nominees must teach or have taught in a K-12 school, college, or university in the United States. Teachers of all grade levels and subject areas are eligible. A panel of judges reviewed a pool of nominations and chose the recipients based on the power and quality of the nomination from their former students.

“Teachers define us,” stated Stephen Sondheim. “In our early years, when we are still being formed, they often see in us more than we see in ourselves, more even than our families see and, as a result, help us to evolve into what we ultimately become. Good teachers are touchstones to paths of achieving more than we might have otherwise accomplished, in directions we might not have gone.”

Winner of the Special Tony Award<sup>®</sup> for Lifetime Achievement in the Theatre, **Stephen Sondheim** has received more Tonys<sup>®</sup> than any other composer. Mr. Sondheim wrote the music and lyrics for *Saturday Night, A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, Anyone Can Whistle, Company, Follies, A Little Night Music, The Frogs, Pacific Overtures, Sweeney Todd, Merrily We Roll Along, Sunday in the Park With George* (for which he received a Pulitzer Prize), *Into the Woods, Assassins, Passion and Road Show*, as well as lyrics for *West Side Story, Gypsy*, and *Do I Hear a Waltz?* and additional lyrics for *Candide*. Revues of his work include *Sondheim on Sondheim, Side by Side by Sondheim, Marry Me a Little, You're Gonna Love Tomorrow*, and *Putting It Together*. For films and television, he composed the scores of *Stavisky* and *Reds* and wrote songs for *Dick Tracy*, for which he received an Academy Award, and *Evening Primrose*. He was also the recipient of The Kennedy Center Honors in 1993. Mr. Sondheim is on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, having served as its president from 1973 to 1981.

To learn more about the Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards, please visit [kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards](http://kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards). A full list of recipients and their nominating students is below.

## 2011 Kennedy Center Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Award Recipients

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Student</b>	<b>Subject/Grades taught</b>	<b>School</b>
Christi Davis	Matthew Karkutt	Choir	Gray's Creek Elementary
Rafe Esquith	Joanna Cho	5th/6th grade	Hobart Boulevard Elementary
Paul Fry	David Pogue	English	Yale University
Rembert Herbert	Lin-Manuel Miranda	High School English	Hunter College High School
Bridget Lambright	Chardonay Brown	High School English	Jane Addams Business Career Center
Melanie Mann	Melanie Chancy	Child Care	North Miami Beach Senior High
Steven Miller	Genein Letford	6th grade	Bemis Elementary
Tom Porton	David Gonzalez	High School English	James Monroe High School
Evelys Ubiera	Melissa Machado	Special Education	Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Jacque Wheeler	Debra Fordham	Theater	Valdosta State University

### **About Education at the Kennedy Center**

As the nation's performing arts center, the Kennedy Center's impact and responsibility extends far beyond its doors—it reaches across America and into the future. Nowhere is this goal more truly achieved than in the Center's education programs. For nearly 40 years, the Kennedy Center Education Department has provided quality arts experiences for students, teachers, families, and the general public throughout the United States. In the past year, the Center's education programs have directly impacted more than 11 million people. The mission of the Education Department is to foster understanding of and participation in the performing arts through exemplary programs and performances for diverse populations of all ages that represent the unique cultural life and heritage of the United States. The resources of the Department focus on producing, presenting, and touring performances and educational events for young people and their families; school- and community-based residencies and other programs that directly impact teachers, students, administrators, and artists through professional development; systemic and school improvement through the arts and arts integrated curricula; partnerships; creating and providing educational materials via print and the Internet; the development of careers in the arts for young people and aspiring professionals; and strengthening the management of arts organizations. The programs of the Education Department have become models for communities across the country and have unlocked the door to learning for millions of young people. This has been accomplished by fostering creativity, teaching discipline, improving self-esteem, and challenging students to think in new ways, as well as offering them experiences in

the pure enjoyment and excitement of the performing arts. For more information, visit the Center's web site at [www.kennedy-center.org/education](http://www.kennedy-center.org/education).

The Kennedy Center is a member of the DC Arts and Humanities Education Collaborative.

The U.S. Department of Education supports approximately one-third of the budget for the Kennedy Center Education Department. The contents of this press release do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

For more information about the Kennedy Center/Stephen Sondheim Inspirational Teacher Awards, please visit [kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards](http://kennedy-center.org/sondheimteacherawards).

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