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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## ANNUAL GALA

### **Ford's Theatre Society Announces Leonard Slatkin and Gary Sinise as 2026 Lincoln Medalists**

**Awards to Be Presented at *The Ford's Theatre Annual Gala* Performance  
on May 31, 2026**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—Ford's Theatre Society celebrates the legacy of President Abraham Lincoln at its annual gala performance on Sunday, May 31, 2026, at Ford's Theatre. For more than 45 years, Ford's Theatre Society has hosted this bipartisan event, which provides crucial support to the nonprofit's theatrical and educational programs. As part of the evening, Ford's will present the Lincoln Medal to two distinguished honorees: Grammy Award-winning conductor **Leonard Slatkin**, one of the leading American conductors of his generation, and **Gary Sinise**—an Emmy, Golden Globe and Tony Award-winning actor, director, producer, humanitarian and dedicated advocate for active duty military, veterans and their families. The Lincoln Medal, awarded by the Ford's Theatre Society, recognizes

individuals whose body of work, accomplishments and character reflect the enduring legacy and strength of character embodied by President Abraham Lincoln.

“Each year, the Lincoln Medal invites us to consider how Abraham Lincoln’s legacy continues to live on through individuals whose work strengthens our nation,” said **Paul R. Tetreault**, Director of Ford’s Theatre. “This year, we are proud to honor two remarkable leaders whose contributions span the arts and public service. **Leonard Slatkin** has shaped the sound of American music for generations, while **Gary Sinise** has used his platform over the last 40+ years to uplift and serve those who have sacrificed for our country, including establishing the Gary Sinise Foundation in 2011 as an amplification of those efforts to support our nation’s heroes. Together, they embody a commitment to excellence, compassion and civic responsibility that reflects the very best of the American spirit.”

*The Ford’s Theatre Annual Gala* benefits the 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 sponsor **General Dynamics**. Ford’s Theatre gratefully acknowledges **Alston & Bird LLP** as the Lincoln Medal Dinner Sponsor. Ford’s Theatre extends a special thanks to **Stu Schreiber** and **Center Drive Media** for the production of the 2026 Lincoln Medalist tribute videos.

For registration information and to reserve tickets for the weekend of events, please visit [fords.org/gala-registration](https://fords.org/gala-registration).

## Lincoln Medal

Past recipients of the Lincoln Medal include **The Honorable Nancy Pelosi** (2024) and philanthropist and co-founder, CEO and Chairman of Blackstone, **Stephen A. Schwarzman** (2024); EGOT-winning, trailblazing actress, **Rita Moreno** (2023) and philanthropist and health advocate, **Marlene A. Malek** (2023); **The Honorable James E. Clyburn** (2022) and music industry legend, **Clive Davis, Jr.** (2022); **General Colin L. Powell** and **Alma J. Powell** (2019) and political humorist, **Mark Russell** (2019); philanthropist and businesswoman, **Sheila C. Johnson** (2018) and golf champion, **Jack Nicklaus** (2018); former NFL player, **Peyton W. Manning** (2017); civil rights activist, **Diane Nash** (2015); **Congressman John D. Dingell** (2014) and actor, **James Earl Jones** (2014); former **Secretary of State Dr. Condoleezza Rice** (2013); Holocaust survivor and author, **Elie Wiesel** (2012); human rights activist, **Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu** (2010) and **Justice Albie Sachs** (2010); filmmaker, **George Lucas** (2009), singer, **Aretha Franklin** (2009) and actor, **Sidney Poitier** (2009); **Dr. Maya Angelou** (2008), actor, **Ruby Dee** (2008) and **Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor** (2008); and **Congressman John Lewis** (2007).

## This Year's Lincoln Medal Recipients

**Leonard Slatkin**, a commanding presence in American classical music, is widely recognized as a leading advocate for the nation's repertoire. He has connected the richness of established symphonic traditions with a strong commitment to accessibility, education and the preservation of musical heritage over his 60-year career.

Recently named Music Director of the Nashville Symphony, he will take the artistic helm of the orchestra beginning with the 2026–2027 season, following his previous appointment as Artistic Advisor. His other titles include Music Director Laureate of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Directeur Musical Honoraire of the Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL), Conductor Laureate of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra (SLSO), Principal Guest Conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria (OFGC) and Artistic Consultant to the Las Vegas Philharmonic (LVP). He maintains a rigorous schedule of guest conducting and is active as a composer, author and educator.

Slatkin's 2025-2026 season included engagements with the National Symphony Orchestra (Ireland), Manhattan School of Music Symphony Orchestra, SLSO, USC Thornton Symphony, LVP, Taiwan Philharmonic, KBS Symphony Orchestra (Seoul), Gunma Symphony Orchestra, NHK Symphony Orchestra (Tokyo), Nashville Symphony, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Warsaw Philharmonic, Franz Schubert Filharmonia (Barcelona), ONL, Prague Symphony Orchestra, Filarmonica George Enescu (Bucharest), OFGC and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin.

Slatkin has received six Grammy awards and 35 nominations. Naxos recently reissued Vox audiophile editions of his SLSO recordings featuring the works of Gershwin, Rachmaninov, and Prokofiev. Other Naxos recordings include *Slatkin Conducts Slatkin*—a compilation of pieces written by generations of his family—as well as works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel, Berlioz, Copland, Borzova, McTee and Williams.

A recipient of the National Medal of Arts, Slatkin also holds the rank of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honor. He has been awarded the Prix Charbonnier from the Federation of Alliances Françaises, Austria's Decoration of Honor in Silver, and the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton. His debut book, *Conducting Business* (2012), for which he received the ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Recognition Award, was followed by *Leading Tones* (2017) and *Classical Crossroads: The Path Forward for Music in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2021). His latest books are *Eight Symphonic Masterworks of the Twentieth Century* (spring 2024) and *Eight Symphonic Masterworks of the Nineteenth Century* (fall 2024), part of an ongoing series of essays that supplement the score-study process, published by Bloomsbury.

**Gary Sinise's** stage, film and television career spans more than four decades. At 18, he co-founded Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company, where he later served as Artistic Director for seven years. Now in its fifth decade, Steppenwolf has earned national and international acclaim. Sinise has starred in or directed more than a dozen productions there, some transferring to Broadway and earning Tony nominations, along with Drama Desk, Obie, Joseph Jefferson and Regional Theatre Tony Awards.

Twenty years into his career, his performance as Lt. Dan Taylor in *Forrest Gump* brought widespread recognition, earning Golden Globe, SAG and Academy Award nominations, as well as honors from the National Board of Review and Disabled American Veterans. His film credits include *Apollo 13*, *Ransom*, *Snake Eyes*, *The Green Mile*, *Mission to Mars*, *The Human Stain*, *I Still Believe* and *Good Joe Bell*. On television, he starred in *CSI: NY* for nine seasons and *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders*, with additional work in *13 Reasons Why*. He is an Emmy, Golden Globe and two-time SAG Award winner, with additional recognition for roles in *Truman*, *George Wallace* and *The Stand*.

Sinise also directed two feature films, including *Of Mice and Men*, which he co-produced and starred in. For more than 40 years, he has been a dedicated advocate for service members, veterans, first responders and their families—beginning with support for Vietnam veterans in Chicago and deepening through his enduring connection to the military community following *Forrest Gump* and the events of September 11, 2001.

In 2011, he founded the Gary Sinise Foundation, which serves veterans, first responders and their families through multiple programs. He also serves in leadership and advisory roles with organizations including the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial Foundation, Disabled American Veterans, the Medal of Honor Foundation, the USO and Hope for the Warriors.

In recognition of his humanitarian work, Sinise has received numerous honors, including the Presidential Citizens Medal, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the Spirit of Hope Award and the Thayer Award, and has been named an honorary Chief Petty Officer by the Navy and an Honorary Marine.

His 2019 memoir, *Grateful American: A Journey from Self to Service*, became a *New York Times* bestseller, reflecting a lifelong commitment to ensuring those who serve are never forgotten.

## **About Ford's Theatre**

One of the most visited sites in the nation's capital, Ford's Theatre reopened its doors in 1968, more than a hundred years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Operated through a partnership between Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service, Ford's Theatre is the premier destination in Washington, D.C. to explore and celebrate Abraham Lincoln's life and legacy.

Ford's Theatre Society was founded under the guidance of executive producer **Frankie Hewitt**, who, during her 35-year tenure, established Ford's as a living, working theatre producing performances that highlighted the diversity of the American experience. Since the arrival of **Paul R. Tetreault** as director, critics and the theatre-going public have recognized Ford's for the superior quality of its artistic programming. With works from the Tony-nominated *Come From Away* and the nationally acclaimed *Big River*, to the world premieres of *Meet John Doe*, *The Heavens Are Hung In Black*, *Liberty Smith*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *The Widow Lincoln*, *The Guard*, *Grace*, *Something Moving* and *The American Five*, Ford's Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. Under the current leadership of Board of Trustees Chairman Phebe N. Novakovic and through the lens of Lincoln's leadership and legacy, Ford's Theatre endeavors today to advance Lincoln's "unfinished work" with programs and performances that cultivate empathy, encourage dialogue and bridge divides in American life.

For more information on Ford's Theatre and the Ford's Theatre Society, please visit [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org).

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