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2019 MARIAN ANDERSON AWARD TO BE PRESENTED TO KOOL & THE GANG

November Gala and Concert to Honor Award-Winning R&B Group

PHILADELPHIA, PA (June 5, 2019) – Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney announced today that Kool & the Gang will receive the 2019 Marian Anderson Award on November 12, 2019, during the highly anticipated Gala and Concert at The Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The Award was designed to celebrate critically acclaimed artists who have excelled in their field and have contributed to society in a positive and singular manner. Funds raised by the Marian Anderson Award Gala and Concert will provide fundamental support for high school-age artists who have financial challenges through the Award’s signature philanthropic initiative, the Young Artist Study-Grant (YASG).

American R&B, jazz, soul, funk and disco group Kool & the Gang officially launched in 1969 and have performed continuously longer than any other R&B group in history. Influencing music over three generations, Kool & the Gang have earned two Grammy Awards, seven American Music Awards, 25 Top Ten R&B hits, nine Top Ten Pop hits and 31 gold and platinum albums. In 2014, they were honored with the BET Soul Train Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2015, the group took their place as American musical icons with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. This year, Kool & the Gang will be celebrating their 50th anniversary of performing as a group.

“We are honored to present Kool & the Gang with the 2019 Marian Anderson Award,” Mayor Kenney said. “The group embodies all that Marian Anderson herself stood for, and I cannot think of a group more deserving of this prestigious honor.”

Today, Kool & the Gang are one of the most sampled R&B groups of all time thanks to iconic songs like *Celebration*, *Cherish*, *Jungle Boogie*, *Summer Madness* and *Open Sesame*, as well as

appearing alongside music legends including Kid Rock, Dave Matthews Band, Elton John and The Roots. The group's signature drum beats, bass, guitar and horn lines lace the tracks of numerous artists including the Beastie Boys, Jay-Z, Madonna, Janet Jackson, Cypress Hill and P. Diddy.

"We are truly honored," Kool & the Gang said. "Philadelphia played such an integral part in our early career. We would not be where we are without the city of Philadelphia, or as we called it back in the day, 'Funky Philly.' It's where we recorded several of our albums and where radio and fans really had our back. Receiving an award founded by Marian Anderson on our 50th anniversary means so much to us. Thank you to everyone involved."

Kool & the Gang have a noteworthy history of charitable involvement. From their participation with Band Aid in 1984 to raise funds for victims of famine in Africa to their longtime involvement with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Kool & the Gang have a mission to uplift children and people in need all over the world. The group has donated to or performed gratis for Haiti Relief, Wounded Warriors, Sweet Relief Musicians Fund, Kids X-press, Gabrielle's Angels, The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center and more.

Willa Hightower, chairwoman of The Marian Anderson Award, spoke of the board's decision to pay tribute to Kool & the Gang.

"Kool & the Gang's profound success over the last five decades combined with their philanthropic spirit makes them the obvious and well-deserving recipient of this year's Marian Anderson Award," Ms. Hightower said. "We are looking forward to another exceptional evening celebrating the importance of the arts in Philadelphia."

Ms. Hightower also announced organizational changes within the Marian Anderson Award.

"This is truly an exciting year for the Marian Anderson Award," Ms. Hightower said. "Our executive director, Pat Moran, has announced his retirement after more than 20 years of service. We are forever grateful for his tireless support and dedication to the Marian Anderson Award. He has been dearly missed. Gregory Murphy now serves as our interim executive director as he has stepped down as vice-chair of our Board. We are confident he will approach the role with the same passion as Pat did."

Ms. Hightower also thanked Wells Fargo, PECO and COMCAST for their important support as the Award's lead sponsors, as well as the world-renowned Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts which is now in its fourth year partnering with the Award.

"We are thrilled to sponsor the 2019 Marian Anderson Award Gala and Concert honoring Kool & the Gang," said Ed Cambron, chief operating officer and executive vice president of the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. "Kool & the Gang are recording industry legends, and their philanthropic initiatives align closely with our organization's mission and commitment to education. We are very much looking forward to this year's event."

Emmy Award-winning producer, arranger and keyboardist Bill Jolly will be the music director for The Marian Anderson Award Gala Concert. The Concert will also feature performances by renowned artists including multiple Grammy-Award-winning composer, producer, arranger, guitarist and co-founder of CHIC, Nile Rodgers, Atlantic Records artist Bri Steves, trombonist Jeff Bradshaw, trumpeter Matt Cappy and internationally acclaimed artists Lady Alma and Carol Riddick.

For information about attending the Gala Dinner, please call 215-893-1837. For tickets to the Gala Concert, go to:

<https://www.kimmelcenter.org/events-and-tickets/201920/kcp/marian-anderson-awards/>

Visit www.marianandersonaward.org and <https://www.kimmelcenter.org> for more information about the organizations.

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