

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2023

GREAT STAGES GALA
Yannick Nézet-Séguin and The Philadelphia Orchestra
Featuring Renée Fleming and Angélique Kidjo
Hosted by Jim Gardner
May 16, 2023

***New Celebration Benefits the Academy of Music and
The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc.***

(Philadelphia, March 1, 2023)—**The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc.**, will present the **Great Stages Gala**, a new celebration that unites the traditions of the Academy of Music Anniversary Concert and Ball with the Kimmel Cultural Campus Gala. The inaugural celebration will take place on **May 16, 2023**, featuring a performance by **The Philadelphia Orchestra** under the baton of Music and Artistic Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** in Verizon Hall at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The Orchestra will collaborate with world-renowned singers **Renée Fleming** and **Angélique Kidjo**, both of whom are five-time GRAMMY winners. Former 6abc Action News anchor **Jim Gardner** will serve as host for the evening. Proceeds from the Great Stages Gala benefit the Academy of Music Restoration Fund, the Kimmel Cultural Campus, and The Philadelphia Orchestra.

“We are delighted to unify two long-standing event traditions of the Kimmel Cultural Campus and The Philadelphia Orchestra in the Great Stages Gala,” said Matías Tarnopolsky, president and CEO of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc. “The Kimmel Cultural Campus is a place where a universe of world-class art forms, genres, and ideas takes shape. This concert, featuring Yannick, the musicians of the Orchestra, and stellar artists Renée Fleming and Angélique Kidjo showcases the remarkable collaborations made possible through the creation of The Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc.”

Donors who contribute at the Silver Patron level and above will enjoy a Luminaries Reception on the Academy of Music Stage beginning at 5:00 PM. All benefactors will enjoy a pre-concert reception

beginning at 6:00 PM in the Academy of Music Lobby prior to the 8:00 PM concert in Verizon Hall. More information about Great Stages benefactor packages, as well as public tickets for the concert, is available [here](#).

The Great Stages Gala has been organized under the direction of Academy of Music Board member Lisa Bettinger-Buckingham and Philadelphia Orchestra and Kimmel Center, Inc., Board members Christopher M. Keith and Jami Wintz McKeon.

About the Guests

Renée Fleming is one of the most acclaimed singers of our time, performing on the stages of the world's greatest opera houses and concert halls. Honored with five GRAMMY awards and the U.S. National Medal of Arts, she has sung for momentous occasions from the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the Super Bowl. In November, she starred in the world premiere of the staged version of *The Hours*, a new opera based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel and award-winning film, at the Metropolitan Opera, having appeared in the concert version with The Philadelphia Orchestra the previous March. With Yannick Nézet-Séguin as pianist, Fleming won the 2023 GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Vocal Solo Album for *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*. In January, she was awarded the 2023 Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum in Davos. A leading advocate for research at the intersection of arts and health, as artistic advisor to the Kennedy Center, Fleming launched the first ongoing collaboration between the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the National Institutes of Health. She leads SongStudio at Carnegie Hall, co-directs the Aspen Opera Center and VocalArts, and she is advisor for special projects at LA Opera. More information: www.reneefleming.com

Five-time GRAMMY Award winner Angélique Kidjo is one of the greatest artists in international music today, a creative force with 16 albums to her name. *TIME* magazine has called her "Africa's premier diva," and named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world for 2021. The BBC has included her in its list of the continent's 50 most iconic figures, and in 2011, the *Guardian* listed her as one of its Top 100 Most Inspiring Women in the World. *Forbes* has ranked Kidjo as the first woman in its list of the Most Powerful Celebrities in Africa. She is the recipient of the prestigious 2015 Crystal Award given by the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland; the 2016 Amnesty International Ambassador of Conscience Award; the 2018 German Sustainability Award; and the 2023 Vilcek Prize in Music. As a performer, her striking voice, stage presence, and fluency in multiple cultures and languages have won respect from her peers and expanded her following across borders. Kidjo has cross-pollinated the West-African traditions of her childhood in Benin with elements of American R&B, funk, and jazz, as well as influences from Europe and Latin America. More information: www.kidjo.com

Former 6abc Action News Anchor Jim Gardner helped guide viewers of the program through every news event, large and small, from 1976–2023. Even though he was born, raised, and educated in New York City, Gardner has lived most of his adult life in the Philadelphia area, and his roots run deep. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Columbia University in 1970. As a student, he got his first taste of broadcast journalism when he reported on the historic student riots at Columbia in 1968. On June 1, 1976, Gardner joined WPVI-TV in Philadelphia as a reporter and anchor of Action News at Noon. He assumed the role of anchor of Action News at 6 PM and 11 PM on May 11, 1977. Having recently retired, he is most proud of his longevity and consistency, being there at 6 and 11 PM every day for four decades.

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