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Contact: Dani Barlow

Tel: 646-524-2226

[dbarlow@sdcfoundation.org](mailto:dbarlow@sdcfoundation.org)

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**DONALD BYRD TO BE PRESENTED WITH  
STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS FOUNDATION (SDCF)  
GORDON DAVIDSON AWARD**

**FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AND DISTINGUISHED SERVICE IN THE  
NATIONAL NOT-FOR-PROFIT THEATRE**

(New York, December 14, 2022) Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF), the not-for-profit foundation of Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), has named choreographer Donald Byrd as the recipient of its annual Gordon Davidson Award. Named in honor of the founding artistic director of Los Angeles's Center Theatre Group and one of the visionary leaders of the resident theatre movement, the Gordon Davidson Award recognizes a director or choreographer for lifetime achievement and distinguished service in the national not-for-profit theatre. The award will be presented to Byrd, who is the Artistic Director of Spectrum Dance Theater, at a virtual ceremony in winter 2023.

The selection committee met in October and was chaired by **Neel Keller**, Associate Artistic Director of Center Theatre Group in Los Angeles. "We are thrilled to honor Donald Byrd with this year's Gordon Davidson Award. Donald is an inspirational artist and leader whose work and beliefs share so much of Gordon's spirit and passion. A choreographer of international acclaim, he has created work on stages from Broadway to regional theatres, from major ballet and opera companies to rural colleges. Donald's exhilarating choreography combines the highest levels of artistry with a belief that the performing arts can further social justice and improve society. Like Gordon, Donald is also a builder of trailblazing institutions. For the past 20 years as Artistic Director of Spectrum Dance Theatre he has built a repertory company while collaborating with civic leaders to use dance to celebrate community and spark public discourse around many of our most pressing issues. He is an innovator, collaborator, and visionary. The Davidson committee is happy to present the Davidson Award to Donald Byrd in celebration of his lifetime achievement and continuing contributions to our field."

"Gordon Davidson's impact on the American Theatre is unmatched, his commitment to artists unparalleled," said Byrd. "To be recognized with this

award is more than an honor, it inspires me to redouble my efforts. During this time when so much has changed and we are faced with challenges that can seem unsurmountable it is imperative that we respect our communities by creating work that calls an audience together to experience the magic and power of dance and of the theatre. I think that's what Gordon would ask us all to do. Thank you SDCF, I'm humbled."

Keller was joined on the selection committee by **Sheldon Epps**, SDCF Trustee and Artistic Director Emeritus of Pasadena Playhouse; **Michael John Garcés**, Artistic Director of Cornerstone Theatre Company; **Tom Moore**, who was mentored by Davidson and directed shows at the Mark Taper Forum and Ahmanson Theatre; **Laura Penn**, Executive Director of SDC; **Lisa Peterson**, Resident Director at the Mark Taper Forum from 1995 to 2005; freelance director **Seret Scott**; and **Warner Shook**, who directed Davidson's final Taper production.

The Gordon Davidson Award has previously been presented to Oskar Eustis (2018), Lisa Peterson (2019), Seret Scott (2020), and Emily Mann (2021).

## BIOGRAPHIES

**Donald Byrd** is the Artistic Director of the Seattle-based Spectrum Dance Theater, and a Tony-nominated (*The Color Purple*) and Bessie Award-winning (*The Minstrel Show*) choreographer. He has created works for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Dance Theater of Harlem, The Joffrey Ballet among others; and has worked extensively in theatre and opera including the New York Public Theater, 5th Avenue Theater, Baltimore Center Stage, Seattle Opera, Dutch National Opera, The Atlanta Opera, The Israeli Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and San Francisco Opera. Awards, prizes, and fellowships includes Doris Duke Artist Award, James W. Ray Distinguished Artist Award, Laurate of the Rainier Club (Seattle), Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts (Cornish College of the Arts), Masters of Choreography Award (The Kennedy Center), Fellow at The American Academy of Jerusalem, James Baldwin Fellow of United States Artists, Resident Fellow of The Rockefeller Center Bellagio (Italy), Fellow at the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue (based at Harvard), and the Mayor's Arts Award for his sustained contributions to the City of Seattle.

To read a full bio and learn more about Donald's illustrious career, please follow this link: <https://sdcfoundation.org/2022-gordon-davidson-award-recipient-donald-byrd/>

**Gordon Davidson (1933-2016)** was the founding artistic director of Los Angeles's Mark Taper Forum, which he led from 1967 to 2005, as well as artistic director of the Ahmanson Theatre from 1989 to 2005. In 2004 Davidson produced the inaugural season at the Kirk Douglas Theatre. Under his leadership, numerous works were developed or made their premieres in Los Angeles, including *Zoot Suit*, *Angels in America*, *The Shadow Box*, *The Trial of the Catonsville*

*Nine, In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer, Jelly's Last Jam, and Children of a Lesser God.* The Taper received the Tony Award for Outstanding Regional Theatre in 1977, and Davidson received the Tony as Best Director of a Play for *Children of a Lesser God* in 1980. He was inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame in 2000. He began his career as a stage manager and briefly served as managing director for the Theatre Group at UCLA.

Founded in 1965, **Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF)** celebrates, develops, and supports professional stage directors and choreographers throughout every phase of their careers. SDCF works to build a theatrical community that reflects the cultural, racial, and gender diversity of our nation by creating opportunities for artists of all backgrounds to bring their full, authentic selves to their work as creative leaders in the theatre. SDCF's goals are to provide opportunities to practice the crafts of directing and choreography; to gather and disseminate craft and career information; to promote the profession to emerging talent; to provide opportunities for exchange of knowledge among directors and choreographers; to increase the awareness of the value of directors' and choreographers' work; and to convene around issues affecting theatre artists. [sdcfoundation.org](http://sdcfoundation.org).

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