

MEDIA ALERT * * * MEDIA ALERT * * * MEDIA ALERT

**NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION TO HOST ANNUAL BACKYARD
BALL PERFORMANCE AND GALA IN CELEBRATION OF 2018 WINNERS
AND IN HONOR OF PLAYWRIGHT TARELL ALVIN MCCRANEY**

Evening Presented by Max Mara to Feature Performances by Grammy Award Winner and Voice Alumna Grace Weber and to be Emceed by TV Personality Louis Aguirre

WHAT: National YoungArts Foundation (YoungArts) will bring together the nation's most promising artists, industry leaders, alumni and celebrities for the organization's largest annual fundraiser and the kick off to the Backyard Ball performance and gala on Saturday, January 13. The celebratory evening will be the culmination of National YoungArts Week, YoungArts' signature program beginning January 7 for 166 Finalists in the visual, literary, design and performing arts selected from approximately 8,000 applicants. The event will honor Academy Award winner and playwright **Tarell Alvin McCraney** (1999 YoungArts Winner in Theater and YoungArts master teacher) as the 2018 Arison Alumni Award recipient for his contributions and commitment to the arts.

The Backyard Ball is presented by **Max Mara**, an Italian luxury brand aligned in YoungArts' mission to support young artists in their educational and professional development. This is the fourth consecutive year that Max Mara has joined YoungArts in the celebration of burgeoning talent. Max Mara will also showcase new designs during the cocktail reception, and honor 2017 Max Mara Young Visionary Award recipient **Torrance Hall** (2017 Winner in Photography). New and unique this year is the format of the production. The entire show will take place on one stage with TV personality and local celebrity **Louis Aguirre** leading as Master of Ceremonies. He will introduce a series of inspiring alumni performances curated by Grammy Award winner **Grace Weber** (2006 Winner in Voice & U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts), alongside **Thirdstory** (**Ben Lusher**, 2010 Winner in Voice; **Richard Saunders**, 2008 Winner in Voice & U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts; **Elliott Skinner**, 2013 Winner in Voice), **Nadia Alexander** (2012 Winner in Theater & U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts), **Amanda Krische** (2012 Winner in Dance), **Jasmine "Jaz" Sinclair Sabino** (2012 Winner in Theater), **Jose "BOY BOI" Tena** (2012 Winner in Dance), **Elliot Wu** (2017 Winner in Classical Music), and an all-star alumni jazz band led by four-time Grammy nominated pianist and composer **Gerald Clayton** (2002 Winner in Jazz & U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts) with **Braxton Cook** (2010 Winner in Jazz), **Julius Rodriguez** (2014 Winner in Jazz), **Zack Ostroff** (2011 Winner in Jazz & U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts) and **Benny Benack** (2009 Winner in Jazz).

In addition to the performances, the evening, hosted by Chairs **Dr. Kira** and **Mr. Neil Flanzraich**, will feature an elegant reception and seated dinner. The YoungArts Campus will undergo a stunning transformation for the gala with iridescent visual

elements, gold accents, ceiling art and original works throughout the space. **Torrance Hall** will showcase silkscreens of his self-portraiture.

The evening will conclude with the Backyard Bash on the YoungArts Plaza with dancing and dessert under the stars, featuring music by legendary DJ and producer **Arthur Baker**.

WHO: Expected guests include **Louis Aguirre, Sarah Arison & Thomas Wilhelm, Linda Coll, Santino Fontana, Dr. Kira & Mr. Neil Flanzraich, Carolina García Jayaram, Matt Haggman, Richard Kohan, Maria Giulia Maramotti, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Jorge & Darlene Pérez, Patrice Rushen, Ellie & Bruce Taub, Charles & Judy Temel, Grace Weber and Maurice M. Zarmati.**

WHEN: Saturday, January 13, 2018
Media check-in: 5:00 PM (YoungArts Tent, Biscayne Blvd & 22nd Street)
Red carpet arrivals begin: 5:15 PM
Doors open at 6:30 PM
Program begins: 7:45 PM
***all media must be credentialed in advance

WHERE: **National YoungArts Foundation
2100 Biscayne Boulevard
Miami, Florida 33137**

SUPPORT AND TICKETS: The Backyard Ball performance and gala is supported by Presenting Partner Max Mara, EventStar Structure, Bacardi, Miami Herald and MIAMI Magazine.

Tickets to the Backyard Ball start at \$1,500 and tables are available starting at \$15,000. Tickets can be purchased [here](#) or by contacting Lauren Nessler at gala@youngarts.org / 305.377.1140 ext. 1808.

To join the Backyard Bash gala after-party, please contact membership at membership@youngarts.org.

MORE INFO: youngarts.org/gala

ABOUT THE NATIONAL YOUNGARTS FOUNDATION

The National YoungArts Foundation (YoungArts) was established in 1981 by Lin and Ted Arison to identify and nurture the most accomplished young artists in the visual, literary, design and performing arts, and assist them at critical junctures in their educational and professional development. Through a wide range of annual programs, performances, and partnerships with some of the nation's leading cultural institutions, YoungArts aspires to create a strong community of alumni and a platform for a lifetime of encouragement, opportunity and support.

YoungArts' signature program is an application-based award for emerging artists ages 15–18 or in grades 10–12 from across the United States. Selected through a blind adjudication process, YoungArts winners receive valuable support, including financial awards of up to \$10,000, professional development and educational experiences working with renowned mentors—such as Debbie Allen, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rebecca Walker, Plácido Domingo, Frank Gehry, Jeff Koons,

Wynton Marsalis, Salman Rushdie and Carrie Mae Weems—and performance and exhibition opportunities at some of the nation’s leading cultural institutions, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (Washington, D.C.), The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), The Museum of Modern Art (New York) and New World Center (Miami). Additionally, YoungArts winners are eligible for nomination as a U.S. Presidential Scholar in the Arts, one of the nation’s highest honors for high school students who exemplify academic and artistic excellence.

YoungArts winners become part of a thousands-strong alumni network of artists, which offers them additional professional opportunities throughout their careers. YoungArts alumni who have gone on to become leading professionals in their fields include actresses Viola Davis, Anna Gunn, Zuzanna Szadkowski and Kerry Washington; Broadway stars Raúl Esparza, Billy Porter, Andrew Rannells and Tony Yazbeck; recording artists Josh Groban, Judith Hill and Chris Young; Metropolitan Opera star Eric Owens; musicians Terence Blanchard, Gerald Clayton, Jennifer Koh and Elizabeth Roe; choreographers Camille A. Brown and Desmond Richardson; visual artists Daniel Arsham and Hernan Bas; internationally acclaimed multimedia artist Doug Aitken; New York Times bestselling author Sam Lipsyte; and Academy Award winners Doug Blush and Tarell Alvin McCraney.

For more information, visit youngarts.org, facebook.com/YoungArtsFoundation or twitter.com/YoungArts. To watch a brief video about YoungArts, [click here](#).

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