
Trump's Impact on the Kennedy Center: What's the Story?

Description

Notably, only several weeks prior, the most significant event emerging from the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., was its annual homage to distinguished American artists. However, the landscape has dramatically shifted with the return of Donald Trump.

In the inaugural month of his second term, Trump unceremoniously dismissed the leadership of this esteemed arts institution, appointed a board of trustees predominantly composed of his allies, and proclaimed himself the board's chair—a title reportedly conferred unanimously. In a statement to The Wall Street Journal, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt commented, "The Kennedy Center learned the hard way that if you go woke, you will go broke. President Trump and the members of his newly appointed board are committed to revitalizing the Kennedy Center into a vibrant and highly regarded establishment where all Americans, along with international visitors, can engage with the arts in a manner that honors America's rich history and traditions."

What is the Kennedy Center and how long has it been in existence?

Financed through a combination of government funding and private philanthropy, the center is a towering 100-foot complex housing a concert hall, opera house, and theater, alongside a lecture hall, numerous meeting spaces, and a "Millennium Stage" known for hosting free performances. Its inception was fundamentally bipartisan.

Conceived in the late 1950s during the Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower, the endeavor gained traction through a proposal from a Democrat-led Congress advocating for a "National Culture Center." The initiative was further championed in the early 1960s by President John F. Kennedy, who launched a fundraising campaign, culminating in Lyndon B. Johnson signing a 1964 bill designating it as the John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts, a tribute following Kennedy's assassination the previous year.

Who has graced the Kennedy Center stage?

The center has long served as a prestigious venue for a wide array of theatrical and musical performances, spotlighting iconic figures such as the Paul Taylor Dance Company and notable duos like Tony Bennett and Lady Gaga. Annual highlights also include the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, with laureates like Lorne Michaels, Tina Fey, and Bob Newhart being recognized, alongside ceremonies honoring distinguished artists such as Francis Ford Coppola, Bonnie Raitt, and the Grateful Dead.

Presidents have frequently attended these honors, even amidst artists who might politically oppose them. This good-natured spirit was encapsulated in 2002 during the administration of Republican President George W. Bush



, when Steve Martin humorously recalled being asked by Bush about procuring bootleg recordings of Barbra Streisand, a staunch Democrat, eliciting laughter from Bush and his guests.

What prompts Trump's renewed focus on the Kennedy Center?

During his first term, Trump largely overlooked the Kennedy Center, becoming the first president to regularly absent himself from the honors ceremony, a decision influenced, in part, by the refusal of honoree producer Norman Lear to attend in his presence. In a departure from his previous approach, Trump has adopted a notably assertive and proactive stance in his second term, citing specific performances, such as drag shows, as catalysts for his decision to restructure the institution.

"At my directive, we are going to make the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C., GREAT AGAIN," Trump proclaimed on his social media platform. "I have resolved to immediately dismiss multiple individuals from the Board of Trustees, including the Chairman, who do not subscribe to our Vision for a Golden Age in Arts and Culture."

Conversely, the Kennedy Center's website continues to emphasize its core mission, which aims "to ensure that the education and outreach programs and policies of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts meet the highest level of excellence and reflect the cultural diversity of the United States." Among its initiatives is the "Promise of US" project, encouraging public submissions of artistic self-portraits to be part of a virtual mosaic symbolizing America's diverse populace and the promise of its future.

Who leads the institution now?

Trump has ousted the previous board chair, David M. Rubenstein, a noted philanthropist and owner of the Baltimore Orioles. He now oversees a board that, traditionally bipartisan, has tilted overwhelmingly Republican, with recent appointments including Attorney General Pam Bondi, country singer Lee Greenwood, and White House chief of staff Susie Wiles.

Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter, who was appointed by Rubenstein in 2014, resigned shortly after the board overhaul, with Trump designating diplomat Richard Grenell, former U.S. ambassador to Germany during Trump's first term, as the interim president.

"I'm truly, genuinely heartbroken about the implications for our artists, the performances on our stages, and the staff who support them," Rutter lamented in a recent NPR interview. "The Kennedy Center is intended to serve as a beacon for the arts across America."

What are the repercussions of these changes?

The ramifications are unprecedented. Prominent consultants for the Kennedy Center, including musician Ben Folds and soprano Renée Fleming, have resigned, while actor Issa Rae and author Louise Penny have canceled their scheduled appearances. At a recent concert, singer-songwriter Victoria Clark boldly wore a shirt emblazoned with the phrase "ANTI TRUMP AF."

Further controversies loom on the horizon. The upcoming schedule features "RIOT! Funny Women Stand



Up,” a special comedy event commemorating Women’s History Month, during which Conan O’Brien is set to receive the Twain Award amidst an event likely rife with politically charged humor. Additionally, the center is slated to host “Eureka Day,” a play addressing a mumps outbreak—an especially sensitive theme with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. recently appointed as secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services due to his criticisms of vaccines.

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An earlier version of this report incorrectly stated that the center had canceled performances by the touring children’s musical “Finn” and a concert by the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington, D.C., since Trump’s takeover. Kennedy Center officials clarified that these cancellations had been arranged prior to the leadership change.

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Vocabulary List:

1. **Revitalizing** /,ri:'vaɪtəlaɪzɪŋ/ (verb): To imbue with new life and vitality.
2. **Established** /ɪ'stæblɪʃt/ (adjective): Having been in existence for a long time and therefore recognized and generally accepted.
3. **Predecessor** /'prɛdəsɛsər/ (noun): A person or thing that has previously occupied a position or place.
4. **Corroborate** /kə'rɒbəreɪt/ (verb): To confirm or give support to a statement theory or finding.
5. **Tribute** /'trɪbjʊ:t/ (noun): An act statement or gift that is intended to show gratitude respect or admiration.
6. **Emphasize** /'ɛm.fə.saɪz/ (verb): To give special importance or prominence to something in speaking or writing.

Vocabulary quizzes



Multiple Choice (Select the Correct answer for each question.)

1. What is the process of breathing new life into something called?
Option: Revitalizing
Option: Established
Option: Emphasize
Option: Tribute

2. What are assertions made without proof called?
Option: Empowered
Option: Lamenting
Option: Allegations
Option: Posthumously

3. What is another word for skillfully made or constructed?
Option: Crafted
Option: Contenders
Option: Cerebral
Option: Antagonists

4. What type of film presents facts and information about a subject?
Option: Struggles
Option: Documentary
Option: Intervene
Option: Deterioration

5. What is the act of giving special importance or attention to something?
Option: Revitalizing
Option: Tribute
Option: Emphasize
Option: Turmoil

6. What is an award given to someone after their death called?
Option: Empowered
Option: Accolades
Option: Posthumously
Option: Eligibility

7. What is a warning or indication of a future event called?
Option: Empowered
Option: Foreshadow
Option: Artistry



Option: Sabotage

8. What describes things that are connected or related to each other?

- Option: Reflecting
- Option: Interconnected
- Option: Antagonists
- Option: Incarcerated

9. What is expressing sorrow or grief about something called?

- Option: Empowered
- Option: Lamenting
- Option: Allegations
- Option: Contenders

10. What is the act of deliberately destroying or damaging something?

- Option: Tribute
- Option: Crafted
- Option: Cerebral
- Option: Sabotage

Gap-Fill (Fill in the blanks with the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

11. The company was _____ in 1995 and quickly became a market leader.

12. During difficult times individuals use different strategies for _____.

13. Understanding the _____ of historical events helps in analyzing their impact.

14. Her new role _____ her to make important decisions on behalf of the team.

15. The concert was a fitting _____ to the legendary musician.

16. His actions were a way of _____ his innermost thoughts and feelings.

17. The lack of maintenance led to the _____ of the old building.

18. In the upcoming tournament there are several strong _____ for the championship title.

19. To participate in the competition athletes must meet the _____ criteria.



20. The novel's plot revolves around the conflict between the protagonist and the _____.

Matching Sentences (Match each definition to the correct word from the vocabulary list.)

21. A leader who held the position before the current one.
22. To confirm or give support to a statement or finding.
23. A state of great disturbance confusion or uncertainty.
24. To give someone the authority or power to do something.
25. Expressions of praise or admiration.
26. Occurring awarded or appearing after the death of the person concerned.
27. Carefully created or constructed.
28. Involving intelligence rather than emotions or instinct.
29. To be confined in prison; imprisoned.
30. To be a warning or indication of a future event.

Answer

Multiple Choice: 1. Revitalizing 2. Allegations 3. Crafted 4. Documentary 5. Emphasize 6. Posthumously 7. Foreshadow 8. Interconnected 9. Lamenting 10. Sabotage

Gap-Fill: 11. Established 12. Coping 13. Significance 14. Empowered 15. Tribute 16. Reflecting 17. Deterioration 18. Contenders 19. Eligibility 20. Antagonists

Matching sentence: 1. Predecessor 2. Corroborate 3. Turmoil 4. Empowered 5. Accolades 6. Posthumously 7. Crafted 8. Cerebral 9. Incarcerated 10. Foreshadow

CATEGORY

1. Entertainment - LEVEL5

Date Created

2025/02/20

Author

aimeeyoung99