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Cellist Yo-Yo Ma to Receive Lifelong Learning Award from WHYY, May 1

PHILADELPHIA—WHYY will honor cellist Yo-Yo Ma with its Lifelong Learning Award during a special engagement on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. The event will take place online and in-person and feature an exclusive interview of Ma by Terry Gross, host and co-executive producer of *Fresh Air with Terry Gross and Tonya Mosley*, one of public radio's most popular programs, with millions of people tuning in each week on over 650 NPR stations. The interview will be broadcast at a later date nationally as well as locally on WHYY-FM as part of a *Fresh Air* episode.

"WHYY is honored to recognize Yo-Yo Ma with this year's Lifelong Learning Award for his support of education and cross-cultural artistic partnerships," said William J. Marrazzo, President & CEO of WHYY Inc. "Ma understands that the arts have the power to create empathy, foster understanding, and inspire change."

Most recently, Ma began *Our Common Nature*, a cultural journey to celebrate the ways that nature can reunite us in pursuit of a shared future. *Our Common Nature* follows the Bach Project, a 36-community, six-continent tour of J. S. Bach's cello suites paired with local cultural programming. Both endeavors reflect Ma's lifelong commitment to stretching the boundaries of genre and tradition to understand how music helps us to imagine and build a stronger society and a devotion to inspiring others to do the same.

"Part of being a transformative teacher involves creating a learning environment that is free of judgment and full of collaboration," Ma has said. "Great educators, like great performers, have to catch a student's attention, and then take their learner on a journey made up of connections that transcend a single subject." Great teachers, he said, "can take you to far away, and then somehow lead you right back to where you started."

In 2010, President Obama named Ma a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom saying "while Yo-Yo could have just settled for being the world's greatest cellist, he's said that even greater than his passion for music is his passion for people. And so, he's spent much of his life traveling the world, training and mentoring thousands of students, from Lebanon and Korea to the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra."

Ma's discography of more than 120 albums (including 19 Grammy Award winners) ranges from iconic renditions of the Western classical canon to recordings that defy categorization, such as "Hush" with Bobby McFerrin and the "Goat Rodeo Sessions" with Stuart Duncan, Edgar Meyer, and Chris Thile. Ma's

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recent releases include “Six Evolutions,” his third recording of Bach’s cello suites, and “Songs of Comfort and Hope,” created and recorded with pianist Kathryn Stott in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. His latest album, “Beethoven for Three: Symphony No. 4 and Op. 97 “Archduke,” is the third in a new series of Beethoven recordings with pianist Emanuel Ax and violinist Leonidas Kavakos

WHYY’s Lifelong Learning Award has been awarded for over two decades. Previous recipients have included historian and filmmaker Dr. Henry Louis Gates Jr., President Joseph Biden (honored while not in office), groundbreaking researcher and advisor Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, four-time Olympic gold medalist Dawn Staley, former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge, news anchors Jim Lehrer and Robert MacNeil, broadcaster Cokie Roberts, Philadelphia’s legendary Kenny Gamble, and Jack Bogle, founder of The Vanguard Group.

Proceeds from the event support WHYY’s commitment to encouraging lifelong learning and advancing civic engagement through storytelling, education and community dialogue programs.

For sponsorship opportunities, contact Nancy Stuski nstuski@whyy.org