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**MAYOR BLOOMBERG PRESENTS 2009 MAYOR'S AWARDS FOR
ARTS & CULTURE AT FRANK SINATRA SCHOOL OF THE ARTS**

*Presents Legendary Opera Singer Jessye Norman with the 2009 NYC Handel Medallion,
the City's Highest Award for Achievement in the Arts*

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg presented the 2009 Mayor's Awards for Arts & Culture to six individuals and organizations in celebration of their outstanding contributions to New York City's cultural life. The Mayor also presented the 2009 NYC Handel Medallion, New York City's highest award for achievement in the arts, to Jessye Norman. Recipients of the Mayor's Awards were the Big Apple Circus, Jaynemie Capetanakis, H.T. Chen, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Vernon Reid, and the Thalia Spanish Theatre. The event, held at the newly-opened Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, was co-hosted by *Bye Bye Birdie* star John Stamos. It featured live performances by the Dance Theatre of Harlem, Dee Dee Bridgewater, the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts Musical Theater Ensemble, Cajun Cellist Sean Grissom, and Picaso, Jr. of the Big Apple Circus. Special guests included Executive and Artistic Director Clive Gillinson of Carnegie Hall and actor Avery Brooks. The Mayor was joined at the awards ceremony by Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin, and Cultural Advisory Commission Chair Agnes Gund.

"Our artists and cultural groups help make New York City a great place to live, learn and work, and a destination for ambitious and creative people from across the world," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Tonight's awards give us a chance to recognize the achievements of some of the people who work hard every day to ensure that New York City remains the place to be for artists and audiences from the five boroughs and beyond. I'm thrilled to present the Handel Medallion to Jessye Norman, one of the consummate artists of our time, whose body of work reflects the City's energy, audacity and passion."

Jessye Norman is one of America's most eminent and universally acclaimed performing artists. Born in Augusta, Georgia, Norman's extraordinary artistry has been hailed around the world, through a career that bridges acclaimed opera stagings, and new music collaborations with artists on the cutting-edge. This year, she served as curator and director for HONOR!, a collaboration with Carnegie Hall that celebrated the African American contributions to the cultural mosaic of the world. Norman is the recipient of 35 honorary doctorate degrees, the Kennedy Center Honor and five Grammy Awards, including the award for lifetime achievement in 2006. Her service to New York City's cultural life extends beyond her music, to include serving on the boards of the New York Public Library, the New York Botanical Garden, Carnegie Hall and the Dance Theatre of Harlem. She is the national spokesperson for the Partnership for the Homeless and the

Lupus Foundation, and a former board member of City-Meals-on-Wheels. She is also the founder of the Jessye Norman School for the Arts in Augusta, Georgia.

The NYC Handel Medallion was established in 1959 by Mayor Robert F. Wagner to honor outstanding achievement in the fields of art and music. Named for the composer George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), the award was first presented at the Handel Festival, a series of 32 concerts held in New York City in 1959 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Handel's death. Past NYC Handel Medallion recipients have included Alvin Ailey, Benny Goodman, Richard Rodgers, Charlie Chaplin, Dizzy Gillespie, Lena Horne, Merce Cunningham and Neil Simon.

"It is an honor, indeed, to receive the Handel Medallion and to find myself in the company of icons, trailblazers, artists of such power and strength," said Jessye Norman. "I am encouraged to work even harder to merit being a part of such an illustrious and diverse assemblage of intellect, daring, inventiveness and sheer talent."

The Mayor's Awards for Arts and Culture were created in 1974 by the Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission to honor individuals and organizations that have made significant contributions to the cultural life of New York City. The Awards acknowledge and celebrate the role individual artists, arts educators, cultural organizations, corporations and philanthropists play in the public-private partnerships that sustains the City's creative vitality and economic well-being. The Bloomberg Administration revived the awards in 2004.

"For the last six years, the Commission has been proud to work with Mayor Bloomberg on the Mayor's Awards for Arts and Culture, building on the strides Commissioner Levin and her staff have made in supporting and sustaining our City's cultural community," said Ms. Gund. "Tonight's event reminds us of how lucky we are to have the highest-caliber artists, educators and organizations dedicated to serving New York City's audiences."

"Culture is critical to the City's economy and quality of life in every neighborhood," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Levin. "As my agency works daily to support cultural nonprofit groups through funding and advocacy, it's important to take this moment to celebrate the people who help define New York City's identity as a home for artists, and a destination for audiences from around the corner and around the world."

At the awards ceremony, Mayor Bloomberg invited guests to view "Splatter Project #1," part of a series of new video installations by Tony Oursler, commissioned for Frank Sinatra School of the Arts by the Department of Cultural Affairs Percent for Art Program, the Department of Education and the New York City School Construction Authority. Completed in 2009, this new media installation marks the City's first ever usage of video for a permanent public art commission.

2009 Mayor's Awards Recipients

Big Apple Circus

For inspiring New Yorkers and visitors from around the world through the joy and artistry of classical circus, and providing significant, innovative services to communities across New York City. Through high quality circus programs tailored to the needs of children undergoing pediatric treatment, at-risk youth, and the disabled, the Big Apple Circus serves as a model for nonprofit cultural community service.

