For Immediate Release

Ben Vereen Speaks at APAP|NYC 2016 Annual Awards Ceremony; MK Wegmann, National Performance Network, Receives “Distinguished Service Award”
Joining Honorees Dr. Charles “Chuck” Davis, Jedediah Wheeler, Sheila M. Smith

Next Year Marks the 60th Annual APAP|NYC: Jan. 6-10, 2017

NEW YORK CITY, (January 19, 2016) – The Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP) honored the top performing arts leaders of 2015 at its annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon today. Actor Ben Vereen addressed the honorees and attendees at the event that took place at the New York Hilton Midtown and is part of APAP|NYC 2016, the association’s annual conference and the world’s premier gathering of performing arts professionals. One of the most popular events each year at APAP|NYC, winners are nominated by their peers for having had a significant impact on the industry and on communities worldwide. APAP also invited the performing arts community to plan to attend next year’s conference—the 60th annual APAP|NYC—Jan. 6-10, 2017.

“This year’s awardees have forged paths of progress for performing arts through vision, passion and hard work. From inspiring great performance to supporting artists and advocating for arts these beloved leaders continue to make an impact and we are proud to shine a spotlight on each of them and their achievements,” said Mario Garcia Durham, president and CEO of APAP.

A surprise each year, APAP’s coveted FAN TAYLOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO THE FIELD OF PROFESSIONAL PRESENTING was awarded to MK Wegmann, President & CEO, National Performance Network (NPN).

MK Wegmann has more than 35 years of experience in organizational development, artists’ services, presenting and producing for non-profit visual and performing arts organizations. Head of NPN, she supports artists in creating and touring of performing arts. As an independent consultant she works with organizations and individual artists in long-range planning, organizational development and system management. Prior to her work with NPN, Wegmann was Associate Director for the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans and Managing Director of the theatre company, Junebug Productions. She has served on and chaired panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation and more, and currently serves on numerous boards.

Other winners honored today included:
THE AWARD OF MERIT FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN PERFORMING ARTS:
Dr. Charles “Chuck” Davis, Founder and Artistic Director, African American Dance Ensemble and DanceAfrica America

THE WILLIAM DAWSON AWARD FOR PROGRAMMATIC EXCELLENCE AND SUSTAINED ACHIEVEMENT IN PROGRAMMING:
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director for Arts and Cultural Programming, Montclair State University

THE SIDNEY R. YATES AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF THE PERFORMING ARTS:
Sheila M. Smith, Executive Director, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts

BIOGRAPHIES

**Dr. Charles “Chuck” Davis, Founder and Artistic Director, African American Dance Ensemble and DanceAfrica America**

Dr. Chuck Davis is one of the foremost teachers and choreographers of traditional African dance in America. Davis founded the Chuck Davis Dance Company in New York in 1968 and the African American Dance Ensemble in Durham, North Carolina in 1983. He has been a panelist for several programs of the National Endowment for the Arts and is a recipient of the AARP Certificate of Excellence, the North Carolina Dance Alliance Award, the 1990 North Carolina Artist Award, and the North Carolina Order of the Long Leaf Pine. In 1992, he received the North Carolina Award in Fine Arts, the state’s highest honor. He has received honorary doctorates from several universities. Most recently, Chuck Davis and DanceAfrica were cited as one of “America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: The First 100” by the Dance Heritage Coalition. Dr. Davis brings the joy of the dance, the excitement of the rhythm and the intensity of humanity to everything he does.

**Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director for Arts and Cultural Programming, Montclair State University**

Jedediah Wheeler is Executive Director for Arts and Cultural Programming at Montclair State University in New Jersey. His program Peak Performances is recognized internationally for its commitment to creating and presenting works without compromise by singular artists in theater, dance, music, opera and performance art. Previously, Wheeler was president of International Production Associates (IPA), the arts management company based in New York City that challenged the conventional wisdom of its time. As the producer of Serious Fun! at Lincoln Center, Jed Wheeler received the 1992 Village Voice OBIE Award for Outstanding Achievement.

**Sheila M. Smith, Executive Director, Minnesota Citizens for the Arts**

Sheila Smith has been Minnesota Citizens for the Arts’s Executive Director since 1996. Now Chair of the Creative Minnesota Project, she was a leader in the 2008 “Legacy” campaign to create 25 years of dedicated funding for the arts and environment through a constitutional amendment. She is on the Board and Public Policy Cabinet of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, and has been Chair of the State Arts Action League, part of Americans for the Arts. She teaches at the University of Minnesota and has a Masters in Arts Administration from St. Mary’s University and a B.A. in Shakespeare from St. Olaf College. She previously served as staff at the Minnesota State Senate.

**NAPAMA AWARD WINNERS**

North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents also presented two awards to its agents and presenters at the event:

**NAPAMA AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE PERFORMING ARTS WINNER:**

**Steve Duchrow, Director of Performing Arts, Elgin Community College Arts Center**

Presented by Jerry Ross, Co-Founder and Vice President, Harmony Artists, and President of NAPAMA

**NAPAMA AGENT/MANAGER AWARD WINNER:**
Harold Norris, Director of Booking, Pentacle
Presented by Monica Felkel, Director of Artist Management, Young Concert Artists

**APAP|NYC 2016** is the world's largest networking forum and marketplace for performing arts professionals. More than 3,600 presenters, artists, managers, agents and emerging arts leaders from all 50 U.S. states and more than 30 countries convene in New York City for five days of professional development, business deals and exciting performances. The week includes more than 1,000 world-class performance showcases, nearly 370 exhibitors and dozens of professional development sessions.

**ABOUT APAP**
The Association of Performing Arts Presenters is the national service, advocacy and membership organization for presenters of the performing arts. APAP is dedicated to developing and supporting a robust performing arts industry and the professionals who work within it. APAP|NYC conference information [APAPNYC.org](http://APAPNYC.org) | APAP membership information [APAP365.org](http://APAP365.org) Twitter [@APAP365](https://twitter.com/APAP365) | Facebook [facebook.com/APAPNYC](https://facebook.com/APAPNYC).  

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