



**Doris Duke Foundation to Host Kickoff of the New York Arab American Comedy Festival's 20th Anniversary National Tour**

Year-Long Comedy Extravaganza to Five of the Country's Most Prestigious Theaters Announced

New York, NY - July 18, 2023 – The New York Arab American Comedy Festival is excited to announce its 20th Anniversary Celebration, a year-long tour to five of the most prestigious performance venues in the United States made possible by the Doris Duke Foundation. For two decades, the festival has upheld its commitment to combating negative media portrayals of Arab Americans and Muslims, while showcasing the incredible talent within the community and fostering connections with industry professionals.

To kick off this momentous celebration, the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) is presenting a special event titled "Comedy Stands Up Against Hate" in New York on July 24. The evening will feature an exclusive preview of the 20th Anniversary Celebration, as well as a dynamic conversation with festival co-founders Dean Obeidallah and Maysoon Zayid, led by renowned comic Pete Dominick. The event is hosted by Sam Gill, President and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF), and Zeyba Rahman, director of the Building Bridges Program at DDF, which works to counter hate directed at Muslims through storytelling and multimedia initiatives.

"Laughter is an infectious medium we rely on to collapse the social distance and develop mutual understanding and connections between people from diverse backgrounds and experiences," said Rahman. "We are delighted to host this kickoff event to support the New York Arab American Comedy Festival's 20th Anniversary Tour and highlight the excellent platform that the festival founders have created to highlight and celebrate U.S. based Arab and Muslim voices to counter hate."

"We are thrilled to celebrate the New York Arab American Comedy Festival's 20th Anniversary with a National Tour to the most iconic theaters in the country," said Maysoon Zayid, comedian, inspirational speaker and co-founder of the festival, "From the very beginning, our festival has aimed to challenge stereotypes and amplify Arab American voices. We started our festival shortly after 9/11, with the deep understanding of the power of comedy to refute negative stereotypes and create understanding and community. In the face of renewed islamophobia from political scapegoating of Arab immigrants, the festival's anti-hate messaging is more vital than ever." Maysoon Zayid is known for her record breaking TED Talk "I've got 99 Problems... Palsy is Just One," as well as regular appearances on CNN, MSNBC, OWN and standout roles on General Hospital and Hollywood blockbusters alike.

Dean Obeidallah, co-founder of the festival and known for his hit "The Dean Obeidallah Show" on SiriusXM radio, Comedy Central's "Axis of Evil," co-director of the award-winning "The

Muslims are Coming!” comedy documentary, regular appearances on MSNBC and more, added: "For two decades, the festival has been a platform for emerging and established comedians to shine. Festival alumni have achieved incredible success, recognition at the Golden Globes and Emmys, and starring in and writing for specials and series on Comedy Central, Netflix, HBO, Hulu and more. We are proud of their accomplishments and the impact they have made in breaking barriers and expanding representation."

**Important Tour Dates:**

September 9 at the Virginia Wimberly Theatre in Boston  
November 16 - 18 at New York City's renowned Gotham Theatre  
November 19 at the iconic 1,500 seat Town Hall on Broadway  
February 10 at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco  
June 8 at the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.

Tickets for the 20th Anniversary National Tour of the NY Arab American Comedy Festival will be available for purchase through the respective venue's box offices and websites. Stay tuned for additional announcements and surprises throughout the year.

**ABOUT THE NEW YORK ARAB AMERICAN COMEDY FESTIVAL**

Founded in 2003, the New York Arab American Comedy Festival has been a pioneering force in showcasing the talents of Arab American comedians and challenging stereotypes through humor. The festival serves as a platform for cultural expression and fosters understanding through laughter. Over the past two decades, it has gained widespread recognition and has become a launching pad for numerous successful careers in the entertainment industry. For more information about the festival, tour dates, participating comedians, and the year-long celebration, please visit [www.arabcomedy.com](http://www.arabcomedy.com).

**ABOUT THE DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION**

The Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) supports the well-being of people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. We operate five national programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri La, two centers that directly serve the public. DDF's Building Bridges Program works with U.S. Muslims to support national efforts to increase mutual understanding and well-being among diverse populations for the benefit of building stronger, inclusive communities. The program is anchored in the conviction that strategic use of the arts and media can help provide an effective social prescription for achieving this vision. Visit [www.dorisduke.org](http://www.dorisduke.org) to learn more.

Media Contact:

Marcy Clark, President of Marcy Clark PR & Events

Email: [Marcy@marcyclarkpr.com](mailto:Marcy@marcyclarkpr.com)

Phone: 212-729-9619

Media Contact:

Doris Duke Foundation Press Room  
Email: [comms@dorisduke.org](mailto:comms@dorisduke.org)  
Phone: 212-974-7006

###