

# Bach Festival Society OF WINTER PARK

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## **Bach Festival performer to receive Kennedy Center Honors Award**

*Pianist Leon Fleisher honored for lifetime arts contribution*

**WINTER PARK, FL** In February 2008, world-revered pianist Leon Fleisher will perform Mozart's *Piano Concerto No. 12* at the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park's Annual Bach Festival. By then he will carry a Kennedy Center Honors Award, a distinction of artistic legacy.

Fleisher will receive his award on December 1 at the 30<sup>th</sup>-annual celebration dinner, hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice. On December 2 he will sit with the President of the United States and First Lady Laura Bush at the annual Honors Gala. Fleisher will be recognized along with actor/writer Steve Martin, singer Diana Ross, film director Martin Scorsese, and songwriter Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys. The gala will air on CBS on Wednesday, December 26 at 9 p.m. (EST).

"We are proud to have Mr. Fleisher, one of the most admired pianists in the world, as part of our lineup this year," says Dr. John Sinclair, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park. "This award is so special. It's been paralleled with knighthood in Britain and the French Legion of Honor."

At 16-years-old, Fleisher played with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall and won the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels in 1952. He is particularly well known for his interpretations of the piano concerti of Brahms and Beethoven. After he lost the use of his right hand due to focal dystonia in 1965 at the age of 37, his life is a story of triumph. He continued performing with only his left hand until he regained the use of his right hand in the 1990s. In 2004 he released *Two Hands*, his first recording of two-handed repertoire in over 40 years. *Two*

*Hands* is also the title of a documentary film featuring his story by Nathaniel Kahn, which was nominated for an Academy Award in January 2007 for best short subject.

Past recipients of the Kennedy Center honor include Steven Spielberg, Luciano Pavarotti, James Earl Jones, and Aretha Franklin, among others. For more information, visit [www.kennedy-center.org/programs/specialevents/honors](http://www.kennedy-center.org/programs/specialevents/honors).

The Bach Festival Society, located in Winter Park, Florida, is one of the longest continuously operating Bach Festivals in the country and among America's great oratorio societies. The Bach Festival Society brings the highest caliber of classical music to Central Florida. Performances are held in the intimate settings of the Tiedtke Concert Hall and Knowles Memorial Chapel on the beautiful campus of Rollins College. For more information regarding the upcoming season or to order tickets, please call the Bach Festival Society at 407-646-2182 or online at [www.bachfestivalflorida.org](http://www.bachfestivalflorida.org).

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