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## **Play On Philly Announces Acquisition of Marian Anderson Award**

*The Marian Anderson Award, which is set to return in fall 2022, will be redesigned to encourage and support young artists in Philadelphia.*

**PHILADELPHIA** - Play On Philly (POP), a tuition-free music education program and nonprofit, announced today that it has obtained the rights to the famed Marian Anderson Award and will launch a revamped in-person ceremony this fall that will honor the legacy of the renowned vocalist and pave the way for young musicians across the region.

Created in 1998, the Marian Anderson Award honors Philadelphian and African-American contralto, Marian Anderson, by recognizing critically acclaimed artists who have positively impacted society either through their own humanitarian work or their philanthropic support for a humanitarian cause. The award, which was managed by an independent board and the Kimmel Center, also raised funds to support high-school-aged musicians in Philadelphia through a Young Artist Study Grant, which contributed \$440,000 across 21 years to more than 200 motivated and talented students with significant financial challenges.

“The success of the Marian Anderson Award is in its ability to inspire others by uplifting the legacy of Marian Anderson through the musicians who we know and love and the future musicians who are still perfecting their craft,” said Willa Hightower, former award board chair. “Play On Philly, with its success in unveiling the power of music education, is well-positioned to meaningfully support young performers throughout their musical journeys.”

Under the leadership of POP, the Marian Anderson Award in its new format will focus on renewing the award’s commitment to young artists by providing holistic resources for professional development tuition-free. The concept of the Young Artist Study Grant will be combined with POP’s existing Emerging Artist Collective, which provides private lessons, high-caliber instruments, and access to performance opportunities for POP students who have expressed serious interest in musical performance. This new program model, the Marian Anderson Young Artist Program, will expand to include students outside of POP’s programs and offer a longer engagement with youth, providing them with mentorship, networking, advocacy, and exposure opportunities to help navigate the exclusive world of music and orchestral performance.

“Marian Anderson was dedicated to removing the same barriers that stopped her from performing throughout her career,” said Founder and Executive Director of POP, Stanford Thompson. “For her, that meant taking young musicians under her tutelage, creating spaces for them to perform, and granting access to the stages that welcomed her. POP is excited to bring that same spirit back to the Marian Anderson Award.”

POP will continue to recognize musicians with a local connection and significant contributions to society, with the first award ceremony tentatively set for fall 2022. The last Marian Anderson Award program was held in 2019 and recognized Kool & the Gang. Previous honorees include Harry Belafonte, Quincy Jones, Oprah Winfrey, Sidney Poitier, and James Earl Jones.

### **ABOUT PLAY ON PHILLY**

Play On Philly (POP) provides high-quality music education to students, who would typically lack access, as a vehicle for life skills and academic achievement. During a typical year, we provide 2 hours of music instruction and ensemble practice every day after school and over 25 performance opportunities throughout the year. Students range from pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade and are loaned an orchestral instrument at no cost. POP programming has proven results: our students score ten points higher on standardized tests and have improved behavior and study skills. We cultivate musical excellence, lifelong skills, and confidence. Learn more about POP at our website: [www.playonphilly.org](http://www.playonphilly.org).