



MEDIA CONTACT:
Shea Bartlett
Imagination Stage
301-280-1641
sbartlett@imaginationstage.org

For Immediate Release

Bella Notte
Imagination Stage's 2017 Annual Gala
Friday, December 8, 2017

BETHESDA, MD (October 30, 2017) Imagination Stage will host its 2017 **Annual Gala: *Bella Notte*** Friday, December 8, at the Embassy of Italy. The gala is chaired by **Erika Martin Bolden, Monique Pressley, Senator Larry Levitan. Dana Bash**, CNN Chief Political Correspondent serves as the Honorary Chair. The gala celebrates Imagination Stage's 38 years of service to the DMV. Funds from the evening will underwrite theatre and arts education programs.

A VIP cocktail reception, courtesy of **Dede and Marvin Lang, and hosted by Kim Greenfield Alfonso and George Little** kicks off the event at 6:00 p.m. A seated dinner follows at 7:00 p.m., catered by Ridgewells' Catering, guests will be entertained by IStage students and actors. The performance, directed by Imagination Stage's Artistic Director **Janet Stanford**, will celebrate the vibrant musical culture of Italy - with an IStage twist, of course, thanks to Lyricist Tina Martin! **Deborah Jacobson** music directs our cast, including IStage favorite **Tiziano D'Affuso** (Gaston in *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*, Prince Eric in *The Little Mermaid*), and beloved, multi-talented Imagination Stage teaching artists and staff members **Laquavia Alston, Gwen Grastoff, Celesta Kirk, and Marcel Smith**. Following the main show, a very special performance from a silk-spinning spider, actress **Shanara Gabrielle**, will give attendees a taste of this year's holiday production, *Charlotte's Web!*

All proceeds raised during the "Fund A Cause" portion of the evening will directly support our **Learning Through Theatre** Initiative, an innovative arts partnership between Imagination Stage, MCPS, DCPS, and DC Public Charter Schools that offers live theatre for children who otherwise would not be exposed to the creative arts.

"We are really looking forward to welcoming Gala guests to 'Italy' this year! *Bella Notte* will be celebrated at the Embassy of Italy on December 8, and will jumpstart the holiday season," says Executive Director **Bonnie Fogel**. "The highlight of the evening will be the presentation of the Imagine Award to **Montgomery County Executive Ike Leggett** and **Catherine Leggett** under whose leadership the arts in Montgomery County have flourished."

We are grateful for the support of our "Producer" level sponsors Dede and Marvin Lang. As well as our "Choreographer" level sponsors, The Annette M. and Theodore N. Lerner Foundation, The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, Design Foundry, Pepco, and Rifkin, Weiner, Livingston LLC.

Décor will be provided by Design Foundry. Atmosphere, Inc. will provide the event lighting, and Creative Video will provide audio and video services. Individual tickets are \$400, and sponsorship packages begin at \$1,000. To request more information or to purchase tickets, contact Kelsey Dean, Special Events Associate, at 301-280-1626 or kdean@imaginationstage.org.

ABOUT MONTGOMERY COUNTY EXECUTIVE IKE LEGGETT AND FIRST LADY CATHERINE LEGGETT, RECIPIENTS OF THE IMAGINATION AWARD

Isiah "Ike" Leggett currently serves as the executive of Montgomery County, Maryland. Mr. Leggett has shown a life-long commitment to public service. From 2002-2004, he served as the Chairman of the Maryland Democratic Party. Prior to that, he was a member of the Montgomery County Council for the At-Large district from 1986-2002. He attended Southern University in Baton Rouge, where he worked through school as a groundskeeper in a work-study program. He graduated in 1967. While an undergraduate student, he was a student-leader in the civil rights movement, and twice met Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. While leading the on-campus civil rights movement, he also commanded the Southern University Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) unit.

First Lady Catherine Leggett has also shown a strong commitment not only to public service, but also the arts. One of her earliest commitments was to join the board of Bethesda Academy of Performing Arts, which later became Imagination Stage. She is now the Chair of Maryland's Arts Commission. As wife of the County Executive, she has spearheaded the Executive's Ball for the Arts for the past twelve years, raising literally millions of dollars for the operating budgets of arts organizations and artists in Montgomery County. She also directed the creation of the 9/11 Memorial of Maryland.

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ABOUT IMAGINATION STAGE

Founded in 1979, Imagination Stage is a 501(c)(3) organization with a mission is to inspire creativity through theatre and arts education programs that nurture, challenge, and empower young people of all abilities. The organization offers year-round professional theatre for young audiences and classes in creative drama/acting, musical theatre, dance, and filmmaking for ages 1-18.

www.imaginationstage.org

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