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**JOIN CO-HOSTS GARY SINISE AND JOE MANTEGNA FOR
THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY CONCERT:
A TRIBUTE TO THE SACRIFICE OF AMERICA'S SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN**

- Live National Television Event from the U.S. Capitol on PBS stars General Colin Powell, Katie Holmes, Laurence Fishburne, Dianne Wiest, Katharine McPhee, Trace Adkins, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Colm Wilkinson, Denyce Graves, Lang Lang, Robert McDuffie, Maestro Erich Kunzel and the National Symphony Orchestra -

Washington, DC, April 8, 2009 - On Memorial Day weekend, PBS will unite our nation with an evening that has become an American tradition. The multi award-winning **National Memorial Day Concert** honors the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, their families at home and all those who have given their lives for our country. The 2009 event commemorates 20 years on air as the nation's memorial service, offering viewers a time to remember, to heal and bring our country together. The program is co-hosted for the fourth year by Emmy Award-winner **Gary Sinise** (*CSI:New York*) and Tony Award-winner **Joe Mantegna** (*Criminal Minds*), two acclaimed actors who have dedicated themselves to veteran's causes and supporting our troops in active service. The top-rated show will be broadcast live from the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol on PBS **Sunday, May 24 from 8:00 to 9:30 p.m. ET** (check local listings) before a concert audience of hundreds of thousands, millions more at home, as well as to our troops serving around the world on the American Forces Radio and Television Network.

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Joining co-hosts **Sinise** and **Mantegna** is an all-star line-up of dignitaries, actors and musical artists including: distinguished American leader **Colin L. Powell USA (Ret.)**; renowned film, television and stage actress **Katie Holmes**; Emmy Award-winning actor **Laurence Fishburne**; double Academy Award-winning actress **Dianne Wiest**; recording artist/actress **Katharine McPhee**; country music superstar **Trace Adkins**; Tony Award-winning Broadway star **Brian Stokes Mitchell**; celebrated Broadway star **Colm Wilkinson** (*Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*); acclaimed opera star **Denyce Graves**; classical music superstar **Lang Lang**; and Grammy nominated violin virtuoso **Robert McDuffie** in performance with the **National Symphony Orchestra** under the direction of maestro **Erich Kunzel**, recipient of the National Medal of Arts. The U.S Joint Chiefs of Staff will also participate in the event along with The U.S. Army Herald Trumpets, The U.S. Army Chorus, The U.S. Army Ceremonial Band, The Soldiers' Chorus of the U.S. Army Field Band, The U.S. Navy Sea Chanters, the Armed Forces Color Guard and Service Color Teams provided by the Military District of Washington, D.C.

“For 20 years, a remarkable group of distinguished performers and television veterans have come together to create a moving remembrance and tribute to those who have been wounded or given their lives for our country,” said concert executive producer Jerry Colbert. “Together with our audience, we have become a community of care and support for our troops. And, every year, we receive a growing number of e-mails and letters from those who still suffer their own personal and painful losses – from WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and now Iraq and Afghanistan – for whom this concert is truly a healing and uniting experience.”

The **National Memorial Day Concert** features uplifting musical performances, documentary footage and dramatic readings that honor all Americans who have served or made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. The 2009 event will focus on three main themes:

- As part of the nationwide Lincoln Bicentennial celebration, the concert pays tribute to Abraham Lincoln's legacy of reaching out “to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan...” The segment will feature dramatic readings of some of Lincoln's personal letters written during the Civil War, the most costly conflict in America's history with over 620,000 lives lost.

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- The concert will also honor the sacrifices, suffering and love of the thousands of family members caring for our severely wounded veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan. These disabled warriors have become our living memorials, a visible reminder of those who sacrificed so much for the principles we stand for, and for their families who take care of them and will continue to sacrifice for them for the rest of their lives.
- As well, this 20th anniversary broadcast reaches out to the entire community of Americans who join us year after year on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol and from around the country to support our troops. Since 1989, the producers of ***The National Memorial Day Concert*** have been privileged to welcome acclaimed stars from the stage, screen and music worlds -- from Tom Hanks, George Clooney, Jimmy Smits, Richard Dreyfuss, Kathy Bates and Natalie Cole to Gladys Knight, B.B. King, Martina McBride, Vanessa Williams, Brad Paisley and Alison Krauss. This year's event will look back and reflect on some of the most powerful moments from the past two decades, in which these performers contributed their immense talents to help us remember and pay tribute to all those who served in America's wars.

For the 2009 event, Colbert has assembled an award-winning production team that features the top Hollywood talent behind some of television's most prestigious entertainment awards shows. The team includes: Emmy award-winning producer Walter C. Miller, America's leading director and producer of live programs including the *Grammy Awards* and *Country Music Awards*; award-winning director Paul Miller whose credits include *The Country Music Awards* and *Saturday Night Live*; and veteran television writer Joan Meyerson who was honored with a distinguished Writer's Guild Award for the 2006 ***National Memorial Day Concert***. The program is a co-production of Jerry Colbert of Capital Concerts and WETA, Washington, D.C.

A companion Web Site at www.pbs.org/memorialdayconcert will feature a comprehensive viewer's guide to the 2009 concert and a special remembrance area where veterans and their families can send eulogies for their loved ones and friends to be delivered to the national memorials in Washington, D.C.

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For over 25 years, Capital Concerts has produced the two major patriotic events at the U.S. Capitol. In 1981, executive producer Jerry Colbert presented the first PBS Fourth of July concert with the National Symphony Orchestra and guest artists performing live from the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol. In 1990, he introduced the **National Memorial Day Concert**. Since then, both holiday specials have been honored with over 80 awards including the New York Film Festival Award, the Telly Award, the Golden Cine Award, the Videographer Award, the National Education Association Award, the Aurora Award, the Christopher Award, the Communicator's Award, the AXIEM Award, the Omni Award and the Writer's Guild of America Award.

The **National Memorial Day Concert** is made possible by grants from Disabled American Veterans and Golden Corral Restaurants, the National Park Service, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Department of the Army, the National Endowment for the Arts, PBS and public television stations nationwide. Air travel is provided by American Airlines.

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