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**WILSON CENTER ANNOUNCES 2025 BIG EVENT HONOREES***Don and JoAnne Krause; and The Wisconsin Conservatory of Music to be Honored as Award Recipients*

**Brookfield, WI (January, 2025)** At [**The Big Event**](https://www.wilson-center.com/the-big-event) on Saturday, June 7, 2025, the **Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts** (Wilson Center) will recognize **Don and JoAnne Krause** and **The Wisconsin Conservatory of Music** as this year’s recipients of the **EDDY Award** and **Educational Excellence Award** (respectively).

Endowed by Wilson Center supporters Kathryn Murphy Burke and John Burke, the **EDDY** is presented annually by the Wilson Center’s Bridge Committee to an arts organization, corporation, or individual(s) whose philanthropic commitment to regional collaboration has created a higher standard of excellence in arts and arts education. In presenting the 2025 EDDY Award, the Wilson Center will celebrate the generosity of Don and JoAnne Krause for their longstanding commitment to the arts in the Milwaukee area, with a particular focus on classical music and music education.

Over the years, Don and JoAnne Krause have made a significant impact with a variety of local organizations, including the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO), the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (MYSO), and PianoArts of Wisconsin.

JoAnne’s lifelong passion for classical music began at the age of seven when she started taking piano lessons—a formative experience that has shaped her dedication to the arts. JoAnne and Don were instrumental in the early years of the Wilson Center. JoAnne served as a Board Member and a member of the programming committee, where she helped shape the Center’s offerings. Don played a pivotal role in the fundraising efforts for the construction of the Wilson Center, serving on the initial Capital Campaign cabinet. Today, they are leading sponsors of the Wilson Center’s classical music performances, and in recognition of their extensive support, the JoAnne Krause Music Education Classroom was named in their honor. Located in the Education wing of the Center, this room serves as a hub for music lessons in partnership with the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music.

Don and JoAnne’s commitment to music education and the arts extends beyond the Wilson Center to include the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, where they are prominent supporters of the MSO’s Music Education Endowment Fund. JoAnne’s involvement with the MSO included service as a Board Member, as President of the Women’s League, and she is a member of the Chairman’s Council. JoAnne sang with the Symphony Chorus for 17 years and was honored with the Distinguished Citizen-Patron of the Arts Award from the Milwaukee Civic Music Association. In addition to the MSO, JoAnne’s leadership in the local arts scene also included her membership with the American Symphony Orchestra League Volunteer Council and her support and membership with the Board of Visitors for the Mead Witter School of Music at the University of Wisconsin where she has been honored as a “Distinguished Alumni”.

Beyond their support of the arts, the Krauses are also avid Wisconsin Badger fans, having been season football ticket holders for 35 years. Don's professional career included a long tenure as Senior VP and Corporate Controller at Newell Brands, from which he retired in 1999. Together, their deep connection to their community and their commitment to enriching the cultural landscape through music and education have made them cherished members of the Milwaukee arts community.

Recent EDDY Award recipients include, Andrea and Tony Bryant & Judy and Gary Jorgensen (2024), Keith Mardak and Mary Vendenberg (2023), Kathryn Murphy Burke (2022), Baird and Mary Ellen & Scott Stanek (2020/21), Kate and Don Wilson (2019), and Bud and Sue Selig (2018). See the complete list of honorees [here](https://www.wilson-center.com/the-big-event).

The 2025 Big Event will mark the tenth year of the **Educational Excellence Award**, which recognizes organizational achievement by a nonprofit that exemplifies collaboration in the arts. The Wilson Center Bridge Committee has selected [**The Wisconsin Conservatory of Music**](https://www.wcmusic.org/)as this year’s recipient of the award, in recognition of their significant commitment to inspiring students of every age and skill level by providing an accessible, exceptional music education.

The Conservatory traces its roots to several Wisconsin music institutions and is now the largest independent non-profit music school in the state. With renowned former students such as Liberace and Gene Wilder, WCM continues to produce entertainment icons like Justin Hurwitz, the Academy Award-winning composer of La La Land, and Angie Swan, one of the most successful professional guitarists of our time.

Today, more than 100 highly trained teaching artists provide expert individual, group, and ensemble instruction to over 16,000 students annually. WCM also serves students at 52 community partnership sites, including public, private, and charter schools, as well as community organizations like Next Door and La Causa. As the Wilson Center’s earliest tenant, WCM offers year-round private lessons, classes, and summer camps there while maintaining a strong collaborative partnership with Wilson Center arts programs.

Last year, WCM celebrated 125 years of excellence in music education, achieved eight consecutive years of a balanced, debt-free budget, and acquired the Milwaukee Children's Choir to save it from insolvency, ensuring the preservation of this important institution for aspiring young singers across the region. Looking to the future, WCM plans to continue its expansion, including the opening of a new site in Bronzeville, and to further reduce barriers to music education throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

Past recipients of the Educational Excellence Award have included The Milwaukee Rep (2024), Latino Arts, Inc. (2023), Next Act Theater and Producing Artistic Director David Cecsarini (2022), Milwaukee Film (2020/21), Milwaukee Ballet and Artistic Director Michael Pink (2019), Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra Arts in Community Education/ACE (2018), Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra (2017), First Stage (2016), and the Florentine Opera Company (2015).

**ABOUT THE SHARON LYNNE WILSON CENTER FOR THE ARTS AND THE BIG EVENT**The Wilson Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization situated in a beautiful 400-acre park in Brookfield, Wisconsin. The Wilson Center’s vibrant outdoor artistic landscape—the Lynn Chappy ArtsPark—joins nature and art in ways that are designed to educate and inspire. Recognized as a cultural anchor in the greater Milwaukee community, the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts serves as a catalyst for lifelong discovery and exploration of the arts. This nonprofit serves more than 55,000 people annually, including 10,000 students. The Wilson Center focuses on three main disciplines: performing arts, arts education, and visual arts. In addition to year-round performances, the organization promotes lifelong learning through arts education programs, art classes and art exhibitions. For more information visit [www.wilson-center.com](http://www.wilson-center.com).

The Big Event is an all-inclusive evening featuring cocktails, a reception, live entertainment, art experiences, dinner on the stage, a voice auction, award presentation and after dinner entertainment. Proceeds from The Big Event support the mission of the Wilson Center to be a vibrant destination expanding, inspiring, and delivering a lifetime of arts education and experiences. Tickets will go on sale Spring of 2025. Sponsorship opportunities are available now and inquiries can be directed to Ben Brzeski, Development Director, at 262-439-5684 or email [bbrzeski@wilson-center.com](mailto:bbrzeski@wilson-center.com)

**ABOUT THE WILSON CENTER BRIDGE COMMITTEE**  
The Bridge Committee, comprised of regional arts and community leaders, is committed to supporting the Wilson Center’s efforts to strengthen the impact of regional collaboration for the long-term viability of the arts in Southeastern Wisconsin. Andy Nunemaker, CEO, *Groupware Technologies, Inc,* and Sarah Smith-Pancheri, *President & CEO, Milwaukee World Festival, Inc.,* are co-chairs of the Bridge Committee. The Bridge Committee was created by Kate Wilson. Kate Wilson’s vision for the Bridge Committee was to bring supporters of the arts together from the lakefront to the lake country - to form a ‘bridge’. Bridge Committee members can be found on the Wilson Center [website](https://www.wilson-center.com/our-team).

*For photography assets of the awardees, please contact Jen Moran at* [*jmoran@wilson-center.com*](mailto:jmoran@wilson-center.com)

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