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**FIVE-TIME GRAMMY AWARD WINNER
MICHAEL MCDONALD
to be Featured at
The Third Annual **BENEFIT THE BARD** Fundraiser
Presented by **WIND CREEK HOSPITALITY**
and the **ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL,**
Saturday, August 20 at 8 p.m.**

MONTGOMERY, AL (April 21, 2016) Five-time Grammy Award winner **Michael McDonald** will be the star of the Alabama Shakespeare Festival's biggest fundraiser of the year, **Benefit the Bard**, on August 20 at 8:00 p.m. **McDonald's** distinctive and soulful voice has been front and center for the legendary **Doobie Brothers** and Rock & Roll Hall of Famers, **Steely Dan**. His outstanding solo career features two multi-platinum, Grammy-nominated Motown albums.

The third annual Benefit the Bard fundraiser is presented by **Wind Creek Hospitality** and the **Alabama Shakespeare Festival** to support the State Theatre's cultural programming and educational efforts. Smokey Robinson and Michael Bolton were the featured artists at the previous two benefit concerts.

A limited number of single public tickets are available for sale. Prices range from \$99 to \$129 and may be purchased by calling **800.841.4273**, going online at www.asf.net or visiting the ASF box office located at 1 Festival Drive in Montgomery's beautiful Blount Cultural Park. Sponsorship information is available by calling **334.271.5343**.

Michael McDonald's voice made classics of songs such as *Takin' to the Streets*, *It Keeps You Runnin'*, *Minute By Minute*, *Sweet Freedom*, *On My Own* with Patti Labelle and the Grammy-award winning *Ya Mo B There* with James Ingram. His 2005 Christmas album, *Through The Many Winters*, sold 500,000 copies in two weeks.

McDonald's vocal style and mastery of the keyboard have been utilized to sing and play with other notable artists such as Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, Elton John and Joni Mitchell.

In addition to his outstanding musical talents, **Michael McDonald** is an active humanitarian. His causes include MusiCares, the National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse and the 7UP Grammy Signature Schools Program. He was part of a star-studded lineup at Kokua for Japan, which raised \$1.6 million for tsunami relief.

"Michael McDonald's heart is as big as his soulful voice and we look forward to hosting him at ASF," noted ASF's artistic producing director **Geoffrey Sherman**.

(more)

“What a gift it is for us to have **Wind Creek Hospitality** as the Benefit the Bard Presenting Sponsor for the third consecutive year,” added ASF’s Board Chair **Dr. Laurie Weil**. “ASF maintains its reputation for excellence in programming and educational outreach throughout the state because we have the consistent support of generous, caring and committed corporate partners such as **Wind Creek Hospitality**.”

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is the State Theatre of Alabama. In addition to producing the highest level of professional theatre, ASF offers **SchoolFest**, the student-matinee program that exposes more than 40,000 students annually to the theatrical arts and literacy projects. The theatre also conducts multiple camps, including **Camp Shakespeare**, and classes for children throughout the year. ASF’s **Southern Writers’ Project Festival of Plays** focuses on the creation of new Southern-themed works, many of which have gone on to be published or produced at ASF and around the country.

To keep tickets affordable, over half of ASF’s \$7.6 million budget must come from contributions and special events such as **Benefit the Bard** fundraiser. The last two **Benefit the Bard** fundraisers raised over \$300,000 each.

ASF has approximately a \$20 million impact on the River Region and is responsible for the creation of about 1,000 jobs. It is an economic closer attracting executives and industry to Alabama. As a nationally renowned theatre producer, ASF continues to enhance the reputation of the State of Alabama and the region.

The Alabama Shakespeare Festival is among the largest Shakespeare Theatres in the world. Designated as the State Theatre of Alabama, ASF has been located in Montgomery since 1985 when it moved from Anniston as a result of Mr. and Mrs. Wynton Blount’s gift of a performing arts complex in the 250-acre Wynton M. Blount Cultural Park.

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