WORLD RENOWNED PIANIST VAN CLIBURN
TO PERFORM DURING 2008 LIBERTY MEDAL CEREMONY

Philadelphia, PA (August 22, 2008) – Celebrated pianist Van Cliburn will give his first public performance in the 50th anniversary year of his victory at the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow during the 2008 Liberty Medal ceremony at the National Constitution Center on Thursday, September 18, 2008, honoring President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Van Cliburn was only twenty-three years old when he won the first International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow on April 14, 1958, at the height of the Cold War. With his victory, he built a cultural bridge between the world’s two superpowers – earning a hug from Khrushchev himself, who had granted permission to the Soviet judges to award the prize to an American. Upon his return to the United States, Cliburn was welcomed in New York City with a ticker-tape parade – the first and only time the city gave such an honor to a musician. On May 19, 1958, he was featured on the cover of TIME magazine with the headline: “The Texan Who Conquered Russia.”

Cliburn went on to perform for every American president from 1958 until today. The most famous of these concerts occurred in 1987 when he played for Ronald Reagan and President Gorbachev in the White House, as part of a summit meeting between the two leaders prior to the end of the Cold War. In 2003, President George W. Bush awarded Cliburn the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2004, President Vladimir Putin presented him with the Order of Friendship, a state decoration bestowed almost exclusively upon Russian citizens for “their significant contribution into the strengthening of friendship and cooperation of nations and nationalities.”

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ADD ONE/VAN CLIBURN

The National Constitution Center’s 2008 Liberty Medal will be awarded to former Soviet leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Mikhail Gorbachev for his courageous role in ending the dangerous, decades-long Cold War and in giving hope and freedom to millions who lived behind the Iron Curtain. The public Liberty Medal ceremony will take place on Thursday, September 18, 2008, at 7:00 p.m. at the National Constitution Center in Historic Philadelphia, and will set the stage for international commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 2009.

The Liberty Medal ceremony will be broadcast live on CBS 3 on Thursday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. The CW Philly 57 will rebroadcast the ceremony that same evening at 10:00 p.m. CBS 3 (KYW-TV) and The CW Philly 57 (WPSG-TV) are part of CBS Television Stations, a division of CBS Corporation.

Established in 1988 by We the People 200 to commemorate the bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution, the Liberty Medal annually honors men and women of courage and conviction who strive to secure the blessings of liberty to people across the world.

Ira Lubert and Independence Capital Partners will co-sponsor the 2008 Liberty Medal Award. The Liberty Medal is also generously supported by the Dorrance H. Hamilton Charitable Lead Trust. Citizens Bank is the presenting sponsor for the President’s Reception prior to the Liberty Medal ceremony.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising”. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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