



PRESS RELEASE

FOR RELEASE:

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Please see [here](#) for 2021 season photos.

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts updates

2021 Season Programming for National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera

and announces

2021 Seasons for Theater, Ballet and Dance, and Performances for Young Audiences

Highlights include:

**The D.C. Premiere of Tony Award[®]-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist
Tazewell Thompson's contemporary opera *Blue***

**National Symphony Orchestra programs include four commissions, three world
premieres and rescheduled *Beethoven at 250 Festival***

**Broadway Hit Shows: *Jesus Christ Superstar*; *Freestyle Love Supreme*; Rodgers and
Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*; *Dear Evan Hansen*; *The Band's Visit*;
Disney's Frozen; *Hadestown***

**Kennedy Center debut of Monaco's Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo,
American Ballet Theatre's *Don Quixote* and
New York City Ballet's *A Midsummer Night's Dream***

**Paul Taylor Dance Company: The Celebration Tour, Ragamala Dance Company and
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater**

**A new collaboration between Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence Mo
Willems and Ephrat Asherie Dance for Performances for Young Audiences**

**2021 seasons of Hip Hop, Comedy, Jazz, NSO Pops, and VOICES
to be announced later this year**

2021 Season begins January 14, 2021

(WASHINGTON)—In anticipation of reopening its doors and resuming mainstage performances, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announces the updated 2021 seasons of the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) and Washington National Opera (WNO) along with the new seasons of theater, ballet and dance, and Performances for Young Audiences. The ambitious, but limited season will begin on January 14, 2021, contingent on entry into phase four of the District of Columbia’s ReOpen D.C. guidelines. Programming will remain flexible and in accordance with any updates to Mayor Bowser’s reopening guidelines.

“Over the past four months I’ve been struck by the heartening proof that we need artists and the arts now more than ever,” said Deborah F. Rutter, President of the Kennedy Center. “The Center has chosen to move forward with optimism balanced by safety and constant re-evaluation as the effects of the pandemic continue to evolve. Even with a shortened season, the Kennedy Center strives to provide a broad range of world-class arts to the widest possible audience—in-person and digitally. Our supporters and patrons have given us strength during these unusual times; as the coming months unfold, we are exceedingly grateful for the patience, flexibility, and trust of our audiences.”

Highlights of the 2021 season include: previously announced NSO subscription performances beginning with an exciting program, January 14 and 16, conducted by Dalia Stasevska, Principal Guest Conductor of London’s BBC Symphony Orchestra; the rescheduled performances of WNO’s highly anticipated production of **Blue**, Tony Award®-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist Tazewell Thompson’s contemporary opera which was recently named “Best New Opera” of 2020 by the Music Critics Association of North America; a range of Broadway hits including a new 50th anniversary production of **Jesus Christ Superstar**; the original hip hop improv sensation **Freestyle Love Supreme** returns following its 2019 pre-Broadway Kennedy Center run; the Tony Award® winner for Best Revival of a Musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s **Oklahoma!**; the Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning Best Musical, **Dear Evan Hansen**; Tony®-nominee Disney’s **Frozen**; the Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning Best Musical **Hadestown**; and Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning Best Musical **The Band’s Visit**; **Beethoven at 250**, the NSO’s four-week festival of concerts celebrating the composer’s 250th birthday and his remarkable contribution to music; **Paul Taylor Dance Company**’s Celebration Tour honoring the impact of the company’s iconic founder; the Kennedy Center debut of Monaco’s renowned **Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo**; perennial favorites **New York City Ballet** and **American Ballet Theatre** with comedic classics in the ballet repertoire; **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** with a mix of exhilarating repertory programs; and Kennedy Center co-commission of the newest work from leading Bharatanatyam ensemble, **Ragamala Dance Company**; and a number of Kennedy Center commissions and co-commissions for performances for young audiences including **In the MOment: A Drawing Dance**, a new collaboration between Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence Mo Willems and Ephrat Asherie Dance.

Additionally, the 2021 seasons of Hip Hop, Comedy, Jazz, NSO Pops, and Renée Fleming’s VOICES, will be announced at a later date. The previously announced Fortas series for 2021 will move forward as previously announced.

Also announced today is the Center’s slate of 2020 fall programming, a range of both digital and new in-person events curated to take advantage of the Center’s diverse indoor spaces and more than 130,000 square feet of outdoor green space allowing for physically distant programming. The new schedule also features some previously planned performances relocated into larger venues. For further information regarding fall 2020 programming, please see the press release [here](#).

The Kennedy Center continues to work in consultation with health and safety experts including consultation with medical experts from George Washington University, the National Institutes of Health, United Health Care, and the Wharton School, national and local guidelines, and in accordance with the District of Columbia’s ReOpen DC guidelines for its reopening plans. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to evolve and as the Center and the nation learns more about best practices for reopening, we are committed to reviewing and updating our risk mitigation protocols on an ongoing basis. For the most up-to-date information regarding protocols both current and for spring of 2021, please check the Kennedy Center [website](#) for all measures to ensure patron safety during this time. *These protocols are not an absolute protection against contracting COVID-19. Patrons assume their own risk by entering the facility.*

For subscribers holding tickets to previously announced NSO and WNO performances, the ticket value has been placed on account and representatives from the Kennedy Center will be in contact with options for the newly scheduled dates. More information for subscribers can be found [here](#).

Full schedule 2021 programming for the NSO, WNO, theater, ballet and dance, and performances for young audiences can be found below.

Please note all artists and performances are subject to change.

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Celebrating its 90th season, the NSO’s revised 2021 season, led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda and Executive Director Gary Ginstling, and its fourth under the artistic leadership of Gianandrea Noseda, will showcase Beethoven and **“Pivotal Moments, Powerful Voices,”** a series of new works by living composers demonstrating how music reflects broader social and historical relevance, in addition to previously announced subscription performances.

“Pivotal Moments, Powerful Voices” features world premiere commissions by Peter Boyer, Michael Daugherty, and Jessie Montgomery, and the D.C. premiere of a co-commissioned piece by Julia Wolfe—works in which composers have responded to pivotal moments and iconic figures in American history. In January 2021, the NSO performs a new work

by acclaimed composer **Jessie Montgomery** celebrating the 90th birthday of Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison, who was born the same year of the NSO's founding. In March 2021, Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Julia Wolfe** honors the trailblazing suffragette women who fought for the 19th Amendment in *Her Story*, a large-scale work for orchestra and the all-female vocal group, Lorelei Ensemble. The NSO co-commissioned *Her Story* along with the Boston, Chicago, Nashville, and San Francisco symphonies, and these performances will be led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda. Also in March, the NSO performs the world premiere of Grammy Award®-winning composer **Michael Daugherty's** *Blue Electra*, a concerto for violin and orchestra written for Anne Akiko Meyers, who is the featured soloist in these NSO performances. Part of an all-American program, this work was inspired by pioneering pilot Amelia Earhart and her detailed and often poetic aviation records. Finally, in May 2021 the NSO performs the world premiere commission of **Peter Boyer's** *Balance of Power*, written to honor the 95th birthday of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

The NSO's season concludes with a four week **Beethoven at 250** Festival in celebration of the composer's 250th birthday. Originally scheduled for the 2019-2020 season and postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this festival marks the Orchestra and Noseda's first Beethoven Symphony Cycle together. All nine Beethoven symphonies will be recorded for later release.

All previously announced NSO subscription performances from January 14-May 15 are proceeding with the following updates:

- **January 22-24: Hilary Hahn plays Prokofiev**
Glinka's *Ruslan and Ludmila* Overture will replace Kilar's *Krzesany*
Stravinsky's *The Firebird* - Suite (1945) will replace Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*
- **February 18-20: Gianandrea Noseda & Emanuel Ax**
Wagner's *Dawn and Siegfried's Rhine Journey* (from *Götterdämmerung*) will no longer be part of the program
- **April 15-17: Benjamin Grosvenor plays Mozart / Sir Mark Elder conducts Elgar**
Elgar's *Enigma Variations* will replace Elgar's Symphony No. 2
- Kennedy Center Chamber Players March 7 concert has been moved to February 21

The 2021 updated NSO Schedule, in addition to previously announced programming:

Dates	Theater	Program
January 14-June 12, 2021	Concert Hall	For all previously announced and revised NSO subscription programming, please see here .

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Given the unique challenges of mounting full-scale opera productions during the pandemic, the WNO, led by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and General Director Timothy O'Leary, plans a season, beginning fall 2020, to include an innovative mix of virtual performances and small-scale live performances, culminating in May and July with two mainstage productions.

Offerings beginning this fall include exploring new ways of bringing opera to audiences in this changing and challenging landscape with the **Come, Hope Project**, the title of which is taken from Beethoven’s *Fidelio* aria, “Komm, Hoffnung” (Come, Hope) and will engage audiences in summoning hope and examining and celebrating the human heart through song. For further information regarding the *Come, Hope Project*, please see the press release [here](#).

In May 2021 Puccini’s beloved classic, **La Bohème**, led by Principal Conductor Evan Rogister and starring soprano Angel Blue is performed in the Opera House stage. Widely considered one of the most popular operas in the repertoire, the story of Bohemian artists in Paris tangled up in love’s highs and lows will feature grand sets evoking the City of Love. In July, Tony Award®-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and NAACP Theatre Award-winning librettist Tazewell Thompson’s new contemporary opera, **Blue**, makes its long-awaited D.C. premiere after being postponed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently named the “Best New Opera” of 2020 by the Music Critics Association of North America, *Blue* is a co-production with The Glimmerglass Festival and the Lyric Opera of Chicago that explores love, loss, family, and community in the wake of racially motivated police violence. In advance of *Blue*’s performances, WNO will create a full audio recording this fall and plans to work with noted Black documentary filmmaker Sam Pollard to create a short documentary about the writing of the opera and the recording process to be released before *Blue*’s performances in July. Committed to fostering conversations that enable understanding and action, WNO’s “Let’s Go There” series, which uses opera as a prism to examine and candidly discuss issues central to contemporary culture, will include virtual community events this season connected to *Blue*. Dates and information to be announced.

The 2021 updated WNO Schedule:

Dates	Theater	Opera
Fall 2020	N/A	<i>Come, Hope Project</i>
May 8–22, 2021	Opera House	<i>La Bohème</i>
July 3–11, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	<i>Blue</i>

THEATER

The 2021 season of theater will host some of Broadway’s biggest hits and revivals. The season begins in May with a new 50th anniversary production of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s and Tim Rice’s groundbreaking rock opera and winner of the Olivier Award for Best Revival, **Jesus Christ Superstar**. The original hip hop improv sensation created by Thomas Kail, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Anthony Veneziale, **Freestyle Love Supreme**, also part of Comedy at the Kennedy Center season, comes to the Eisenhower Theater where suggestions from the audience are spun into instantaneous riffs and full-length musical numbers with no two shows alike as it is created live nightly bringing much joy and laughter as it is performed. The acclaimed and sold-out hit on Broadway is also the subject of the recently released *We Are Freestyle Love Supreme* documentary on Hulu that has earned rave reviews at Sundance. The Tony Award® winner for Best Revival of a Musical, Rodgers and Hammerstein’s **Oklahoma!** comes to the Eisenhower stage with director

Daniel Fish’s re-orchestrated and reimagined production for the 21st century as you’ve never seen or heard before.

The summer continues with the Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning Best Musical, **Dear Evan Hansen**, as it returns to D.C. from where it first premiered; the critically acclaimed Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning musical **The Band’s Visit**, a joyously offbeat story, set in a remote town where a band of musicians arrive lost, out of the blue. Under the spell of the desert sky, and with beautiful music perfuming the air, the band brings the town to life in unexpected and tantalizing ways; and Disney’s smash megahit **Frozen** featuring the wildly popular songs from the original film plus an expanded score with a dozen new musical numbers from the film’s Oscar-winning songwriters. The Tony® and Grammy Award®-winning Best Musical **Hadestown**, by celebrated singer-songwriter Anais Mitchell and innovative director Rachel Chavkin, concludes the season with a love story for today intertwining two mythic tales—that of young dreamers Orpheus and Eurydice, and King Hades and his wife Persephone. In addition, **Shear Madness**, the interactive comedy whodunit that lets the audience solve the crime, will recommence in January 2021 in the Theater Lab.

The Center’s acclaimed *Broadway Center Stage* series will continue in 2021. Productions and dates to be announced.

The 2021 Kennedy Center Theater Schedule:

Performance Dates	Theater	Company
May 25–June 13, 2021	Opera House	<i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i>
June 8–13, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	<i>Freestyle Love Supreme</i>
June 22–27, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	Rodgers and Hammerstein’s <i>Oklahoma!</i>
June 29–July 18, 2021	Opera House	<i>Dear Evan Hansen</i>
July 28–August 8, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	<i>The Band’s Visit</i>
July 21–September 5, 2021	Opera House	<i>Disney’s Frozen</i>
August 10–September 5, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	<i>Hadestown</i>
Recommences January 2021	Theater Lab	<i>Shear Madness</i>

BALLET AND DANCE

The 2021 ballet and dance season includes opportunities to see storied companies in innovative contemporary works alongside signature classics. Highlights include perennial favorites like **New York City Ballet** and **American Ballet Theatre** with comedic classics in the ballet repertoire and **Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater** with a mix of exhilarating repertory programs and a celebration of 60 years of Alvin Ailey’s masterpiece *Revelations*. **Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo** makes its Kennedy Center debut with Choreographer-Director Jean-Christophe Maillot’s reimagined and visually striking adaptation of the well-known fairy-tale, *Cendrillon* (*Cinderella*). In addition, in a Kennedy Center co-commission, leading Bharatanatyam ensemble, **Ragamala Dance Company** brings its newest work, Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy’s *Fires of Varanasi*. The choreographers create a ritual for the stage inspired by the cosmic trinity of Varanasi—sacred pilgrimage routes, The Ganges River, and the patron deity Shiva—and imagines a metaphorical crossing, where one may leave the mundane and enter into the world of transcendence. The Kennedy Center continues to highlight the impact of pioneers in the modern dance field with The Celebration Tour of **Paul Taylor Dance Company**, featuring six masterworks choreographed by and honoring the impact of the company’s iconic founder.

The annual **Local Dance Commissioning Project**, which supports and fosters new dance works by local artists, celebrates its 20th anniversary with works by this year’s recipients, Britta Joy Peterson and Quynn Johnson. Britta Joy Peterson’s *Frequencies* is an audience-focused performance highlighting the relationship between dance and music, light and space, individual and community, and intimacy and grandeur. *Unsung Sole*, with choreography by Quynn Johnson, is a percussive performance piece focused on the legacy of African American female tap dancers, spotlighting their contributions (many unknown) to tap dance during the 1920s through 1960s. Dates and locations to be announced at a later date.

Further details for the annual **National Dance Day** on Saturday, September 19, 2020 will be announced at a later date. Celebrations will include virtual opportunities to take dance classes in a variety of styles.

The 2021 Kennedy Center Ballet and Dance Season Schedule:

Performance Dates	Theater	Company
February 2–7, 2021	Opera House	Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Repertory Programs
February 24–27, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	Les Ballets de Monte-Carlo, <i>Cendrillon</i> (<i>Cinderella</i>)
March 23–28, 2021	Opera House	New York City Ballet, <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream</i> , with choreography by NYCB co-founder George Balanchine
April 20–21, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	Ragamala Dance Company, Ranee Ramaswamy and Aparna Ramaswamy’s <i>Fires of Varanasi</i>
April 21–25, 2021	Opera House	American Ballet Theatre,

		<i>Don Quixote</i>
May 20–22, 2021	Eisenhower Theater	Paul Taylor Dance Company, The Celebration Tour: Two Repertory Programs

PERFORMANCES FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

The 2021 season of Performances for Young Audiences is designed to inspire and engage audiences both young and young at heart and includes three Kennedy Center commissions and co-commissions, a National Symphony Orchestra commission, and a Kennedy Center/NSO co-commission. Using its signature style of shadow puppetry and interactive multimedia, Emmy Award®-winning company Manual Cinema tells Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence Mo Willems’s tale of a not-so scary monster in the world premiere Kennedy Center commission of ***Leonardo and Sam: The Terrible Monster and the Most Scaredy-Cat Kid in the Whole World, Respectively***. In ***A Wind in the Door***, playwright Jacqueline Goldfinger and director Nicole A. Watson bring the sequel to Madeline L’Engle’s beloved book *A Wrinkle in Time* to the stage for the first time. In this world premiere Kennedy Center commission, the thrilling sci-fi story reveals that love and kindness are the best antidotes to evil. Austin-based Glass Half Full Theatre presents its award-winning “story within a story” using puppetry, Spanish, and English and tackles cultural heritage, family, and the power of language in ***Cenicienta: A Bilingual Cinderella Story***.

Inspired by the artwork and abstractions of Mo Willems, Ephrat Asherie Dance collaborates with Willems to create another Kennedy Center co-commission, ***In the Moment: A Drawing Dance***, a show about making art out of small things. After a sold-out performance at the REACH opening family day, ***Story Pirates*** return in their imaginative production where actors, comedians, improvisers, and musicians take original stories from real kids around the country and turn them into a wildly funny comedy performance.

Music offerings for young audiences include a performance by Baltimore-born and D.C.-raised, Grammy®-nominated singer **Maimouna Youssef**, who blends gospel, jazz, soul, and hip hop for an awe-inspiring musical experience; and NSO Family Concerts: ***Sleepover at the Museum***, a musical and scientific scavenger hunt concert based on the book of the same name by Karen LeFrak; ***Super Cello!***, a program uniting Scottie Rowell of Atlanta’s Teller Productions and NSO cellist David Teie in a story using puppets, props, and music to help super musicians save the day in this world premiere Kennedy Center and NSO commission; ***Because***, a collaboration and NSO world premiere commission between Mo Willems, animator and illustrator Amber Ren, and acclaimed composer, violinist, and Jessie Montgomery, recipient of the Leonard Bernstein Award from the ASCAP Foundation, about how chance, discovery, and persistence changed the life of a young girl. In addition, enjoy music across all genres on select Saturdays at 11 a.m. at the REACH with Howard University’s premier vocal jazz ensemble, ***Afro Blue*** (February 20); **Falu**, who is known for her “Indie Hindi” sound-blending traditions of Indian classical and folk music with western rock, and electronic styles to create songs that explore themes of womanhood, romance, longing, and loss (April 10); and two-time Grammy Award® nominee and Smithsonian Folkways artist **Elizabeth Mitchell** and her band for gentle, homespun music for children and families (May 15).

To provide the utmost safety, flexibility, and best experience for Kennedy Center families as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves, performances will include reduced audience capacity in the Family Theater to ensure physical distancing with general admission seating for *Leonardo and Sam* specifically. Throughout the season Kennedy Center ushers and theater management will help guide patrons in selecting their seating to sit with family members or members of their party. In addition, show times have been adjusted to allow for thorough deep cleaning and sanitization between performances.

The 2021 Kennedy Center Performances for Young Audiences Schedule:

Performance Dates	Theater	Program
January 28, 2021	Family Theater	<i>Music for Young Audiences: Maimouna Youssef: An Acoustic Experience</i>
February 4–21, 2021	Family Theater	<i>Leonardo and Sam: The Terrible Monster and the Most Scaredy-Cat Kid in the Whole World, Respectively</i>
February 20, 2021	Justice Forum, REACH	Afro Blue
February 28, 2021	Concert Hall	<i>NSO Family: Sleepover at the Museum</i>
March 4–21, 2021	Family Theater	<i>A Wind in the Door</i>
March 27–28, 2021	Family Theater	<i>NSO Music for Young Audiences: Super Cello!</i>
April 9–11, 2021	Family Theater	<i>Cenicienta: A Bilingual Cinderella Story</i>
April 10, 2021	Justice Forum, REACH	Falu
May 2, 2021	Concert Hall	<i>NSO Family: Because</i>
May 6–23, 2021	Family Theater	<i>In the MOMent: A Drawing Dance</i>
May 15, 2021	Justice Forum, REACH	Elizabeth Mitchell
June 1–6, 2021	Family Theater	<i>Story Pirates</i>

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General Dynamics

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Cornerstone of the REACH

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