



Washington National Opera  
The Kennedy Center

Timothy O'Leary  
General Director

Francesca Zambello  
Artistic Director

Press Release

Photos and assets [here](#)

FOR RELEASE:  
March 14, 2024

## WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA ANNOUNCES 2024–2025 SEASON

FOUR PRODUCTIONS OF GRAND OPERA EXPLORING THEMES OF FREEDOM & JUSTICE  
PLUS TWO STAGED CONCERTS & A NEW HOLIDAY OPERA

- **New Production of *Fidelio***  
First collaboration between Robert Spano as Music Director Designate & WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello; featuring Sinéad Campbell Wallace in her American debut
- **Verdi's *Macbeth* Returns After 17 Years, in a New Production**  
Featuring Étienne Dupuis in his role debut, Ewa Płonka returning, and Principal Conductor Evan Rogister
- **WNO Premiere of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs***  
WNO Premiere of opera composed by former Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates and librettist Mark Campbell
- **Revival of *Porgy and Bess***  
Conducted by Kwamé Ryan in his WNO debut; featuring Michael Sumuel, Reginald Smith, Jr., Brittany Renee, Alyson Cambridge, Denyce Graves, Vuvu Mpofo, Amber Monroe, Kenneth Kellogg, and Norman Garrett
- **World Premiere of New Version of New Holiday Opera, *Jungle Book***  
Expanded orchestration and revision to the Kipling classic by Kamala Sankaram and Kelley Rourke
- **Two Staged Concerts in the Opera House**  
*Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner* featuring Christine Goerke and Brandon Jovanovich  
*American Rhapsody* featuring Marin Alsop, Renée Fleming, Denyce Graves, and Thomas Hampson
- **Advancing Opera: Supporting Artists and Audiences**  
Artist Ambassador Program, 12th Season of American Opera Initiative, Marian Anderson Award, True Voice Award, *Opera in the Outfield*®

(WASHINGTON)—The **Washington National Opera (WNO)** will present a 2024–2025 season that pays tribute to the grand tradition of opera, while shaping its future with two new productions, two WNO premieres, and a long-awaited revival. The season—led by General Director **Timothy O'Leary** and Artistic Director **Francesca Zambello**—explores themes that reflect our times and expands the company's offerings in the Opera House. In this season, WNO continues its commitment to presenting established and rising artists, a list of which can be found [here](#).

WNO General Director **Timothy O'Leary** said, "WNO is committed to riveting performances and to innovation. This year, our Artistic Director Francesca Zambello has assembled a season that introduces three new productions, revives an American classic, and adds two new works to our repertoire. We

~ more ~

present four operas and two concerts in the beloved Kennedy Center Opera House. We build on WNO's tradition of casting important artists in American debuts and role debuts. And our community makes it possible for WNO to shape the future of opera through signature programs—the American Opera Initiative, Cafritz Young Artists, Marian Anderson Award, the True Voice Award and others.”

“The works we have chosen for next season demonstrate how the choices we make can reverberate and shape lives both individually and collectively,” said WNO **Artistic Director Francesca Zambello**. “These operatic characters’ fights for freedom and justice still resonate with us today. These grand ideas will have a grand stage as we return to the Opera House for four operas that examine the power and consequences of individual choices. We will meet characters driven by their passion for justice, their lust for power, their yearning for connection, their hope for the future. Our kaleidoscopic offerings that each plumb the depths of the human spirit include large-scale concerts showcasing our orchestra and soloists, our beloved holiday opera, recitals, and the American Opera Initiative in its 12th season. We look forward to collaborating with artists new and returning.”

### **Season opening: New production of *Fidelio***

WNO will present a new production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, directed by **Francesca Zambello**. This marks Zambello and **Music Director Designate Robert Spano**'s first collaboration at WNO. “Beethoven's only opera is set against the backdrop of a society oppressed by a corrupt government,” said Zambello. “Beethoven is a composer very aware of the politics of his time. *Fidelio* is not only about one woman's fight to release her husband from prison, but also a rallying cry for all the unfairly prosecuted and clandestinely executed.” Irish soprano **Sinéad Campbell Wallace** sings the role of Leonora in her American debut. In his much-anticipated WNO debut, New Orleans-born tenor **Jamez McCorkle**, who rose to prominence playing the titular role in the eponymous 2023 Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, *Omar*, sings the role of Florestan. Australian bass-baritone **Derek Welton** makes his role and WNO debut as Don Pizarro. Music Director Designate Robert Spano conducts. “Beethoven famously struggled writing *Fidelio*,” said Spano. “In this opera, he wrestled with the social and political, as well as the spiritual. After all of Beethoven's toil, revising the opera four times and renaming it once, its message continues to resonate with us today. Just listen to the ‘Prisoners’ Chorus’ and you will hear the emancipation of the human spirit.”

### **A new production of *Macbeth***

*Macbeth*, Verdi's first Shakespearean opera, returns to WNO in a new production after 17 years. “Smooth-toned and seductive” (*The New York Times*) Canadian baritone **Étienne Dupuis** makes his role debut in the title role. **Ewa Płonka**, who was praised by *Das Opernglas* for her “brilliant high notes of her high-class-voice,” sings the role of Lady Macbeth. “To sing this role, you need to have it all,” says Płonka. “Coloratura technique, buttery legato, scary chest voice, and brilliant high. You need all of them to portray her complete character. It is exciting!” **Kang Wang**, who possesses “a secure, beautifully even tone and a thrilling top register” (*Limelight*), plays Macduff in his role debut. **Soloman Howard**, WNO Artist Ambassador and Cafritz Young Artist alumnus, plays Banquo. The production will be conducted by **Principal Conductor Evan Rogister** who the *Washington Post* said “deserves maximal plaudits” for his conducting of WNO's *Romeo and Juliet*. **Brenna Corner**, who directed the company's recent production of *Il trovatore* with “elegant restraint” (*The Washington Post*), will helm this new production.

### **WNO premiere of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs***

Kennedy Center's first-ever Composer-in-Residence (2015–2020) **Mason Bates** and librettist **Mark Campbell**'s *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* makes its anticipated WNO premiere in a production by **Tomer Zvulun**. **Lidiya Yankovskaya**, pioneering music director of Chicago Opera Theater, returns to conduct. "A triumph" (*The Washington Post*), the 2019 Grammy Award® winner for Best Opera Recording, and one of the most captivating new American operas of the 21st century, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* charts the tumultuous life of this pivotal figure and his quest for inner peace. Bates said, "The story of Steve Jobs is the stuff of opera. It's got obsession, betrayal, love, passion, and the ultimate tragic death. It exists at the intersection of creativity, technology, and human communication—thematic crossroads that opera can explore unlike any other medium." **John Moore** sings Steve Jobs, Cafritz Young Artist **Winona Martin** sings Laurene Powell Jobs, Cafritz Young Artist alumni **Wei Wu** sings Kōbun Chino Otogawa, and **Justin Burgess** sings Paul Jobs.

### **Revival of *Porgy and Bess***

Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* returns to WNO with a new generation of singers ready to carry on and reexamine the legacy of this seminal American opera. The performances will be conducted by **Kwamé Ryan**—who makes his debut at WNO following his debut this season with the New York Philharmonic, Opera Theater of St. Louis, and the Houston Grand Opera this season and who was recently appointed to the position of music director designate of Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. "Gershwin was a great melodist and I think there's probably nothing more appealing in music than a memorable tune," said Ryan. "His music also pulls together popular songs and dance trends of his time that would eventually become the emblematic 'American sound.' Those qualities make his music still attractive today." The cast, many of whom making their WNO debuts, includes **Michael Sumuel** and **Reginald Smith, Jr.** as Porgy, **Brittany Renee** and **Alyson Cambridge** as Bess, **Vuvu Mpofu** as Clara, and **Chauncey Packer** as Sportin' Life. Cafritz Young Artists alumnus **Norman Garrett** and **Kenneth Kellogg** sing Crown. Opera legend **Denyce Graves** sings Maria. **Francesca Zambello** directs.

### **A new holiday opera *Jungle Book***

Building on multiple successes of WNO's family opera presentations, WNO introduces a new work into the family opera repertoire, *Jungle Book*, composed by **Kamala Sankaram** with a libretto by **Kelley Rourke**. This world premiere presentation of the expanded orchestration and instrumentation of *Jungle Book* retells the classic Kipling story through music from Eastern and Western traditions. It also incorporates Bollywood dancing in a special collaboration with the Indian Classical dance company **Taal**. "As a bi-racial Indian American myself, it is important to me to bring the two cultural heritages together in my work," says Sankaram. "This is a wonderful opportunity because it allows us to introduce young performers to the tradition of Indian music, as well as bring it to a young audience. Kids don't have preconceived ideas about what they can do or what opera should sound like. If you teach them, they'll learn it!" The production is directed by **Francesca Zambello** and **Brenna Corner** and conducted by **Stephanie Rhodes Russell**.

### ***Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner***

In addition to the four grand operas in the 2024–2025 season, WNO will present two staged concerts in the Opera House. The first, on October 26, 2024, features Wagner's revolutionary music, including selections from *Tannhäuser*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, and *Parsifal*. Two of the most important Wagnerian singers—**Christine Goerke** and **Brandon Jovanovich**—join the

WNO Orchestra and members of Cafritz Young Artists in this fully staged concert with video projections, conducted by **Music Director Designate Robert Spano**.

### **American Rhapsody**

From soaring arias to toe-tapping ensembles, this gala evening on May 3, 2025 is a lively homage to the music that captures the American spirit. The program includes music by Samuel Barber, Amy Beach, Leonard Bernstein, Margaret Bonds, Carlos Simon, Stephen Sondheim, Kurt Weill, and more. The event features **Renée Fleming**, **Denyce Graves**, and **Thomas Hampson** in his WNO debut, and is conducted by **Marin Alsop**, last seen at the WNO in the world premiere of *Sophie's Choice* in 2006.

### **Fostering the Next Generation of Artists**

Washington National Opera continues its commitment to shaping the future of opera. The following initiatives are designed not only to develop and support a new generation of opera creators and performers, but also to increase diversity both on and off its stages.

- WNO's 12th **American Opera Initiative (AOI)** will feature three newly commissioned works that will premiere on January 18, 2025 in the Terrace Theater. A diverse group of composers—**Kyle Brenn**, **JL Marlor**, and **Omar Najmi**, and librettists—**Clare Fuyuko Bierman**, **Lex Brown**, and **Christine Evans** were selected from a field of more than 150 hopefuls. Their mentors are composer **Gregory Spears**—who has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Santa Fe Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and Houston Grand Opera—and Pulitzer Prize winner and former U.S. Poet Laureate, librettist **Tracy K. Smith**, who will guide the teams throughout the development process. **George Manahan** conducts and **Chloe Treat**, who directed AOI in 2024, returns to direct. Launched in January 2012, AOI is a groundbreaking commissioning program created to stimulate, enrich, and ensure the future of contemporary American opera by providing opportunities for outstanding composers and librettists who have not yet had a major operatic premiere.
- Named for the barrier-breaking African American contralto, the **Marian Anderson Vocal Award** is presented annually by the Kennedy Center and WNO to a young American singer. This year's winner, countertenor **Key'mon Murrah**, praised for his "resplendent, voluptuous tone" by *Opera News*, will have an intimate recital in the Terrace Theater on December 17, 2024. In addition to the recital, Murrah also receives a prize and gives mentorship to young singers at Washington D.C.'s Duke Ellington School of the Arts.
- **Soloman Howard** continues to serve as WNO **Artist Ambassador** for the 2024–2025 season. A 2019 Marian Anderson Vocal Award Winner and 2014 Cafritz Young Artist Program graduate, Howard has performed on celebrated opera stages around the world from the Metropolitan Opera to Teatro Real de Madrid. In this role, Howard will cultivate partnerships with local organizations and groups to widen WNO's impact in the community. In the 2023–2024 season, WNO's partnerships included events with Alfred Street Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.
- Washington National Opera's **Cafritz Young Artists** program is a resident-training program that offers artists on the verge of international careers a course of intensive training, study, career guidance, and performance opportunities in Washington, D.C. and beyond. Throughout their

training, the Cafritz Young Artists are featured prominently in WNO performances, including a special performance of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* on May 9, 2025, the American Opera Initiative on January 18, 2025, *Jungle Book* (December 13–15, 2024), and will be presenting a special offering to be announced at a later date.

- Awarded every three years under the partnership between WNO and librettist Kimberly Reed, composer Laura Kaminsky, and librettist Mark Campbell, the **True Voice Award** supports an emerging singer who self-identifies as transgender or non-binary. The inaugural True Voice Award recipient, tenor **Katherine Goforth**, will give a recital on Millennium Stage on May 1, 2024.
- **Opera in the Outfield®**, the popular annual summer event at which a classic opera is broadcast, free of charge, on the high-definition scoreboard at D.C.'s Nationals Park, will feature **Turandot** on August 24, 2024.

### Let's Go There

As part of WNO's *Let's Go There*, an ongoing series that explores timely topics of identity and justice raised in opera, the following collaborations are planned. More information and specific dates will be announced closer to the opening of the 2024–2025 season:

- *Fidelio*: Famous in part for its epic “Prisoner’s Chorus,” Beethoven’s opera connects across centuries to contemporary conversation about incarceration and criminal justice reform. WNO will host discussion in partnership with Nkechi Taifa, Senior Fellow for the Columbia University Center for Justice, and convener emeritus of The Justice Roundtable. Collaborations with both incarcerated and formerly incarcerated persons are planned.
- *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*: WNO will partner with “Girls Who Code” at George Washington University in a multifaceted collaboration, with a focus on equity in the tech sector. Girls Who Code is a national organization with a mission to close the gender gap in technology. Its “College Loops” provide university-level networks for college-aged women interested in tech to support one another and help each other persist and succeed in the field. In addition to a panel discussion, the collaboration will include workshops at the Kennedy Center with women in technology and technology-driven design fields.
- *Porgy and Bess*: Through partnership with The Denyce Graves Foundation as well as opera scholar Naomi André, David G. Frey Distinguished Professor in Music at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, WNO will convene discussion about the origin and history of *Porgy and Bess* and the opera’s continuing reconsideration within Black American culture and American society. Discussion will focus partly on the opera’s meaning for and impact on Black operatic artists, given the Denyce Graves Foundation’s mission to promote equity and inclusion in American classical vocal arts and to uplifting young artists of world-class talent from all backgrounds.

## **ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA**

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of General Director Timothy O’Leary and world-renowned Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the company presents a diverse repertory of grand opera across three main venues of the Kennedy Center. From classic operas to contemporary works, each season the WNO’s artistic output also includes commissioned American works and a variety of special concerts, youth operas, and events. Founded in 1956 and an artistic affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 2011, WNO has a storied legacy of more than 100 new productions, over 50 world premieres, international tours, live recordings and radio broadcasts, digitally streamed content, as well as innovative education and community-engagement programs. Recent celebrated productions have included a new production of Strauss’ *Elektra*; the D.C. premiere of Jeanine Tesori’s and Tazewell Thompson’s *Blue*, which was commissioned by Zambello; the world premiere of *Written in Stone*—composed for the Kennedy Center’s 50th anniversary season; the world premiere of Philip Glass’ reconceived *Appomattox*, presented in conjunction with cultural events throughout Washington, D.C.; the powerful performances of Kurt Weill’s *Lost in the Stars*; and the massive feat of WNO’s first complete *Ring Cycle*, which was helmed by Zambello and played to sold-out houses following international acclaim. The 2023–2024 season included the world premiere of *Grounded* by Jeanine Tesori and George Brant, and *Turandot* with a new ending by Christopher Tin and Susan Soon He Stanton. WNO is committed to expanding opera’s reach and fostering a new generation of opera talent. Among the company’s most successful education and community engagement programs are the American Opera Initiative, the Cafritz Young Artist Program, the WNO Opera Institute, *Opera in the Outfield*®, in-person and digital Look-In performances, the Student Dress Rehearsal Program, free pre-concert lectures and post-show Q&As after many shows, the WNO Young Associates program, and the *Let’s Go There* discussion series.

Discover [Washington National Opera](#) on social media:



## **Funding Credits**

The WNO Season Sponsor is General Dynamics

The Official Airline of the WNO Season is American Airlines

Major support provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars and Mrs. Eugene B. Casey

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## **Ticket Information**

Tickets may be purchased online at [kennedy-center.org](http://kennedy-center.org), in-person at the Kennedy Center Box Office, or by calling (202) 467-4600.

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## WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA 2024–2025 SEASON SCHEDULE

### ***Fidelio***

**Music by Ludwig van Beethoven**

**Libretto by Joseph von Sonnleithner**

October 25–November 4, 2024 in the Opera House

In German with Projected English Titles

Co-production with Indiana University

Friday, October 25, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, October 27, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 31, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 2, 2024 at 7 p.m.

Monday, November 4, 2024 at 7 p.m.

### **Cast/Creatives**

Leonore	Sinéad Campbell Wallace*
Florestan	Jamez McCorkle*
Don Pizarro	Derek Welton*
Rocco	David Leigh*
Don Fernando	Denyce Graves

Conductor	Robert Spano
Director	Francesca Zambello
Scenic designer	Erhard Rom
Costume designer	Anita Yavitch
Lighting designer	Jane Cox

\* WNO mainstage debut

† Alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist program

**Gods and Mortals: A Celebration of Wagner**

October 26, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in the Opera House

Robert Spano, conductor  
Christine Goerke, soprano  
Brandon Jovanovich\*, tenor

\* WNO mainstage debut

**Macbeth**

**Music by Giuseppe Verdi**

**Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave & Andrea Maffei**

November 13–23, 2024 in the Opera House

In Italian with Projected English Titles

Wednesday, November 13, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 15, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 17, 2024 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 21, 2024 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 23, 2024 at 7 p.m.

**Cast/Creatives**

Macbeth	Étienne Dupuis*
Lady Macbeth	Ewa Płonka
Macduff	Kang Wang
Banquo	Soloman Howard†

Conductor	Evan Rogister
Director	Brenna Corner
Scenic designer	Erhard Rom
Lighting designer	A.J. Guban
Projections designer	S. Katy Tucker
Costumes by Lyric Opera of Chicago	

\* WNO mainstage debut

† Alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist program



**Jungle Book**

**Music by Kamala Sankaram**

**Libretto by Kelley Rourke**

December 13–15, 2024 in the Terrace Theater

In English with Projected English Titles

Friday, December 13, 2024 at 7 p.m.

Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 12 p.m.

Saturday, December 14, 2024 at 5 p.m.

Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 12 p.m.

Sunday, December 15, 2024 at 5 p.m.

**Creatives**

Conductor	Stephanie Rhodes Russell
Co-directors	Francesca Zambello and Brenna Corner
Taal Academy of Dance Executive Director	Shuchi Buch*
Lighting designer	Amith Chandrashaker
Scenery and props designer	James F. Rotondo III
Costume designer	Erik Teague

\* WNO mainstage debut

† Alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist program

Originally commissioned for The Glimmerglass Festival

**Marian Anderson Vocal Award Recital**

December 17, 2024 at 7:30 p.m. in the Terrace Theater

Key'mon Murrah, countertenor

**American Opera Initiative**

Friday, January 18, 2025 at 7:00 & 9:00 p.m. in the Terrace Theater

**Creatives**

Conductor	George Manahan
Mentors	Gregory Spears and Tracy K. Smith
Composer	Kyle Brenn
Composer	JL Marlor
Composer	Omar Najmi
Librettist	Clare Fuyuko Bierman
Librettist	Lex Brown
Librettist	Christine Evans

**The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs**

**Music by Mason Bates**

**Libretto by Mark Campbell**

May 2–10, 2025 in the Opera House

In English with Projected English Titles

Friday, May 2, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 4, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Monday, May 5, 2025 at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, May 9, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. (CYA Cast)

Saturday, May 10, 2025 at 7 p.m.

**Cast/Creatives**

Steve Jobs	John Moore*
Laurene Powell Jobs	Winona Martin^
Kōbun Chino Otogawa	Wei Wu†
Steve (“Woz”) Wozniak	Jonathan Burton
Paul Jobs	Justin Burgess†
Conductor	Lidiya Yankovskaya
Original production and staging	Tomer Zvulun
Revival stage director	Rebecca Herman*
Original scenery and costume designer	Jacob Climer
Original projection designer	S. Katy Tucker
Original lighting designer	Robert Wierzel
Original sound designer	Rick Jacobsohn

\* WNO mainstage debut

† Alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist program

^Current member of the Cafritz Young Artist program

This production of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* is jointly owned by The Atlanta Opera, Austin Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Utah Symphony & Opera, and Calgary Opera Association

**American Rhapsody**

May 3, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. in the Opera House

Marin Alsop, conductor

Renée Fleming, soprano

Denyce Graves, mezzo-soprano

Thomas Hampson\*, baritone

\* WNO mainstage debut

**Porgy & Bess**

**Music by George Gershwin**

**Libretto by Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward**

May 23–31, 2025 in the Opera House

In English with Projected English Titles

Friday, May 23, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 24, 2025 at 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 24, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 25, 2025 at 2 p.m.

Tuesday, May 27, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 28, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 29, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, May 30, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 1 p.m.

Saturday, May 31, 2025 at 7:30 p.m.

**Cast/Creatives**

Porgy	Michael Sumuel* / Reginald Smith Jr.*
Bess	Brittany Renee* / Alyson Cambridge
Maria	Denyce Graves
Clara	Vuvu Mpofu*
Serena	Amber Monroe†
Sportin' Life	Chauncey Packer*
Jake	Ben Taylor*
Crown	Norman Garrett† / Kenneth Kellog†

Conductor	Kwamé Ryan*
Director	Francesca Zambello
Associate director & choreographer	Eric Sean Fogel
Original scenic designer	Peter J. Davison
Original costume designer	Paul Tazewell
Original lighting designer	Mark McCullough

\* WNO mainstage debut

† Alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist program

The scenery was originally created for The Glimmerglass Festival & Seattle Opera