



The  
Kennedy  
Center

ANNUAL REPORT  
to our Community

The John F. Kennedy  
Center for the  
Performing Arts

Fiscal Year 2023 and our  
2022–2023 artistic season

Letter from Chairman **David M. Rubenstein**  
and President **Deborah F. Rutter**



David M. Rubenstein



Deborah F. Rutter

**525,600 minutes**

Anyone familiar with Jonathan Larson’s ground-breaking musical *RENT*—which made its symphonic premiere with the NSO this season—knows there are 525,600 minutes in a year. *RENT* asks us to consider the passage of time, and how we measure those 525,600 minutes. As we reflect on the 2022–2023 artistic seasons of the Kennedy Center, National Symphony Orchestra, and Washington National Opera we ask ourselves, “How do we measure a season at the National Cultural Center?”

Just as a year is made up of minutes, this season is made up of numbers: thousands of events, millions of visitors, hundreds of artists and staff working on and off the stages, and millions of students reached. In *RENT*, Jonathan Larson looks beyond minutes, choosing to measure a year with “Seasons of Love.” In remembering this season, we look beyond numbers to measure with moments of connection and community.

Over the course of a year we experience hope and celebration, but also grief and doubt. It is our hope that throughout the moments of your life, art is always present, always relevant, and always connecting you with community.

This report reflects only a small portion of all that we achieved together, but it contains countless moments of connection. To all who made our programs possible, thank you for your unending belief in our mission. To all who told your stories on our stages and across our campus, you bring our halls to life. And to all who shared a moment with us, thank you for being part of our community. We hope you see yourselves in the following pages, and look forward to sharing more moments with you.

Together in art,

David M. Rubenstein  
Chairman

Deborah F. Rutter  
President

(Opposite) Cloud Gate  
Dance Theatre of Taiwan in  
*13 Tongues*

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# Our commitments

## We are...

- ...a place created by **community, for community.**
- ...a place where **all are welcome and accepted, invited to explore and to learn.**
- ...driven by the **values we prioritize** in our work with each other, artists, and you.
- ...**arts-centric and community-driven.**

## We are...

- ...your **home** for the performing arts.

This year's annual report is one chapter in the story of the Kennedy Center; it may be bound in scope, but is endless in gratitude. For more information about our year-round programming, impact, and opportunities to collaborate, we invite you to visit our website, and welcome you as part of our community.

Dance Sanctuaries: Semilla  
Cultural Bomba class



## Our Mission

As the nation's cultural center, and a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, we are a leader for the arts across America and around the world, reaching and connecting with artists, inspiring and educating communities. We welcome all to create, experience, learn about, and engage with the arts.

## Our Vision

We are the nation's beacon for the performing arts, engaging artists and audiences around the world to share, inspire, and celebrate the cultural heritage by which a great society is defined and remembered.

## Our Values

**COLLABORATION**—We nurture an environment where a fulsome creative experience thrives through artistic and professional collaboration.

**RESPECT**—We treat everyone we encounter with honesty, dignity, fairness, and good intent.

**INCLUSION**—We believe everyone belongs at the Center, and that it is a destination where people of all ages and abilities can come together to experience joy, learn about themselves and others, and engage with art.

**OPENNESS**—We encourage and support transparent communication, active listening, and respectful questioning with the goal of sharing information, fostering dialogue, and ensuring understanding among all stakeholders.

**EMPOWERMENT**—We use art as a means to uplift communities and a tool for civic collaboration in pursuit of an anti-oppressive and anti-racist future.

**SERVICE**—We strive for our actions to benefit our local, national, global, and artistic communities, enabling artists to use their expression to change society for the better.

**EXPLORATION**—We prioritize questioning and innovation, recognizing that new voices, perspectives, and ideas are necessary to achieve our potential.

**We acknowledge that the Kennedy Center is standing on the traditional land of the Nacotchtank and Piscataway peoples past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have been the stewards of this land throughout the generations.**

# “...alive with ideas and experimentation”

By delivering on our mission to present the full spectrum of American culture, we ensure President Kennedy’s living memorial serves as a reminder of the transformative power of art.

Established in 1958 by President Eisenhower with the National Cultural Center Act, the Kennedy Center is more than a performing arts center. It is designated by an act of Congress—Public Law 88-260 signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson—as a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy.

The Center’s Terrace Level contains the 7,500-square-foot interactive exhibit *Art and Ideals: President John F. Kennedy*. This year, we welcomed more than 500,000 visitors to the free exhibit. Three scavenger hunt activities, provided by Friends of the Kennedy Center Volunteers, bring the exhibit to life for younger visitors.

(Below) Bilal in the Club at Studio K, (opposite) *Art and Ideals: President John F. Kennedy* exhibit.



“Proud as each one of us may be of the great structure arising along the Potomac, the existence of the Center will be justified only by the artistic quality of what goes on within the great halls and by the impact this artistic life has on the nation. I hope that visitors to Washington will soon visit the Center as naturally as they now visit the Capitol and the White House, and I trust that performances in Washington will reach out across our wide land and unite us all in the joy and fulfillment of the great performing arts.

This to me is the excitement and purpose of the Kennedy Center. It must not be a shrine, resplendent but lifeless. It must be rather a working place, alive with ideas and experimentation, attracting the most vital of our artists, drawing alert and demanding audiences into its great halls. It must be a living part of the artistic future of our nation and the world.”

—Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, “A Dream Realized,” *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1971



# Impact through the arts

Our systemic commitment to social impact lives in our belief that the arts hold unique power in our society to build community, center joy, inspire action, and drive meaningful change.

## We leverage the arts for non-arts outcomes to advance justice and equity in all that we do.

Our work culminates in a network of powerful community-driven, measurable, and replicable programs and partnerships amplifying unheard voices and untold stories.

### Impact Performances

Our performances showcase visionary artists throughout the year, leveraging their profound talent to highlight issues of social impact.

### Artist Empowerment

Our stages belong to our artists, a platform to amplify the authentic voices and stories that are so often silenced.

### Community Empowerment

The richly diverse communities around us serve as inspiration, breaking down barriers through artistic expression, creative collaborations, and shared learning experiences.

(Opposite) Nai Barghouti with the National Arab Orchestra

### Cultural Leadership

A wide spectrum of perspectives, experiences, and ideas test the boundaries of progress, inspires changes, and challenges us to mobilize and support new, diverse leaders.

### REACH Activation

We invite all to come together in the REACH—a shared space for collective healing, exploration, and experimentation across disciplines.

**390 Social Impact events**

**2,167 artists engaged**

**57,578+ audience members**

**1,396 local artists engaged**

**638,032 online views of programs**

**500 national artists engaged**

**257 international artists engaged**



“Our work in Social Impact is most visible through our partnerships and programs, but most animated by our underlying commitment to the legacy of John F. Kennedy. Kennedy himself was a change agent with a magnetic social vision of equity across the American landscape. Our investment in cultural leaders and brilliant creatives is an extension of Kennedy’s vision of a vibrant and diverse public imagination. We’re working hard to present an exciting impact season that leverages justice today with an eye on a transformative cultural future.”

—**Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, Kennedy Center Vice President of Social Impact and Artistic Director of Cultural Strategy



## Program Highlights

### 2022–2023 Conflux Partner: Arab America Foundation

The Conflux Program is a collaboration between the Kennedy Center and a flagship national community partner—each with their own distinct missions, values, and social impact objectives—combining efforts to launch programming that maximizes our collective impact.

This season’s partner was the Arab America Foundation. *Taking Back Our Narrative* was a three-day celebration speaking to the diversity of the Arab American experience and highlighting the community’s culture through performances, art, and film screenings. The National Arab Orchestra, made up of musicians of both Arab and non-Arab backgrounds, performed in the Eisenhower Theater.

### Local Theatre Residency

The Local Theatre Residency is a year-round curated developmental residency program for local DMV theater companies and playwrights. The program provides support to artists and playwrights to amplify stories that are often overlooked, offering space to create and resources in the REACH. This season, we partnered with **15 artists and groups**.

“It’s hard to believe that it’s just been two weeks—our team is still stunned by the experience we had at the REACH. It ranks as one of the most creative experiences of most of our lives, and I hope that you can see the exponential value that you provide by making space to create in this way. Our time with you has cemented the fact that we have an important piece of theater here. For more of the world to know Isaac Mason’s story we have a responsibility to make it more accessible. This is only one of the many revelations that came from being able to be present with each other, uninterrupted, in the inspiring and creative space that is the REACH.”

—**John Schratwiser**, Director of the Kent Cultural Alliance, a Local Theatre Residency participant

### Community Partners

Community Partners work with Social Impact and other Programming departments at the Kennedy Center (including Dance, Theater, Jazz, Comedy, International Programs, and Hip Hop Culture and Contemporary Music) to develop community-based touchstone programs such as masterclasses, workshops, panel discussions, and performances. Community Partners also participate in other programs, such as Millennium Stage, Office Hours, Local Theatre Residency, or Dance Sanctuaries. This season we collaborated with **6 community organizations**.

### The Cartography Project

As a part of the *Cartography Project*, the Social Impact department worked in collaboration with National Symphony Orchestra and Washington National Opera to commission four new works with composers and librettists in the focus cities of Seattle, Houston, New Orleans, and Detroit. In alignment with our commitment to Black dignity, the focus of these new commissions are Black futures. What do they look like in New Orleans? What do they sound like in Detroit? What are we doing today to shape the Black lives of tomorrow? This is the charge to our commissioned composers and librettists to uncover through mentorship, community engagement, and composition workshops. During the summer of 2023, the Kennedy Center engaged in a series of Hometown Community Activations with arts and cultural partners in each of the focus cities, to deepen and strengthen the work of the commissioned artists and the communities from which they have geographic proximity.

### Community Partners:

Charles H. Wright Museum in Detroit, Michigan  
New Orleans African American Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana  
Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas  
Wa Na Wari in Seattle, Washington

### Partner Artists:

SassyBlack, Charles Lumar II, Deborah D.E.E.P Mouton, Levi Taylor, Jaylin Vinson, Brittini Ward and T.L. Benton with mentors Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Carlos Simon



“As a community partner for Kennedy Center’s Social Impact Program, Armed Service Arts Partnership (ASAP) offered two theater workshops, free for military veterans, service members, and their families: Vocal Performance with the national touring cast of *Les Misérables* and Musical Theater with the national touring cast of Disney’s *The Lion King*. Professional theater artists delivered expert instruction on voice/dance techniques and offered valuable industry advice during Q&A sessions. This partnership enhanced our mission (fostering creative communities where veterans can thrive through the arts) by giving our community members access to expert theater artists and training inside the walls of the renowned Kennedy Center, inspiring them to continue their artistic journeys.”

—**Tara Demmy**, Program Director at Armed Services Arts Partnership, a Community Partner

(Above left) Grammy®-nominated musician Gladney and his band perform as a part of the *Cartography Project* Hometown Activation, at the New Orleans African American Museum, (at left) Participants learn dance moves in an Armed Service Arts Partnership workshop with cast members of Disney’s *The Lion King*

# A place to learn

We see a future fueled by creativity, driven by collaboration, and rooted in empathy. Ideas are encouraged, cultures are celebrated, and barriers are dissolved by learning through replicable, evidence-based programs, resources, and partnerships.

## Education Programs and Productions

From school field trips to hands-on activities in the Moonshot Studio to pre-professional artist trainings...we shape the artists and arts lovers of tomorrow.

## School and Community Programs

Partnering with a network of schools, educators, partner organizations, and artists across the country we work to ensure an arts-integrated education is part of every K-12 student's curriculum.

## Office of Accessibility and VSA

We believe the arts should be accessible to and enjoyed by all, regardless of ability. Office of Accessibility and VSA provides resources, programs, and opportunities for educators, cultural administrators, emerging and professional artists, and performers with disabilities.

## Digital Learning

Arts-based learning is available anywhere. Classroom plans, activities, and virtual performances turn any screen into a place to learn.

## Research and Evaluation

We use data to inform program development focusing on increased access to arts education, especially in priority and competitive populations such as Title I schools and students with disabilities.

**2,031,861 educators, administrators, and students reached across the country, plus Puerto Rico and 12 countries**

**1,770,497 students impacted through school and community programs**

**3,219 visitors to the Moonshot Studio**

**176,784 students from 1,060 schools—404 Title I schools—attended 27 dedicated school performances at the Kennedy Center**

**1,505,088 users accessed digital learning materials on our website a total of 2,424,665 times**

**3 Theater for Young Audiences commissioned/ co-commissioned world premiere works**

**31 performances for young audiences attended by 40,421 students across 97 schools nationwide**



## SPOTLIGHT ON:

### **Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie: Starring Indigo Blume**

**Nationwide tour: January 21–April 13, 2023**  
Since 1992, Kennedy Center Theater for Young Audiences on Tour has been a leader in bringing imaginative and original works to communities around the nation. Throughout the program's history, 44 tours have played across the U.S. and Canada to audiences of over 2 million.

Best-selling author **Kwame Alexander** brought two of his beloved children's books—*Acoustic Rooster and His Barnyard Band* and *Indigo Blume and the Garden City*—to the stage in this world premiere Kennedy Center commission. Alexander teamed up with his writing partner, **Mary Rand Hess**, and long-time musical collaborator, **Randy Preston**, to tell a story about being scared, being brave, and believing in yourself...bringing special guests like Duck Ellington, Miss Dairy Parton, and Acoustic Rooster himself along for the ride!



"[I hope the show makes] you want to go out and read more books about these musicians, about who inspired Duck Ellington...Duke Ellington! About who inspired Miles Davis...Miles Davis! About who inspired Chicki Minaj and Miss Dairy Parton. I hope you're going to go out and listen to some jazz and you're going to go out and make the world a better place one note at a time."

—Kwame Alexander

A digital performance guide available online helped enhance the performance, providing learning opportunities with educational standards information, conversation prompts, and activity guides.

(Above, left to right) Jaysen Wright, Randy Preston, Farrell Parker, Kanysha Williams, Vaughn Midder, and Lauren Davis in *Acoustic Rooster's Barnyard Boogie: Starring Indigo Blume*



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:  
**Training the Artists of Tomorrow**

“When students participate in our summer intensives they can expect a sense of community and belonging, and a really good vision of what their life in the arts could be.”

—**Vanessa Thomas**, Kennedy Center Director of Education Activation and Engagement

Across five programs all held at the REACH—**Betty Carter’s Jazz Ahead, WNO Opera Institute, Kennedy Center Dance Lab, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, NSO Summer Music Institute, and VSA International Young Musicians**—over 100 emerging artists gathered throughout the summer to participate in over 150 different courses.

“I don’t think there’s any other program that could give you this level of intense training and experience in such a short period of time.”

—**Warren Quandt**, Student and participant in WNO Opera Institute

Workshops, seminars, and masterclasses taught by professional instructors and working artists

not only helped the young artists develop their core skills, but also the competencies needed to be a professional artist in the 21st century—such as taking care of your body or instrument and career and finance management.

Though there are five separate programs, the magic happens when the programs overlap and the young artists get to be in community with and learn from one another. This year, participants were given the opportunity to visit Capitol Hill on behalf of the Kennedy Center, meeting with Congressional representatives and building their skills as citizen artists.

Acclaimed alumni of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Artistic Advisor for Dance Education for the Kennedy Center, and Artistic Lead for Kennedy Center Dance Lab, **Hope Boykin** is one of the world-class faculty students are able to learn from.

“Not only are you learning dance, but you’re surrounded by all these mentors that can help you as a person too”

—**Riyan Ware**, Student and participant in Kennedy Center Dance Lab



(Opposite) Artistic Lead Hope Boykin coaches a participant in the Kennedy Center Dance Lab at the REACH, (at left) Students in *Betty Carter’s Jazz Ahead* perform at a showcase on the Millennium Stage.



**The NSO Summer Music Institute celebrated its 30th anniversary this year!**

Students in the NSO Summer Music Institute rehearse side-by-side with NSO musicians.

This year, *Betty Carter's Jazz Ahead* participants performed in the Burlington Jazz Festival as part of their final event of the residency.

Earlier in the year the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival hosted **125 theater students** for their return to in-person events at the KCACTF National Festival. Over the summer, **20 college students and recent graduates** participated in the Directing Intensive at the Center, while other KCACTF summer intensives were made available virtually.

“Being able to work with the National Symphony Orchestra and its musicians is something that you can’t get at another program... this summer has given me a glimpse at what my future could look like.”

—**Derek**, 17-year old violinist from Oregon and participant in NSO’s Summer Music Institute

“To me, it feels like acceptance”

—**Allyson Bennett**, Soprano and soloist in the VSA International Young Musicians Program

## Jacqueline Woodson Education Artist-in-Residence



“It’s been a journey being Education Artist-in-Residence. I’ve met so many amazing people and saw my work come alive in ways I had not before imagined. I’ve also learned so much about the importance of bringing communities together across lines of race and class. The work hasn’t always been easy but nothing we do to move ourselves toward a greater good ever has been. So on we go.”

—**Jacqueline Woodson**

Jacqueline Woodson, winner of the Newbery Honor, National Book Award, and MacArthur “Genius” Grant, entered her second season as our Education Artist-in-Residence. Three of Woodson’s acclaimed books came to life onstage in world premiere Kennedy Center commissions, including *The Day You Begin*, *Each Kindness*, and *This Is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration*. **11,000 audience members** joined us to experience Woodson’s inspirational work on stage.

One highlight of Woodson’s residency was **Jason and Jacqueline’s Block Party**, hosted in partnership with Artistic Director for Jazz Jason Moran. Inspired by Woodson’s book, *The World Belonged to Us*, illustrated by Leo Espinosa, the REACH Plaza was covered in classic childhood outdoor games. Guests brought Woodson’s stories to life through hula hoops, massive hopscotch, double Dutch lessons with DC Retro Jumpers, sidewalk chalk activities with Chalk R!ot, fort building with Arts on the Horizon, and a roller skating demonstration by Our Family’s Skate Association. The day celebrated our host artists with a book reading from Woodson accompanied with music by Jason Moran and The Bandwagon. Over **800 people** joined us for this joyous free celebration of the arts, imagination, and playtime.



SPOTLIGHT ON:  
**Thank an Arts Teacher**

In honor of National Arts in Education Week (September 10-16), we partnered with AMC Theatres and Academy Award®-winning actress, singer, and dancer **Ariana DeBose** on a special campaign to say thank you to our arts educators throughout the month of September. Anchored by a nationwide PSA featuring DeBose running in all AMC Theatres, we invited the public to submit a message of gratitude to an arts teacher who made a difference. In the inaugural issue of CENTER magazine, a feature story written by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist **Sarah L. Kaufman** made the case for the transformative power of arts education.

From high school band teachers and community piano instructors to summer art camp counselors and photography instructors, we received **600 heart-warming messages** for educators of all kinds. In addition to DeBose sharing a story about her mentor Elizabeth ‘Liz’ Droessler, the campaign featured stories from:

- Seven-time NBA all-star and sports analyst **Grant Hill**
- Grammy Award®-winning violinist and the Center’s Artistic Director of the Fortas Chamber Music Concerts, **Jennifer Koh**
- Chief of the UCSF Division of Otolaryngology, Neurotology, and Skull Base Surgery, **Charles Limb**
- Singer-songwriter and National Symphony Orchestra Artistic Advisor, **Ben Folds**
- Juilliard dean and director of the dance division, **Alicia Graf Mack**
- Physicist and dancer **Merritt Moore**
- Former AAADT company member and artistic director of dance at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, Missouri, **Antonio Douthit-Boyd**
- Jazz pianist **José André Montaña**
- Bradenton, Florida middle school arts teacher and Vice Principal **Gabriel Ortiz**
- Educator, violinist, and conductor **Adrian Anantawan**
- 11-year old D.C.-based rapper **Fly Zyah**
- Director, Actor, and Assistant Professor at Gallaudet University, **Monique ‘MoMo’ Holt**
- Composer, jazz pianist, and the Center’s Artistic Director for Jazz, **Jason Moran**
- Award-winning, dancer, choreographer, and Artistic Advisor for Dance Education at the Kennedy Center, **Hope Boykin**

**The Thank an Arts Teacher campaign played on 7,211 AMC Theatre screens across 566 locations, with the campaign making an additional 330,000 social media impressions and more than 80,000 web visits.**

**The campaign was also recognized as a finalist for a 2023 Anthem Award.**



(Opposite) Teacher Antonio Douthit-Boyd rehearses young dance students.

“I learned many things from Miss Liz Droessler, but I think the number one thing she taught me is that kindness is free. It costs you nothing to be kind, or smile, or bring good energy into a room. I think arts teachers are angels that walk among us. I’m so grateful for every arts teacher that has crossed my path. I can safely tell you I wouldn’t be who I am without them.”

—**Ariana DeBose**

“My art teachers taught me to think critically, work through challenges, they inspired me—which transferred to my passion inspiring others. I am the leader I am today because of John and Patricia.”

—**Michelle, Arizona**

“Mr. Silverbook was my Jazz Band teacher in high school. He’d often come into class and say, ‘I’m going to change your lives today!’ I often look back at this moment as the beginning of my artistic journey. To all the art teachers who make learning a joy and help enrich our lives through creativity: Thank you.”

—**Tony, Maryland**

# Opportunities for everyone

The Office of Accessibility and VSA ensures that the arts are a part of everyone's story, including those with disabilities. We believe that together we can be a catalyst for change.

## Access/VSA: A Jean Kennedy Smith Arts and Disability Program

Every guest is welcome at the Kennedy Center. This season we hosted over **260 performances** with services such as sign language interpretation, captioning, audio description, and sensory friendly features, in addition to on-request accommodations for every activity suited for guests' needs. Access programs go beyond those found on our stages though, through a network of programs, collaborations, and opportunities designed for artists and arts lovers with disabilities.

We provided nearly **6,000 large print and braille programs** and over **4,000 assisted listening devices** this season.

Great accessibility with closed captioning, priority seating and enhanced sound for outdoor movie "Indiana Jones" Thank you @kencen This is how it's done! #AccessibilityMatters #Equity #Inclusion —Patron post on X



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: LEAD® Conference

The Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability (LEAD®) program focuses on expanding the breadth and scope of accessible programming across the industry, leading to a more fulsome inclusion of people with disabilities in arts and culture.

This year's conference was hosted over 5 days in Boston, Massachusetts. It attracted **961 arts and culture professionals** across various administration, operations, community engagement, education, DEAI, sales, and patron services roles. A total of **554 organizations** were represented, from all **50 states, D.C., and 9 countries**. Attendees were able to participate in **114 concurrent sessions**, offering something for all types of organizations and all levels of knowledge.

## SPOTLIGHT ON: Access/VSA International Network Mentorship

Last spring the Access/VSA International Network, an online community dedicated to inclusion in the arts for people with disabilities, debuted a new mentorship program. The program connects professional artists to creatives with disabilities, providing direct access for guidance, advice, and community. The Network's first mentor, professional blind visual artist **John Bramblitt**, said, "My goal is to knock down all barriers and give participants a backstage pass to the art world. We need more artists with disabilities showing professionally; let's make it happen!"



(Opposite page) Playwright Francesca Smith reacts to the technical designers sharing their ideas for her script, (at left) Regan Linton leads a workshop as part of the 2023 VSA Playwright Discovery program.

John helped that happen for **Heather Bergerson**. A lifelong multimedia artist and printmaker who lost her sight in 2020, Heather was asked by John to show at his gallery in Texas and to join him on the PBS series *The Expressway* with Dulé Hill.

"Being part of something so beautifully important makes me feel really proud of who I am and what I can accomplish," said Heather. "I felt heard and seen by my role model, John Bramblitt, the PBS film crew, their host Dulé Hill, and everyone who attended the blindfolded workshop and reception. The fire within me burns bright as I continue to discover my place in the arts. Thank you, friends, for giving us the space to flourish."

**2,291 members** participate in the Access/VSA International Network.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: VSA Playwright Discovery Program

The VSA Playwright Discovery Program offers high school writers with disabilities the opportunity to submit scripts for the program. All applicants receive feedback, with finalists engaging in a workshop with disabled actors, playwrights, critics, and other industry professionals to help the young writers hone their skills, explore their disability identity through their art, and consider a career in the arts. This year, **17 applications** were received from **11 states and one international country**, with **5 awards** given.

"The experience made me feel valued as a playwright in ways that I have not felt in any other space. I learned more about myself as a writer and a person with disabilities through my interactions with theatre professionals and my talented peers."

—**Emily**, program participant

# RiverRun

From World Water Day (March 22, 2023) to Earth Day (April 22, 2023), our campus came alive with the first international festival since COVID-19 disruptions, *RiverRun: arts nature impact*.



(Above) Composer/conductor Huang Ruo performs a concert inspired by the rivers and landscapes of China, (opposite) 5,000 pieces of plastic waste collected by students and professors from George Washington University, Georgetown University, and George Mason University were used to produce Celia Ledón's *The Shape of Water* installation.

This year we announced a decade-long programmatic commitment to using the arts as a way to explore humanity's relationship with our physical environment, our planet, and beyond.

*RiverRun* brought together over **300 artists** from **30 countries**, including musicians, actors, dancers, authors, filmmakers, and visual artists. They were joined by more than **12,000 festival attendees**, creating a global stage for performances and exhibitions that celebrated the world's rivers and their impact on art and culture.

The festival hosted **23 performances** (including **11 commissions and world premieres**), **14 panels**, and **14 exhibitions and installations**.

"Never before has man had such capacity to control his own environment, to end thirst and hunger, to conquer poverty and disease, to banish illiteracy and massive human misery. We have the power to make this the best generation of mankind in the history of the world—or make it the last."

—**President John F. Kennedy**, 18th General Assembly of the United Nations address

*RiverRun* participants included **Walter Isaacson**, **Debbie Allen**, **Malavika Sarukkai**, **Scott Silven**, and legendary highwire artist **Philippe Petit**, as well as partnerships with **World Wildlife Fund**, **Potomac Riverkeepers**, **Georgetown University**, **George Washington University**, and the **Louis Armstrong Museum**.

**112 Friends of the Kennedy Center Volunteers supported *RiverRun***



# Genre blending... boundary defying

Performances at the Kennedy Center reach beyond the stage. They are the stories that come to life through artists... that drive our purpose...that compel us to serve our communities.

**1,627 performances**  
**2,000+ total activities**  
**1.4 million+ tickets distributed**  
**166,000+ free tickets**  
**400+ free programs**  
**2.1 million+ visitors**

Our programmers are a creative collective, each with areas of expertise, but collaboratively working across genres. They bring together not only the best artists, but the best leaders, cultural curators, forward-thinkers, and creators to shape the performances you see across our campus, and across our country.



Grammy Award®-winning violinist **Jennifer Koh** is the Center's newest artistic partner, announced this season as the Artistic Director for Fortas Chamber Music Concerts. Her first full season of programming will begin with the 2024–2025 season.

"I have long had a passion for curating programs with music from all eras, long believing that the past and present form a continuum. I believe in bringing forward the voices of those often unheard so that we can listen to stories inclusive of all members of our community."

—**Jennifer Koh**, Artistic Director for Fortas Chamber Music Concerts

## **10 Kennedy Center Programmatic Curators across 15 focuses:**

Arts and Wellbeing  
Ballet  
Broadcast Programs  
Classical New Music  
Comedy  
Contemporary Music  
Dance  
Fortas Chamber Music  
Hip Hop Culture  
International Programming  
Jazz  
Social Impact  
Special Programs  
Theater  
Renée Fleming *VOICES*

Our artistic affiliates, the **National Symphony Orchestra** and **Washington National Opera**

## **6 Kennedy Center Artistic Partners**

**Renée Fleming**, Artistic Advisor-at-Large  
**Jennifer Koh**, Artistic Director for Fortas Chamber Music Concerts  
**Jason Moran**, Artistic Director for Jazz  
**Q-Tip**, Artistic Director for Hip Hop  
**Carlos Simon**, Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence  
**Jacqueline Woodson**, Kennedy Center Education Artist-in-Residence

**Gianandrea Noseda**, Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra, and  
**Francesca Zambello**, Artistic Director of Washington National Opera

(Opposite) Indie artists Ben Rector and Cody Fry perform with the National Symphony Orchestra.



# Stronger together

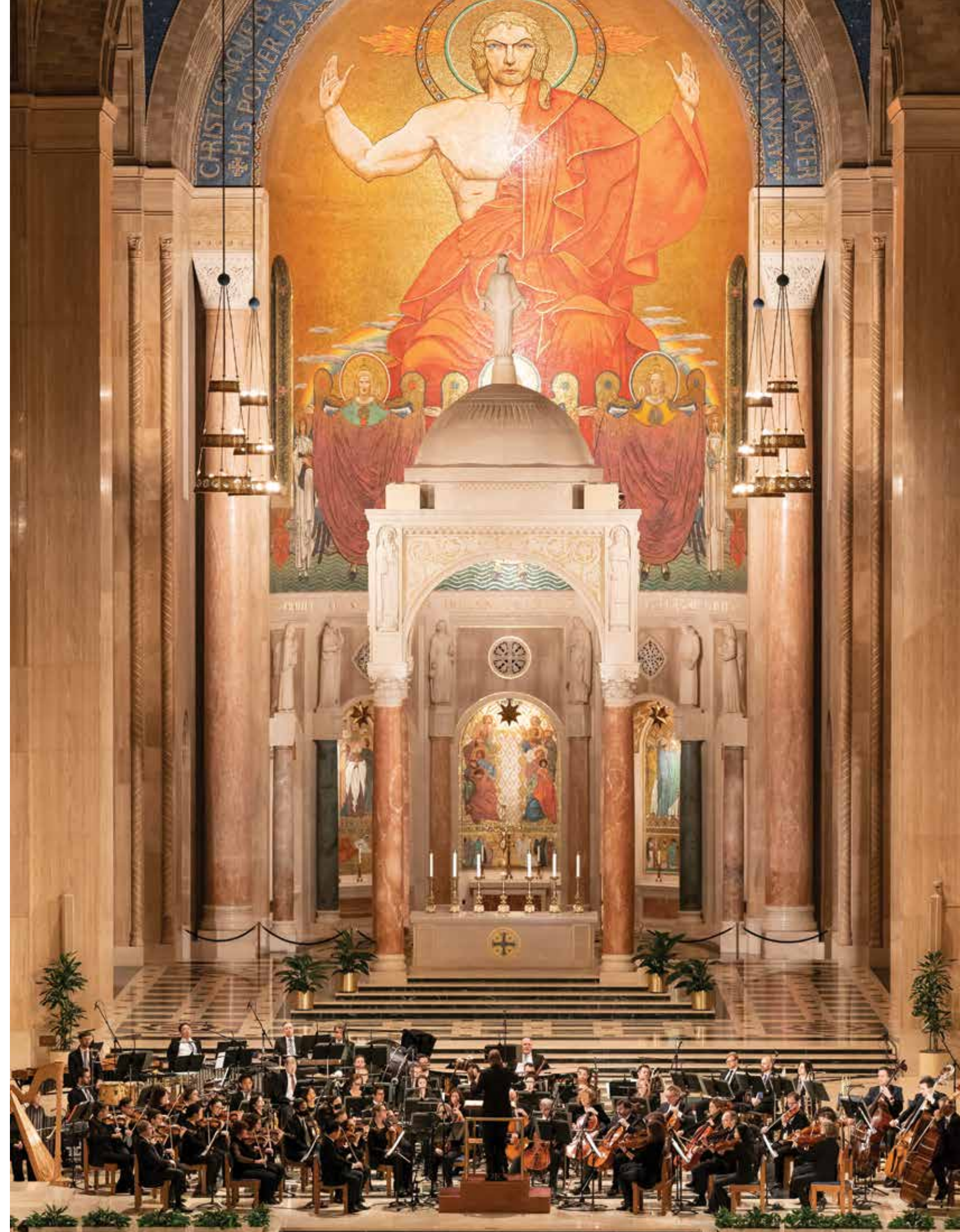
The Kennedy Center is the only major arts institution to house all art forms under one roof, thanks to the partnership of our artistic affiliates, the **National Symphony Orchestra** and **Washington National Opera**.

## National Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1931 and an artistic affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 1986, the National Symphony Orchestra is committed to furthering orchestral music in America through commissioning new work, playing at the highest level, and creating education programs for musicians and music-lovers of all ages. Seen as “stepping on the gas” (*The Washington Post*), the 2022–2023 season was the sixth under Music Director **Gianandrea Noseda**, and the first under new executive director **Jean Davidson**, securing a strong future of artistic acclaim and deep community bonds. The 96-member Orchestra prioritizes its work throughout the community and the nation with regularly televised appearances on PBS, live-streamed performances from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall on medici.tv, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9FM, making the NSO one of the most-heard orchestras in the country. This season, it also received the honor of being nominated for *Gramophone’s* 2023 Orchestra of the Year.

The NSO’s community engagement projects, many of which are highlighted in the following pages, connect the musicians and local audiences through innovative programming. Initiatives like **NSO In Your Neighborhood** take the orchestra out of the Concert Hall and into D.C.’s vibrant neighborhoods, while programs like **Notes of Honor** recognize our military families and **Sound Health** supports ongoing research into the connection between music and our physical health. The NSO concluded its two-season-long “Beethoven and American Masters” project pairing the sinfonias of D.C. native and Pulitzer Prize-winning composer George Walker with Beethoven’s symphonies. The NSO knows making music together is one of the greatest vehicles for communicating and expressing the human condition and in partnership with the Kennedy Center ensures our community has the opportunity to experience and participate in classical music.

(At right) The National Symphony Orchestra performs at Carnegie Hall in New York City, (opposite) The National Symphony Orchestra performs at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in northeast Washington as part of NSO *In Your Neighborhood*.



## Washington National Opera

Washington National Opera was founded in 1956. Now, nearly 70 seasons later under the combined leadership of General Director **Timothy O’Leary** and Artistic Director **Francesca Zambello**, WNO has established itself as a leader in the opera field, committed to artistic excellence, and community impact, as well as cultivating new works, new artists, and a diverse 21st century audience. At the Center’s opening, WNO was named the resident opera company, and in 2011 became an artistic affiliate. Since then, WNO and the Kennedy Center have collaborated to create new works to advance the artform, bring opera to new audiences, foster new talent, and reimagine and celebrate the traditional repertoire.

WNO is a leader in commissioning and championing new work, but also uplifting new creative and artistic voices. This season, *The New York Times* recognized WNO as outpacing all other major opera companies when it came to hiring female conductors, directors, and members of the creative teams. Members of WNO’s pre-professional training program, the **Cafritz Young Artists**, are also regularly recognized on the national stage, including two winners of the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition Grand Finals, and the **American Opera Initiative** commissioning program—celebrating its 10th anniversary this season—has commissioned and premiered 37 new works over its history. From collaborations across the Kennedy Center to community programming, WNO ensures opera is woven throughout our national cultural center.

(At right) Cafritz Young Artists Cecelia McKinley and Jonathan Patton in Jens Ibsen and Cecelia Raker’s AOI premiere of *Bubbe and the Demon*, (opposite) Christine Goerke stars in Washington National Opera’s production of *Elektra*.



# Moments of connection

The 1,627 performances held across our campus this year were made up of moments of joy... of grief... of healing... and of celebration. These are some of the moments we shared together.

## **Sound Health: Renew/Remix**

October 2–3, 2022

Part of the Center’s commitment to Arts and Wellbeing programming, *Sound Health: Renew/Remix* was a two-day symposium illustrating the power of music to guide us toward collective healing through performances, panel discussion, workshops, and screenings about mental wellness and joy. This continuation of *Sound Health*, a partnership with the **National Institute of Health**, the **Sound Health Network**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts** brought together leaders, artists, and audiences to explore the connection between art and healing.

Renée Fleming and the ensemble of the *Renew/Remix* concert.



“Public fascination with the power of music on our minds and bodies continues to grow, along with the science supporting it... Exploring the enormous potential of the arts for human connection and well-being is more crucial than ever.”

—**Renée Fleming**, Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor-at-Large

Events included:

### **Renew/Remix**

This Concert Hall event, featuring **Renée Fleming**, **esperanza spalding**, **Regina Carter**, and more illustrated music’s power to help us navigate the “new normal” and set the stage for an interactive day of learning.

### **The Call: How Music Saved Me**

A panel discussion with **Renée Fleming**, **Damian Woetzel**, **Susan Magsamen**, **Dr. Charles Limb**, **Christopher Bailey**, and **Molly Webster** included moving stories about the strength, resilience, and courage that comes from the power of music.

### **Co-Labs led by esperanza spalding**

Participants explored communal improvised musical creation guided by a team of peers and scientists, led by **esperanza spalding**, designed with **Dr. Marisol Norris** and **Dr. Helena Hansen**

### **Music Vets Screening**

This film tells the story of three proud U.S. Military Veterans in different stages of recovery from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries, demonstrating the therapeutic power of music in practice. The screening was followed by audience Q&A with the film’s directors **Jon Kaufman** and **El Sawyer**, along with music therapist **Rebecca Vaudreuil** and research partner **Dr. Joke Bradt**.



## **Broadway Center Stage**

*Guys and Dolls*—October 7–16, 2022

*Sunset Boulevard*—February 1–8, 2023

*Monty Python’s Spamalot*—May 12–21, 2023  
and now on Broadway!

Since launching in 2018, the Kennedy Center’s *Broadway Center Stage* (BCS) series has been “a raging success” (*The Washington Post*). Led by the Center’s Vice President and Executive Producer of Theater and the Artistic Director of BCS, **Jeffrey Finn**, these starry, smash hit Broadway musicals are produced exclusively for Kennedy Center audiences, feature our own Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, and welcome some of theater’s biggest stars into exciting once-in-a-lifetime roles. As Finn said, “what’s really special about these shows is that often, major Broadway stars have dream roles that they haven’t been able to do on Broadway” and BCS gives them that opportunity. Over the years, BCS has welcomed well-known talent such as **Raul Esparza**, **Vanessa Hudgens**, **Megan Hilty**, **Anthony Ramos** and more, as well as acclaimed directors like **Marc Bruni**.

This year’s BCS season started in 1950s Manhattan with a **Marc Bruni**-directed production of *Guys and Dolls*. The cast, hailed by the *Washington Post* as “a bushel and a peck of top-tier talent” included **James Monroe Iglehart**, **Jessie Mueller**, **Steven Pasquale**, and **Phillipa Soo**. The second

production took audiences to the faded glamor of Hollywood with **Stephanie J. Block** in the iconic role of Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. Playing to sold-out crowds and rave reviews, the rest of the **Sammi Cannold**-directed cast included **Derek Klena**, **Auli’i Cravalho**, and **Nathan Gunn**.

The final production of the season encouraged us to always look on the bright side of life: *Monty Python’s Spamalot*. **Josh Rhodes** directed and choreographed a cast including **Alex Brightman**, **James Monroe Iglehart**, **Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer**, **Rob McClure**, **Matthew Saldívar**, **Jimmy Smagula**, **Michael Urie**, and **Nik Walker** in a production *The Washington Post*’s Peter Marks said “unfair to make [him] laugh this much!” The acclaimed production received a second life on Broadway, transferring to the St. James Theatre. *Spamalot* became the first production from *Broadway Center Stage* to transfer to Broadway and marks the Center’s return to Broadway after a decade.

The cast of the *Broadway Center Stage* production of *Monty Python’s Spamalot*.

### **BCS by the numbers:**

**31 performances**

**33,826 audience members**

**21% first-time attendees to the Kennedy Center**

**33% from outside the DMV**



Robert Glasper in performance

### Robert Glasper: Black Radio 10th Anniversary Celebration

November 13, 2022

Five-time Grammy Award-winning pianist, composer, producer, and founding Kennedy Center Hip Hop Culture Council Member **Robert Glasper** celebrated the 10th anniversary of his genre-shattering, groundbreaking brand—Black Radio—with a homecoming for some of the album’s original collaborators.

The 32-piece Black Radio Orchestra, led by **Derrick Hodge**, was joined by special guests **Lalah Hathaway, Bilal, Meshell Ndegeocello, Kyle Abraham, Amir Sulaiman, and Affion Crockett** in the one-night-only event. The performance, which saw Glasper reimagine his seminal album, was recorded for broadcast as the first episode of the second season of *NEXT AT THE KENNEDY CENTER*, available on demand on PBS.org.

### Washington National Opera: *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*

January 20–22, 2023

She trained hundreds of African American youth to sing. She founded the longest-running, all-Black opera company. She organized opera guilds in the country’s biggest cities. Mary Cardwell Dawson’s dream to bring music to African American audiences came true—and it changed the future of opera.

This new opera starring **Denyce Graves**, based on a play by Sandra Seaton and featuring original music by Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence **Carlos Simon**, told the little-known story of the founder of the historic and groundbreaking National Negro Opera Company. In partnership with the Denyce Graves Foundation, the story extended into the Hall of States with a free exhibit, *Building the Stage*. Photographs and artifacts from the Dawson estate and Heinz History Center completed the fascinating story of Mary Cardwell Dawson’s life.

### The 10th anniversary of the American Opera Initiative

January 21, 2023

WNO celebrated 10 years of 20-minute operas with this season of the **American Opera Initiative** (AOI), a program dedicated to mentoring and coaching the next generation of opera composers and librettists. Since its inception, the program has commissioned and premiered 37 new operas, including this year’s three new works:

***Oshun***—Music by B.E. Boykin; Libretto by Jarrod Lee

***Bubbie and the Demon***—Music by Jens Ibsen; Libretto by Cecelia Raker

***What the Spirits Show***—Music by Silen Wellington; Libretto by Walken Schweigert

**Kelly Rourke** was appointed AOI Artistic Advisor, after serving as an AOI mentor for three years.



(Above) Jonathan Rhodes and Denyce Graves in WNO’s production of *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, (opposite) Robert Glasper in performance



United Ukrainian Ballet in *Giselle*

### Sphinx Symphony Orchestra

January 31, 2023

A co-presentation with Fortas Chamber Music Concerts and Washington Performing Arts, the Sphinx Symphony Orchestra performed in the Concert Hall as part of Sphinx’s 25th anniversary. The unique all Black and Latinx orchestra was directed by **Tito Muñoz** and **Eugene Rogers**, accompanied by **EXIGENCE Vocal Ensemble**, **Aundi Marie Moore**, and members of **The Washington Chorus**. The program included a Sphinx Commission by the Center’s Composer-in-Residence **Carlos Simon**, as well as **Joel Thompson’s** *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, which quotes the last words of seven African-American men killed by police or other authority figures.

**The Kennedy Center is committed to the future of dance, having commissioned over 40 new dance works, many through the Local Dance Commissioning Project.**

### United Ukrainian Ballet

February 1-5, 2023

Consisting of 60 professional artists in exile from the national theaters of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa, and beyond, the United Ukrainian Ballet served as a reminder that the forces that unite are deeper than those that divide, and even in the midst of dark times art will prevail. The company, under the direction of **Igone de Jongh**, performed the U.S. premiere of world-renowned choreographer **Alexi Ratmansky’s** *Giselle* with American Ballet Theatre principal dancer **Christine Shevchenko**, both of whom are Ukrainian artists themselves. In their U.S. debut, the United Ukrainian Ballet was accompanied by the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra. After premiering at the Kennedy Center, the acclaimed work toured internationally.

### Washington National Opera: *Blue*

March 11-25, 2023

Originally scheduled as part of the disrupted 2019-2020 season, *Blue* had its long-awaited, triumphant mainstage debut. Named the “Best New Opera of 2020” by The Music Critics Association of North America Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson’s acclaimed work, which addressed the timely topic of police violence, played to sold out crowds and created meaningful experiences for discussion throughout the community.

*Blue* invited reflections from artists, audience, and community members alike. After performances, audience members were invited to contribute to a Community Reflection Wall, considering: “What moved you?” “What challenged you?” “*Blue* left me feeling...” As the production closed, a tapestry of thoughts and emotions spread across the Eisenhower Theater wall. During community events, *Blue*’s cast and creative team alongside special guests reflected on the themes of the opera.

Community programming took *Blue* into local neighborhoods, with powerful music and engaging discussion leading to deeper community relationships and connections.



(At left) The Community Reflection Wall invited comments from audiences, (below) Kenneth Kellogg and Briana Hunter in *Blue*.

### WNO Spring Preview at Alfred Street Baptist Church

This free event featured WNO’s talented Cafritz Young Artists performing selections from *Blue* and *La bohème*. The program was emceed by WNO Artist Ambassador and Cafritz Young Artist alum **Soloman Howard**.

### Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts Event

WNO partnered with the Coalition for African Americans in the Performing Arts and held a free event for their ARTS (Active Retired Talented and Terrific Seniors) members at the CAAPA Cultural Center in Fort Washington, M.D. with performances from Cafritz Young Artists and Q&A with *Blue* cast members.

### Let’s Go There: Moving Through + Moving Forward

This engaging event explored the themes of *Blue* with a panel conversation featuring special guests, a documentary screening, and a musical performance. The conversation featured **Kenneth Kellogg** and **Aaron Crouch** from *Blue*; **Dr. Sherry Davis Molock**, associate professor of clinical psychology at The George Washington University; **Ronald Hampton**, former Executive Director of the National Black Police Association; and **T’Asia Bates**, co-author of *The Day Tajon Got Shot*. The panel was moderated by **Nkechi Taifa**, attorney, activist, and founder of The Taifa Group LLC.

*Blue* was named “Best of 2023” by *The Washington Post*

“Painfully and beautifully of the moment—and not a moment too soon.”

—*The Washington Post*

**36% of audiences attending *Blue* were new to WNO**

## National Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall

April 18, 2023

The National Symphony Orchestra traveled from the Kennedy Center Concert Hall to Carnegie Hall for the second time with Music Director Gianandrea Noseda. The program featured Washington D.C.-native George Walker's Sinfonia No. 4, "Strands," a piece originally co-commissioned by the NSO. Throughout this and the last season, the NSO recorded the complete Sinfonias of George Walker, released to great acclaim.

The *Washington Post* said of the performance: "If the rapturous audience reception was any indication, rumors of the NSO's rise among American orchestras have not been overstated. The orchestra feels fully charged. ... The NSO has never seemed more settled into itself, never sounded more sound."



J'Nai Bridges sings Carlos Simon's *Songs of Separation* with the NSO.

## National Symphony Orchestra: *Songs of Separation*

April 21, 2023

This season, the NSO added to the contemporary orchestral repertoire through six commissions. The final commission of the season was a world premiere by Composer-in-Residence **Carlos Simon**. Inspired by Rumi's words "What hurts you, blesses you," Simon's *Songs of Separation*, featuring mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges**, examines the inevitable human experience of separation, exploring the emotions of grief, sorrow, and hope.

"*Songs of Separation* comes out of this reflection of seeing so much struggle and suffering, and me wanting to help others through it through music."

—**Carlos Simon**, interview with WETA FM

Other commissions or co-commissions throughout the season included:

*The Journey* by **Paquito D'Rivera** featuring **Yo-Yo Ma** on cello

*Blue Electra* by **Michael Daugherty** featuring **Anne Akiko Meyers** on violin

*Mnemosyne's Pool* by **Steven Mackey**

*Hymn for Everyone* by **Jessie Montgomery**

*This is the Rope* by **Quinn Mason**, written and performed by **Jacqueline Woodson**

**Over its history, the NSO has commissioned over 130 new works.**



Renée Fleming and Mo Willems in *The Ice Cream Truck is Broken! & Other Emotional Arias*

## *The Ice Cream Truck is Broken! & Other Emotional Arias*

April 22-23, 2023

This Kennedy Center and Washington National Opera world premiere commission was an opportunity for the youngest audience members (and those young at heart!) to laugh, cry, and learn new ways to sing your heart out.

A presentation by Artistic Advisor **Renée Fleming** and inaugural Education Artist-in-Residence **Mo Willems**, *The Ice Cream Truck is Broken!* introduced us to all the emotions experienced during any great opera: the joy of playing with 10,000 puppies through the music of Verdi... the despair of not having ice cream (after all, the ice cream truck is broken!) through Leoncavallo... and the anger and frustration of not being able to ride a bike through Mozart... all brought to life by emerging young artists.

As a special double feature, audiences also got to experience Mo Willems' beloved Pigeon's dramatic operatic debut through the world premiere of Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence **Carlos Simon**'s new WNO commission, *Don't Let The Pigeon Sing Up Late!*

**3,340 opera lovers of all ages attended.**

## Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival

May 12-13, 2023

NEA Jazz Master **Dee Dee Bridgewater** hosted the Kennedy Center's 26th Annual Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival, a two-day celebration honoring the "first lady of jazz" Mary Lou Williams with powerful live performances by women leading today's scene.

A highlight of the festival was **Doreen Ketchens**—an acclaimed jazz clarinetist street performer whose dream of performing at the Center came true—along with Doris Duke Artist Award recipient **Somi**. Also featured were **Camille Thurman and the Darrell Green Quartet** and the groundbreaking **Dee Dee Bridgewater Big Band**.



### SPOTLIGHT ON : **Doreen Ketchens**

The intersection of Royal Street and St. Peter in New Orleans is known to locals as "Doreen's Corner," where **Doreen Ketchens** has played for over 30 years. In December 2022, Doreen was interviewed by Ted Koppel for *CBS Sunday Morning* where Doreen shared a place she dreamed of performing—the Kennedy Center.

Kennedy Center Director of Jazz Programming, **Kevin Struthers**, happened to be watching that interview, and helped make Doreen's dream come true with a sold-out, headliner performance in the Terrace Theater.

Erika Rose and Jason Mantzoukas in *Gravid Water*



**National Symphony Orchestra:  
Beethoven & American Masters  
Festival Conclusion**

May 12–June 3, 2023

A two-season initiative beginning last season celebrated the belated 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven’s birth and George Walker’s Centennial. Throughout the two seasons, the orchestra paired Beethoven’s symphonies with works by 20th-century American composers Walker and William Grant Still.



“When we decided to program the symphonic music of William Grant Still and D.C.-native George Walker alongside the Beethoven symphonies, it was with a specific goal in mind: to explore the influences and evolution of the symphonic form over nearly two centuries.”

—Gianandrea Noseda,  
NSO Music Director

**Summer Comedy**

June and July 2023

If laughter is the best medicine, the Kennedy Center made sure our summer audiences were happy and healthy with a range of brilliant comics. Through improvisation, stand-up, residencies, and workshops, we brought our community together through laughter.

Standout stand-ups included the hilarious theatrical-comedy experiment *Gravid Water*, placing trained actors and skilled improvisers including **Becky Drysdale, John Lutz, Jason Mantzoukas, Stephen Ruddy, Tami Sagher, and Brian Stack** into scenes together with hilarious results. Acclaimed comic **Ali Wong** performed a sold-out week-long run in the Concert Hall, while **Maria Bramford** and **Neal Brennan** made their Kennedy Center Terrace Theater debuts. The star-power continued with the cast of *The Last Improv Show* featuring **Jason Mantzoukas, D’Arcy Carden, Nicole Byer, Neil Casey, Ego Nwodim, Paul Welsh, Anthony Atamanuik, and Dan Black**, while the public was invited to get in on the fun with two free interactive and introductory workshops with **Washington Improv Theater** held at the REACH.

**RENT in Concert**

July 26–28, 2023

In a symphonic world premiere, the NSO performed the complete score of Jonathan Larson’s beloved musical *RENT*, led by Principal Pops Conductor **Steven Reineke**. The new concert version featured some of the biggest names in musical theater: **Ali Stroker, Andrew Barth Feldman, Lorna Courtney, Alex Boniello, Jimmie Herrod, Myles Frost, Terrance Johnson, and Awa Sal Secka**.



**Songs for Hope**

September 18, 2023

In collaboration with the **Office of the Surgeon General**, the Kennedy Center presented an evening of remembrance, reflection, and hope celebrating the recipients of the **2023 Surgeon General’s Medallion**. The highest honor the U.S. Surgeon General can present to civilians, the Surgeon General’s Medallion recognizes extraordinary individuals and organizations whose heroic service and sacrifice to advance the well-being of their communities.

The Medallion was awarded to:  
**Corey and Jennifer Feist**  
**Kate’s Club**  
**Eduardo Morales “Father Eddy”**  
**Major Kevin Cho Tipton**  
**Ashanti Branch**  
**Alysha Lee**

The moving concert, with music direction by **Benjamin Rauhala**, included performances from **Kishi Bashi, Aloe Blacc, Ariana DeBose, Renée Fleming, Ben Folds, Joshua Henry, Jimmie Herrod, The Lone Bellow, Chris Olsen, and Sri Ramesh** and played to audiences in the Concert Hall as well as livestreaming around the world.

(At left) Broadway star Ali Stroker as Maureen in *RENT in Concert*, (above) Chris Olsen and Sri Ramesh in *Songs for Hope*

“In a night of music and joy, we honor the Surgeon General Medallion recipients with performances from brilliant artists whose music inspires hope and healing. Together, we acknowledge the past, look forward to a brighter future, and applaud those who model kindness, love, and service.”

—Dr. Vivek Murthy, U.S. Surgeon General

# Together, as community

From the halls of our campus to schools, libraries, and coffee shops across the city, art comes alive through community.

## **NSO In Your Neighborhood: Edge of the City**

March 7-13, 2023

The NSO's annual *In Your Neighborhood* program brought the Symphony out of the Concert Hall and into the places we live our daily lives, this year visiting D.C.'s Ward 5 neighborhoods Brentwood, Brookland, Eckington, Fort Lincoln, Trinidad, University Heights, and Woodridge.

Across **25 events** in collaboration with **23 venues and partners** like yoga studios, libraries, Lincoln's Cottage, NSO musicians brought the joy of live music to nearly **9,000 residents**, right in their neighborhoods.

Highlights included:

### **Introduction to Music Concert at Joe's Movement Emporium**

**Marissa Regni, Principal Second Violin**

Joe's Movement Emporium is a cultural and creative arts center that bridges the gap between under-resourced families and those with means

through their arts-based youth programs. NSO violinist **Marissa Regni** led students in the community through a music show for kids.

### **Full Orchestra Concert at The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception**

**Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, conductor**

In partnership with The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the National Symphony Orchestra, led by conductor **Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser**, dedicated their concert to front-line workers with a performance of **Valerie Coleman's** *Seven O'Clock Shout*, a 2020 commission by the Philadelphia Orchestra to celebrate those who ensured the continuity of critical functions of our communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Flute Duo During Clay Workshop**

**Carole Bean, Flute; Alyce Johnson, Flute**

District Clay is a clay studio that offers lessons to adults and kids, masterclasses, a ceramic gallery, and more. **Carole Bean** and **Alyce Johnson**, NSO flautists, played while the ceramic students worked on their projects.



NSO violinists Meredith Riley and Benjamin Scott perform a pop-up *In Your Neighborhood* concert at The Spice Suite.

## **Art in Embassies**

January 31, 2023

Prior to the performance of the United Ukrainian Ballet the Kennedy Center co-hosted a special event with the **State Department** and the **Aspen Institute** celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the **Office of Art in Embassies**. A program of the U.S. Department of State started by President Kennedy in 1963 to display works by American artists in diplomatic posts around the world, the Office of Art in Embassies shares our belief that art can forge mutual understanding and encourage conversation. Since its inception, this arm of the State Department has installed over 70 permanent art collections in more than 189 countries. As part of the event, the **Ambassador of Ukraine, Her Excellency Oksana Markarova**, reminded us to always celebrate culture. The **United Ukrainian Ballet's Svetlana Onipko**, accompanied by **Amy Frost Baumgarten** and **Sophie Kim Cook** of our own Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, demonstrated the Ambassador's words in action through a breathtaking performance of *The Dying Swan*.

## **Commemorating President Eisenhower and the National Cultural Center Act**

May 15, 2023

Though the Kennedy Center opened in 1971 as the living memorial to President John F. Kennedy, our story begins with President Eisenhower.

President Eisenhower made it a goal of his administration to create a national cultural center to celebrate America's contributions to global art and culture. His advocacy for the creation of a building that would be, as he said, "a civic auditorium and cultural center worthy of our great nation" resulted in the 1958 passage of the National Cultural Center Act. Plans and fundraising for the Center were then continued under the Kennedy administration. This year we recognized the bi-partisan nature of our founding with a new medallion installed outside Eisenhower Theater to commemorate President Eisenhower's role in the creation of the Kennedy Center.

## **Summer at the REACH**

July–September, 2023

Throughout the summer we invited guests to come together at the REACH in a casual setting to enjoy pop up beer gardens, make new friends, and experience art. Over **100 artists**, including Step Afrika, Words Beats & Life, members of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra Summer Music Institute students, and local poets and DJs entertained over **13,000 guests** from the Fourth of July to Labor Day across **23 events**. On Friday nights, film lovers gathered on the REACH lawn for free screenings of popular movies. On Saturdays and Sundays the Moonshot Studio invited everyone to find their inner artist with hands-on activities.



Representative Rick Larsen, Susan Eisenhower, Deborah F. Rutter, and David M. Rubenstein unveiled the new bronze medallion on the Box Tier of the Eisenhower Theater.

## National Dance Day

September 16, 2023

This year's National Dance Day, a partnership between the Kennedy Center, American Dance Movement, and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), invited people of all ages and all abilities to celebrate the joy of dance!

Marking 14 years of the nationwide event, over **2,200 dance lovers** joined us to recognize the golden anniversary of hip hop with free events and activities highlighting hip hop dance forms. This year's activities were envisioned with community curators **Lauren DeVera, Chitra Subramanian** and community advisors **Ama Law** and **Chris Law** in collaboration with **Words Beats & Life** and **True School**. Our Dance Programming, Social Impact's Millennium Stage and Office Hours programs, and Hip Hop Culture Programming all participated in the cross-departmental effort.

Kennedy Center staff show off their dance moves on the REACH campus.



Highlights included:

Free classes and demonstrations across a variety of dance styles from local artists and companies

Words Beats & Life's annual *Freshest of All Time* one-on-one b-boy/b-girl competition

*Fine Lines Paint Jam*, a celebration of graffiti, street art, and fine arts where artists created live works of art on the REACH plaza

Dance parties with DJ Marc Nfinit, DJ Face, and DJ Spinderella

The opportunity to learn the official National Dance Day routine

**Our Kennedy Center staff got in on the fun, creating our own National Dance Day video feature faces and places from across our campus!**



## America's Voices Against Apartheid

September 14–November 5, 2023

Through media and images, this exhibit in the Hall of Nations profiled celebrities, citizens, and organizations who challenged South Africa's apartheid regime despite resistance from their own government. Among the profiled are 2020 Kennedy Center Honoree **Debbie Allen**, singer **Harry Belafonte**, tennis player **Arthur Ashe**, and musician **Steven Van Zandt**. A collaboration between the Kennedy Center and Sister States Maryland, this moving exhibit first opened at the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa in May 2023.

## Opera in the Outfield

September 30, 2023

A tent-pole of WNO's community programming, *Opera in the Outfield* celebrated its 13th season by returning to D.C.'s National's Park with a free broadcast of **Puccini's *La bohème***. Pre-opera activities included unique photo ops with WNO's costume department, balloon animals, community arts and crafts projects, a musical playspace, and chocolate tasting and M&M's photo opportunities from MARS.

**We welcomed over 4,000 attendees to Opera in the Outfield.**

## Millennium Stage

Since its inception in 1997 as part of Performing Arts for Everyone, the Millennium Stage has been driven by a simple goal—to ensure arts access is available to everyone, regardless of cost. The program has evolved in response to the changing needs of our community; now part of our Social Impact programming, Millennium Stage offers a free live and on-demand performance Wednesday through Saturday, with film screenings offered on Sunday. This season, audiences of over **49,000 patrons** enjoyed **211 live Millennium Stage performances** featuring **1,452 artists** as well as **45 film screenings**.

"I love Millennium Stage performances—our young son being able to experience go-go from right here in D.C. one day to Afghan music the next... opera... dance... and performers from all over the world—it's invaluable."

—Millennium Stage patron

*Opera in the Outfield* brings families and opera fans to Nationals Park.

Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor Renée Fleming moderates an Arts and Wellness panel.



### Dance for Parkinson's Disease

Initially launched as a partnership between Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson's Group, Dance for Parkinson's Disease (Dance for PD) offers classes in more than 250 communities and 24 countries. Dance for PD invites everyone, regardless of ability and mobility to discover or re-discover the joy of movement. We offer free community classes Monday's at 2:30, taught by local instructor **Lucy Bowen McCauley** with live guitar accompaniment by local artist **Taylor Carson**. This year, we offered **37 classes**, as well as a two-day Dance for PD teacher training in partnership with Mark Morris Dance Group.

### Arts and Wellness Panels

How can someone with advanced dementia, unable to recognize their own spouse, perfectly recall songs from their youth? Why can some patients with Parkinson's disease, struggling to rise from a chair or walk through a doorway, easily accomplish these tasks, or even dance, to the sound of a musical beat? How can music impact child and adolescent mental health and development?

In partnership with NeuroArts Blueprint, an initiative of the Aspen Institute and Johns Hopkins Medicine, we presented two free in-depth panel discussions with arts and healthcare leaders.

Panelists this season included:

**Renée Fleming**, World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health

**Susan Magsamen**, Founder and executive director of the International Arts + Mind Lab and Center for Applied Neuroaesthetics from the Pedersen Brain Science Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

**Ellen Galinsky**, President of Families and Work Institute and expert on work-life, children's development, youth voice, and parental development

**Tracie Jade Jenkins**, founding member and Executive Director of the Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation, which is dedicated to eradicating the stigma around mental health in the Black community

**Jeanette McCune**, Senior Director of School and Community Programs at the Kennedy Center

**Tom Sweitzer** MMT, MT-BC, Co-Founder, Creative Director, and Head of Music Therapy at A Place to Be, a non-profit organization serving over 300 families weekly through music therapy

**Dr. Francis Collins**, former director of the National Institutes of Health

**Dr. Emmeline Edwards**, director of the Division of Extramural Research of the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

**David Leventhal**, program director for Dance for PD at the Mark Morris Dance Group

### The Friends of the Kennedy Center Volunteers

Few groups embody the Kennedy Center's mission, vision, and values more than the Friends of the Kennedy Center. Since 1965, generous volunteers have served in every corner of the nation's cultural center and answered President Kennedy's inaugural challenge, "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

From front-facing roles like Tour Guides and Retail Associates to behind-the-scenes volunteers broadcasting Millennium Stage, repairing costumes, and preparing Moonshot Studio activities, the Friends touch every corner of the Kennedy Center.

This season, **351 Friends** served in regular roles with an **additional 150** serving as needed.

**59,055 hours volunteered**

**2,558 tours given**

**14,686 tour participants**

**35 new Friends joined the program**

**112 Friends supported RiverRun**

**103 Friends supported the 45th Kennedy Center Honors**

In January 2023, **Marilyn Schoon** received special recognition for 50 years of service, only the second volunteer to reach this extraordinary achievement.

"This is a really special place. I've seen incredible performances. I've met incredible people. It's just important to give back in as good a proportion as you can to what you've gained."

—**Kennedy Center Friend Marilyn Schoon**



(Above) Friends volunteers assist with special events such as *Opera in the Outfield*, (at left) Friends volunteers help stock supplies for the Member lounges.

# From the stage to page to the screen

We connect with audiences world-wide through primetime broadcast specials, dynamic digital and social media content, and widely-read publications.

## The 45th Kennedy Center Honors

The Kennedy Center Honors is a tradition beloved by millions worldwide. This year, we recognized 5 incredible artists—acclaimed actor and filmmaker **George Clooney**; contemporary Christian and pop singer-songwriter **Amy Grant**; the legendary singer of soul, Gospel, R&B, and pop **Gladys Knight**; Cuban-born American composer, conductor, and educator **Tania León**; and iconic Irish rock band **U2**, comprised of band members **Bono**, **The Edge**, **Adam Clayton**, and **Larry Mullen Jr.**

The December 28 CBS and Paramount+ broadcast garnered almost **5.5 million views**, resulting in **10,000 mentions** and **225 million potential impressions** on social media.

## The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor

The 24th Mark Twain Prize, recognizing comedians who have had a significant impact on American culture, was awarded to **Adam Sandler**. The star-studded ceremony, featuring guests like **Jennifer Aniston**, **Judd Apatow**, **Drew Barrymore**, **Idina Menzel**, **Conan O'Brien**, **Chris Rock**, and others found a new broadcast home on CNN, where it achieved a record **12 million views**. On YouTube, clips of the ceremony surpassed **22 million views**, and Adam Sandler's acceptance speech peaked at the **#8 spot** on the YouTube Trending list.

Adam Sandler receives the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, (opposite) The 45th Kennedy Center Honors in the Opera House





Mingus Big Band

**NEXT AT THE KENNEDY CENTER**

A partnership with PBS, *NEXT AT THE KENNEDY CENTER* is a new TV series highlighting the contributions of artistic changemakers and their continued impact on contemporary artists. The first season included five episodes showcasing the diversity of contemporary programming on our stages. Filmed at the Kennedy Center, and combined with exclusive interviews and other footage, episodes capture the unique style and story of each artist for audiences nationwide.

Season 1, Episode 1: *Let My Children Hear Mingus*—The life and legacy of composer, bassist, and bandleader Charles Mingus is explored through performances by the Mingus Big Band in the Terrace Theater.

Season 1, Episode 2: *A Joni Mitchell Songbook*—An all-star cast joins the National Symphony Orchestra for a heartfelt tribute showcasing the beauty and wisdom of Joni Mitchell’s music.

Season 1, Episode 3: *The Roots Residency*—Hip Hop legends The Roots give an electrifying performance from their Kennedy Center Residency, as well as discussing how they strive to inspire others through.

Season 1, Episode 4: *Ballet Hispánico’s Doña Perón*—On the heels of their Kennedy Center performances, Ballet Hispánico explores the riveting and diverging legacies of Evita Perón, from her beginnings as a dancehall performer to Argentina’s controversial and famed First Lady.

Season 1, Episode 5: *Continuum: Jason Moran & Christian McBride*—Music legends Christian McBride and Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz discuss paying it forward through art—sharing stories of their own teachers and introducing us to their protégés.

**Each episode reached over 1 million unique viewers and the series is available to stream on-demand on PBS.**

**George Walker: Five Sinfonias**

In January 2022 the National Symphony Orchestra and Music Director **Gianandrea Noseda** started performing and recording the complete sinfonias of composer George Walker (1922-2018), including the Fourth Sinfonia, a 2011 NSO co-commission. These “compelling recordings” (*The New York Times*) celebrate the orchestra’s connection to George Walker as a D.C. native and the first African American composer to receive a Pulitzer Prize. The complete cycle of all five sinfonias was released in September 2023, both digitally and on Super Audio CD.

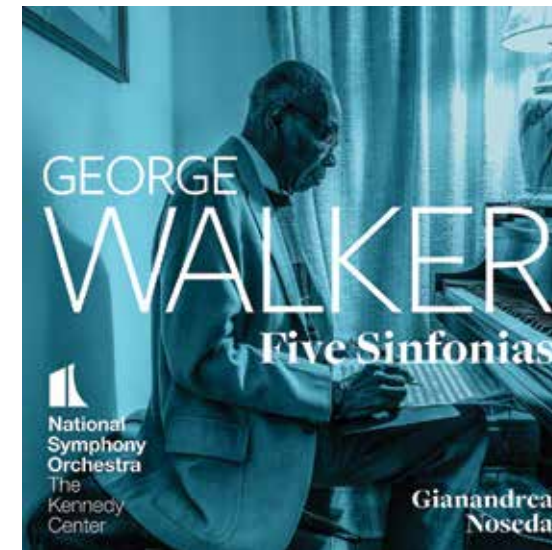
“The sinfonias of George Walker have been an extraordinary musical discovery for me. They are concise in expression, rigorous in structure, and they have their own unique sound world. I am certain that these performances confirm that George Walker is one of the great composers of recent times.”

—**Gianandrea Noseda**, Music Director

“Noseda’s interpretation of Walker’s work is nothing short of revelatory.”

—**Graham Williams**, HRAudio.Net

**George Walker: Five Sinfonias was honored by being one of the five classical albums for September selected for review by *The New York Times*.**



**CENTER Magazine**

For 36 years of our 51-years, *Kennedy Center News* has been delivered to millions of households across the country. This year, it launched as **CENTER**—a new, reimagined patron magazine bringing more stories, fun, and inspiration. As we continue to push boundaries in our programming, we continue to serve audiences in the format they prefer—from digital to print. Available online and through the mail to over 200,000 households per issue, **CENTER** will continue to grow and evolve, featuring in-depth articles about Kennedy Center programming and the arts in America, exclusive interviews, and content designed to give you a front row view to our world.

The magazine was a 2023 Graphic Design USA Award winner for publications.

The inaugural issue featured an article by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Sarah L. Kaufman on the transformative power of arts educators as part of the *Thank an Arts Teacher* campaign.

**14.2 million website visitors**  
**115 million video views**  
**5.3 million hours (over 604 years!) of video watched on YouTube, and 114,000 new YouTube subscribers**

# Fiscal Year 2023 Financial Report

October 1, 2023

October 2, 2022

The Kennedy Center's work is funded by a combination of earned income and philanthropic contributions. We are grateful to all who support our work in a variety of ways.

## Operating Revenue

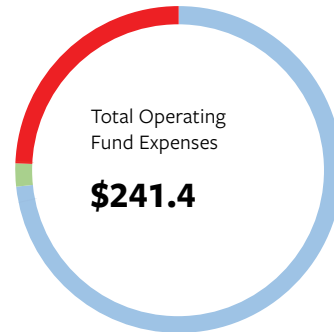
Ticket sales and other earned revenue accounted for more than half of our fiscal year 2023 revenue. Just under \$85 million was raised through philanthropic contributions, annual distributions from the Center's Endowment and transfers from other Funds. Support from our patrons and generous donors is vital to our ability to fulfill our mission as America's national cultural center, serve as a leader in arts education nationwide, and invite visitors to better understand the role arts play in our society.



Operating Revenue		(in millions)
■ Programming and Education		\$121.3
■ Auxiliary Services, Ticket Handling Fees, and Other Revenue	(Includes Parking, Gift Shops, and Food Services)	\$30.7
■ Contributions, Grants, and Other Support	(Includes Transfers from Other Funds)	\$84.7
■ Endowment Support		\$3.5

## Operating Expense

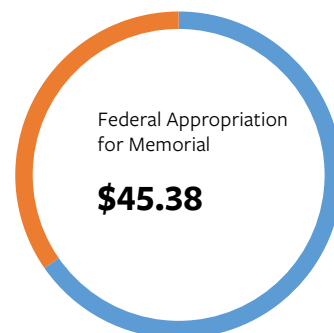
The Kennedy Center's annual expenses are primarily focused on artistic and educational initiatives, including the more than 1,500 performances presented and 2.1 million students, educators, and administrators impacted this year. Related expenses include support for our valued staff.



Operating Expense		(in millions)
■ Programming and Education		\$170
■ Auxiliary Services and Other	(Includes Parking, Gift Shops, and Food Services)	\$5.4
■ General, Administrative, and Other		\$66

## Federal

The Kennedy Center receives an annual federal appropriation in recognition of the Center's role as the presidential memorial to John F. Kennedy. These funds cover the costs to operate, maintain and improve the Center's facilities, grounds and infrastructure, ensuring that the living memorial to our 35th president remains a vibrant homage to his legacy.



Federal Appropriation		(in millions)
■ Operations and Maintenance		\$27.64
■ Capital Repair and Restoration		\$17.74

## Assets

Cash and cash equivalents	<b>28,698,000</b>	52,914,000
Accounts receivable, net	<b>3,976,000</b>	4,638,000
Contributions receivable, net	<b>83,477,000</b>	80,071,000
Marketable securities and other investments	<b>149,227,000</b>	115,997,000
Restricted cash and investments	<b>9,000,000</b>	9,000,000
Federal government appropriation held by the U.S. Treasury –		
Operations and maintenance	<b>8,733,000</b>	9,356,000
Capital repair and restoration	<b>54,849,000</b>	45,060,000
Property, net of accumulated depreciation	<b>282,687,000</b>	298,469,000
Other assets	<b>4,309,000</b>	4,190,000
Right-of-use assets- operating	<b>7,637,000</b>	-
Right-of-use assets- finance	<b>25,000</b>	-

<b>Total assets</b>	<b>632,619,000</b>	619,696,000
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## Liabilities:

Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	<b>17,291,000</b>	20,276,000
Future performance receipts	<b>29,337,000</b>	32,759,000
Loan payable, net	<b>75,064,000</b>	78,315,000
Accrued pension cost	<b>6,101,000</b>	5,768,000
Charitable gift annuity liability	<b>401,000</b>	552,000
Other liabilities	<b>5,490,000</b>	7,659,000
Lease liabilities- operating	<b>8,830,000</b>	-
Lease liabilities- finance	<b>23,000</b>	-

<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>142,536,000</b>	145,328,000
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## Net assets (deficit):

Without donor restrictions:		
Operating fund	<b>(24,543,000)</b>	(23,223,000)
<i>Building the Future</i> and Sustainability funds	<b>19,438,000</b>	24,438,000
Board Designated fund	<b>18,609,000</b>	14,402,000
WNO Fund for Innovation & Excellence	<b>3,821,000</b>	3,232,000
Appropriation fund	<b>66,841,000</b>	78,666,000
Plant and Bond fund	<b>146,792,000</b>	152,641,000

Total without donor restrictions	<b>230,958,000</b>	250,156,000
Total with donor restrictions	<b>259,125,000</b>	224,211,000

<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>490,083,000</b>	474,367,000
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<b>Total liabilities and net assets</b>	<b>632,619,000</b>	619,696,000
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For more information about the Kennedy Center's finances, please contact us at (202) 416-8310 or [contribute@kennedy-center.org](mailto:contribute@kennedy-center.org).

# Together with gratitude

**“We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives”**

—President John F. Kennedy

As we reflect on the 2022-2023 artistic season, we recognize that though moments are unique, they are made possible through the commitment of many people: artists, audiences, partners, staff, volunteers, donors, and everyone who joined us this year.

Together, we stand in support of art, representing the diversity of America on our stages, impacting students and educators through powerful

education programs, and realizing the truths President Kennedy’s legacy can teach us today.

Like the art that surrounds us, life is better when we are together.

A listing of our generous boards, donors, and members can be found on our website at [Kennedy-Center.org/gratitude](https://Kennedy-Center.org/gratitude)



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for the Performing Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20566

