WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

MADAMA BUTTERFLY

NIXON IN CHINA

WE THE PEOPLE

2026/27

FALL SEASON

Welcome Letter





Dear Friends,

We welcome you to a double celebration as we open our 71st season of opera in our nation's capital, as well as our *first* season as a freshly constituted opera company. This year has brought many of the trials faced by any start-up enterprise, as we have built every one of our systems from scratch. We thank you, our WNO family, for taking the leap with us. Together, like Odysseus, we will leave the battlefield behind and begin a seven-show odyssey that will take us to five different venues, where we will step into seven compelling, imaginative landscapes. We begin in China and Japan; from there we journey to the glittering salons of Paris and the expansive deserts of the Southwest. No odyssey is complete without sailing the Aegean, so we will take you there—twice! We are extremely grateful to all who have joined us on this adventure, which has already taught us so much about ourselves, our audience, and our dreams for this art form.

This fall, repertory continues the national semiquincentennial celebration in an iconic American landmark, DAR Constitution Hall, with two stories of American encounters with the East. John Adams and Alice Goodman's *Nixon in China* uses a seminal moment in American history as the launchpad for an exploration of how myths come to be. *Nixon* had its premiere in Houston nearly 50 years ago, but its musical language and thematic treatment still feel so fresh. It is *epic* on every level imaginable. Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, in contrast, is a painfully intimate story of a young Japanese girl who is purchased and "married" to an American naval officer, who subsequently abandons her. We wanted to give our audiences a chance to experience these two works in a new way, so we have created a theatrically immersive installation in Constitution Hall that we hope will allow audiences to experience the intimacy and the grandeur inherent to both these pieces. The same space will be the setting for *We the People*, a concert featuring Amber Monroe (Marian Anderson Award winner and alumna of the Cafritz Young Artist Program) as well as the star opera voices of our season. The repertory, drawn from opera and music theater, will explore themes of liberty and independence.

Then its anchors aweigh and off to our next adventure! We have all been captivated by the zeitgeist of the *Odyssey* this year. If you missed Christopher Nolan's film in the theater, or you haven't yet had time to sit down with the book (we love Emily Wilson's translation)—or even if you've already done both—bring your crew to our one-hour operatic retelling. Our holiday opera, presented in partnership with Arena Stage, is a thrilling romp that includes rollicking choruses, tender ballads, a tango, a Siren song—and more!—as Odysseus makes his way home to Penelope.

(continued)

Welcome Letter

As we celebrate the 15th anniversary of the American Opera Initiative, we are presenting a double bill by rising stars JL Marlor and Clare Fuyuko Bierman. *Cry, Wolf* is a short work, commissioned by WNO in 2025, exploring the insecurities and fears of contemporary young men. *Like, Lambs,* a longer one-act opera, considers the violence and sacrifice of cheerleader culture. This pair of new works will be fully staged, with orchestra, in our Takoma Studio Theater, and performed by the Cafritz Young Artists.

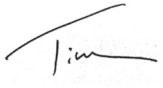
In the spring, we will return to another part of the *Odyssey* with Mozart's towering work, *Idomeneo: A Trojan Tale,* an opera that takes place after the fall of Troy. We are creating our own version of Mozart's classic by introducing a new character, a Trojan woman, played by noted DC actress Holly Twyford. Music Director Robert Spano will lead a cast that includes internationally renowned tenor Greg Kunde and Cafritz Young Artists. *Idomeneo: A Trojan Tale* will be presented on the stage of Harman Hall, thanks to our friends from the Shakespeare Theatre Company.

Spring also brings a world premiere by Christopher Tin and Kelley Rourke, *O'Keeffe: Kiss the Sky*. This opera-ballet, with choreography by Jessica Lang, traces the intertwined stories of three pioneering modernists: painter Georgia O'Keeffe, photographer/art dealer Alfred Stieglitz, and writer/patron Mabel Dodge Luhan. At the story's heart is the tension of O'Keeffe's complicated marriage to Stieglitz, alongside the liberating influence of Luhan, who encouraged O'Keeffe to come to Taos, where she discovered the landscape that would come to define her.

Last stop: Paris—via Bethesda. Strathmore Hall will host a sumptuous production of *La traviata*, taking us from a glittering salon to a countryside idyll and back again. It will feature major new international star Francesca Pia Vitale and conductor Valentina Peleggi, whose work will shine all the more brightly in the hall's renowned acoustics.

Earlier this year, when WNO crew scrambled heroically to salvage our spring season, we felt like we were building the plane and flying it at the same time. With your generous support, we have stabilized the craft. The journey ahead promises a host of wonder and delight—and hopefully very little turbulence. So, buckle up and enjoy the ride!

Warmly,



Timothy O'Leary
General Director and CEO



Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

DAR CONSTITUTION HALL
NOVEMBER 7, 13, 15, 18 & 20, 2026

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Timothy O'Leary
General Director

Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

Robert Spano
Music Director

PRESENTS

Madama Butterfly

MUSIC BY **Giacomo Puccini**
LIBRETTO BY **Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa**

In Italian with projected English titles
This performance is approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes,
including a 25-minute intermission.

Scenery and properties built by San Francisco Opera Scene Shop,
Legacy Scenic Studios, and Cobalt Studio

Costumes are owned by and on generous loan from the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

THANK YOU TO OUR SEASON SPONSORS

GENERAL DYNAMICS

Jacqueline Badger Mars
Dallas Morse Coors

With gratitude for an exceptional, substantial and transformative contribution from the Dallas Morse Coors Foundation, Washington National Opera dedicates this production of *Madama Butterfly* to the foundation's benefactor, Dallas Morse Coors, in recognition of his philanthropic legacy and passion for the classical cannon.

Major support for WNO's production of *Madama Butterfly* is generously provided by Betsy and Ed Cohen and The Dr. M. Lee Pearce Foundation, Inc.

Cast & Creative Team

Madama Butterfly

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa
November 7, 13, 15, 18 & 20, 2026

CIO-CIO-SAN | **Karah Son***
SUZUKI | **Michelle Mariposa**^^
PINKERTON | **Matthew White***
SHARPLESS | **Will Liverman/Thandolwethu Mamba**^ (**November 13**)
GORO | **Rodell Rosel**
BONZE | **Atticus Rego**^
KATE PINKERTON | **Lauren Carroll**^
YAMADORI / REGISTRAR | **Chandler Benn**^
IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER | **Robert Frazier**^
SORROW | **Martellaro Arnett, Lily Fuentes**
CIO-CIO-SAN COVER | **Tiffany Choe**^^

Washington National Opera Orchestra
Washington National Opera Chorus
Washington National Opera Corps Dancers

CONDUCTOR | **Erina Yashima**
DIRECTOR | **E. Loren Meeker**
CHOREOGRAPHER | **Kanji Segawa**
SET DESIGNER | **Walt Spangler**
ORIGINAL COSTUME DESIGNER | **Florence Klotz**
NEW COSTUMES DESIGNER | **Timm Burrow**
LIGHTING DESIGNER | **Duane Schuler**
PROJECTION DESIGNER | **Alexander V. Nichols***
SOUND DESIGNER | **Andrew Harper**
INTIMACY COORDINATOR | **Lorraine Ressegger-Slone**
COVER CONDUCTOR | **Tiffany Chang**
ASSISTANT CONDUCTORS | **Michael Baitzer, Tongyao Li**^**, Anna Gershtein**^
DICTION COACH | **Ken Weiss**
CHORUS PREPARATION | **Steven Gathman**

* Washington National Opera Debut
^ Member, Cafritz Young Artists Program
^^ Alumni, Cafritz Young Artists Program

Synopsis

ACT I
Japan, early 20th century. Lieutenant B.F. Pinkerton of the US Navy inspects a house overlooking Nagasaki Harbor that he is leasing from Goro, a marriage broker. Goro has also arranged for Pinkerton to marry Cio-Cio-San, a young woman known as Madama Butterfly. The American consul, Sharpless, arrives for the wedding ceremony and Pinkerton describes to him his philosophy of the fearless Yankee roaming the world in search of experience and pleasure. Sharpless warns him that his bride may view the marriage more seriously. After the formal introduction, Cio-Cio-San explains that her family was once prominent but lost its position, and she has had to earn her living as a geisha. The Imperial Commissioner reads the marriage agreement and the relatives congratulate the couple. Butterfly's uncle, the Bonze (a priest) interrupts the festivities. He curses the girl for rejecting her ancestral religion, and the shocked relatives denounce Cio-Cio-San as they swiftly leave the house. Pinkerton tries to console his "Butterfly" as they are left alone on their wedding night.

INTERMISSION

ACT II
Three years have passed, and Cio-Cio-San awaits her husband's return. Suzuki prays for help but is berated for believing in Japanese gods rather than in Pinkerton's promise to return "when the robins nest again." Sharpless appears with a letter from Pinkerton, but before he can read it, Goro arrives with a new potential husband, Prince Yamadori. Butterfly politely insists she is not available for marriage—her American husband has not deserted her. Sharpless attempts to read Pinkerton's letter but is repeatedly interrupted. Giving up, he asks her what she would do if Pinkerton never returned. Cio-Cio-San replies she would either become a geisha again, or better, die. After Cio-Cio-San introduces her son, Trouble, Sharpless leaves, promising to tell Pinkerton of the child. A cannon shot is heard in the harbor announcing the arrival of Pinkerton's ship, the *Abraham Lincoln*. Overjoyed, Cio-Cio-San joins Suzuki in strewing the house with flowers. As night falls, they keep vigil, waiting through the night for Pinkerton.

ACT III
At dawn, Suzuki insists that Cio-Cio-San get some sleep. Sharpless appears with Pinkerton and Kate, Pinkerton's new wife. Suzuki realizes who the American woman is and agrees to help break the news. Pinkerton is overcome with guilt and runs from the scene. Cio-Cio-San rushes in hoping to find Pinkerton but sees Kate instead. After a moment, she grasps the situation. She agrees to give up the child but insists Pinkerton return for him. Once she dismisses everyone, she takes out the dagger with which her father committed suicide, reading the inscription, "It is better to die with honor than live without it."



Promotional postcard for the US premiere, 1906, in DC

Background

Composer: Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)

Librettists: Luigi Illica (1857–1919) and Giuseppe Giacosa (1847–1906) had both worked with Puccini on *La bohème* and *Tosca*.

Premiere: February 17, 1904, at La Scala, in Milan, in two acts; it was not well received. Puccini continued to rework the opera, with the fifth "standard" version, the one performed here, completed in 1907.

DC Connection: The first US performance, in English, was on October 16, 1906, by the Henry Savage Opera Company, at the Columbia Theatre, then at 11th and F Street. The Savage company pioneered efforts to make opera more accessible by performing only in English.

Origins: Based on a 1903 story by Philadelphian John Luther Long, who reportedly heard the tale of an abandoned teahouse servant from his sister who lived in Nagasaki. It was adapted into a play by noted impresario David Belasco, which Puccini saw in London. The composer also drew from a popular 1887 novel *Madame Chrysanthème* by French writer Pierre Loti.

Japonisme: A French term coined for the fascination with Japanese culture that arose following the opening of shipping trade in the 1850s; a form of orientalism, which engulfed Europe in the late 1800s and could be seen in art, fashion and popular culture, also resulting in Puccini's *Turandot*.

Controversy: *Madama Butterfly* remains one of the most performed operas, beloved for its music, although productions today must grapple with its problematic racial and sexual stereotyping, as portrayed through the lens of early 20th-century white, European creators. In her Director's Note (at right), E. Loren Meeker addresses how and why the work remains relevant.

Director's Note

By E. Loren Meeker

It is a tremendous honor to return to *Madama Butterfly* and to do so with Washington National Opera, as we open the company's 71st season. To be entrusted with Puccini's masterpiece at this extraordinary moment in WNO's history—and to create it with this remarkable company, in a completely new theatrical environment—is both thrilling and humbling.

I have lived with *Butterfly* for many years, and each time I return to it, I am struck by how differently the piece speaks to me. In 2026, after several productions showcasing the relevancy of this masterpiece, I am now refining my perspective and looking deeply at the human beings and their individual choices inside the opera. *Madama Butterfly* was created through a Western lens, and its complicated cultural history deserves our awareness. But within that history is a devastatingly human story about what happens when two people enter a relationship understanding it in fundamentally different ways. Pinkerton believes his actions are temporary. Butterfly believes they are forever. That imbalance is the tragedy.

Puccini understood something profound about Butterfly's capacity for belief. Although he never traveled to Japan, he sought out Japanese music and culture while composing the opera, consulting with Mme. Oyama, wife of the Japanese ambassador to Italy, who sang traditional songs for him and told him that she knew of a story much like Butterfly's having actually occurred. The practice of Western men taking "temporary wives" in Japanese treaty ports was a historical reality. Puccini transformed that collision of cultures and expectations into music of almost unbearable emotional immediacy.

And what extraordinary music it is. I continue to believe that *Madama Butterfly* is, in many ways, Puccini's love letter to opera itself. He gives us music capable of suspending time, transforming a gesture into a memory and allowing hope to become something we can almost see and touch. The score asks us not simply to observe Butterfly's faith in Pinkerton's return, but to experience it with her.

That idea became the starting point for this production.

Our unique three-quarter thrust stage configuration places Butterfly and her world in the midst of the audience. Rather than attempting to recreate a literal house in a literal Nagasaki, we have embraced the theatrical possibilities of this space to create something more fluid: a world of beauty, fragility, ritual and impermanence. The people who inhabit it are grounded in cultural and historical specificity, while the environment surrounding them can shift with Butterfly's emotional life.

Fabric, light, bodies, movement and translucent layers continually reshape the space. The world can unfurl, drift, conceal, reveal and dissolve. Our dancers are integral to that language—not as decoration, but as extensions of atmosphere, memory, ceremony, nature and fate. At times they help create the world Butterfly

WNO's *Madama Butterfly* utilizes dance to conjure an atmosphere through movement. Japanese-born choreographer **Kanji Segawa** sets the tone:

"The choreography takes an unusual approach in that the dancers do not portray specific characters in the opera. Instead, they reflect the emotional environment of each scene. My hope is that their presence brings greater depth to the music and story, using movement to support the drama as it unfolds."

imagines around herself; at others, they become the forces that begin to tear through it.

Because for me, the tragedy is not simply that Pinkerton abandons Butterfly. It is that Butterfly has constructed an entire universe around the certainty that he will return.

In Act I, that universe blooms. There is possibility everywhere: youth, ceremony, anticipation, seduction. By Act II, time seems almost suspended. Waiting itself becomes an environment. Butterfly holds so fiercely to her faith that the world around her appears to hold its breath with her. And when the truth finally arrives, the dream cannot simply disappear—it must break.

There is tremendous beauty in *Madama Butterfly*, but I don't want that beauty ever to feel merely decorative. It should contain the possibility of its own disappearance, like a blossom carried away before it can settle or moonlight shifting across water. The very delicacy of Butterfly's world is also what makes its destruction so painful.

My hope is that, surrounded by this story, you will experience *Madama Butterfly* not as something preserved, but as something immediate and alive—a world that blooms around us, hovers for one breathtaking moment, and then breaks.

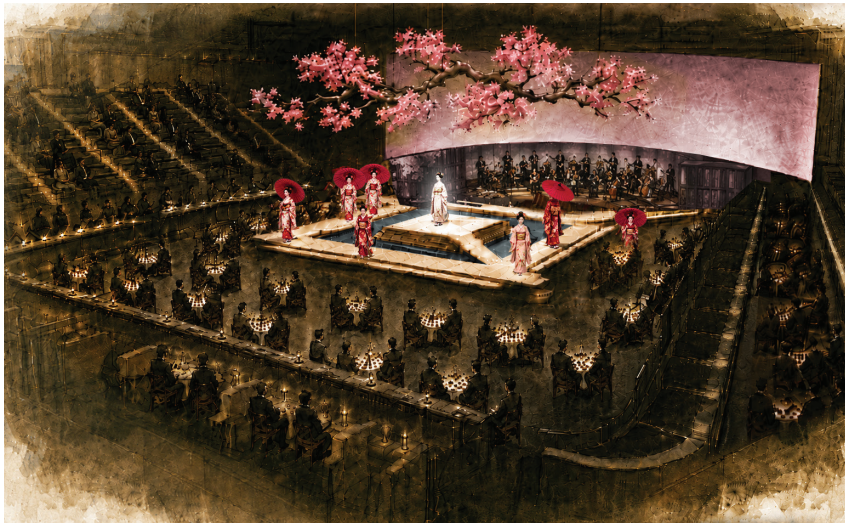
Thank you for joining us as Washington National Opera begins the new season. It is a privilege to share this beautiful, difficult, and deeply human masterpiece with you.

Stitches in Time

Period costumes for WNO's *Madama Butterfly* originated on the sketchpad of legendary Broadway designer Florence Klotz. "Flossie" Klotz is the only costume designer to take home six Tony Awards, including back-to-back wins for *Follies* (1972) and *A Little Night Music* (1973). Those, plus other wins, resulted from Klotz's long-time collaboration with Broadway producer Hal Prince. When Prince turned to another genre with Lyric Opera of Chicago's 1982 production of *Butterfly,* he tapped Klotz for her expertise.

The Brooklyn-born Klotz had design in her blood: her parents owned a millinery shop, and after graduating from Parsons School of Design, she worked at Brooks Costumes, the leading theatrical design house. Her big break came as an assistant on *The King and I* in 1951 and she went on to design for 58 Broadway shows, 32 as the sole designer.

Re-setting the Stage By Francesca Zambello



Rendering of the *Madama Butterfly* stage configuration

I thought it would be important for each space we use this season to match the scale of our repertory. I also wanted audiences to have very different and unique experiences in new venues. This means the season features all new productions, and an added bonus is that the orchestra is featured in new and exciting ways.

For our first venue, my thought was not to use DAR Constitution Hall as a conventional proscenium house, but rather to create a more immersive theatrical experience. I wanted the audience to be as close as they could be in a large venue while still feeling the grandeur that both *Madama Butterfly* and *Nixon in China* can offer. We had the idea to create a "thrust stage," which provides a stage in the middle, so the audience is sitting on three sides, freeing the performers to engage not just in a two-dimensional manner, but in a much larger panoramic way. It allows the audience to be close to the action but also see across to other audience members—something I find exciting in sports arenas and amphitheaters, because the audience becomes part of the spectacle.

The orchestra is very much in view, creating a different kind of backdrop. They are upstage of the action, rather than in their usual downstage position in the pit. Now they are an organic part of the theatrical experience. We hope that this new setting in the DAR will give you an incredibly dynamic experience.

—Francesca Zambello is WNO Artistic Director.

The redesign of DAR Constitution Hall for WNO's fall productions was created by acclaimed theater designer Walt Spangler.

Meet the Artists



Karah Son

SOPRANO | CIO-CIO-SAN

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Madama Butterfly*, numerous appearances including in Korea, Warsaw, Leipzig, Berlin, Turin, Dresden, Los Angeles, Kansas City, Detroit and Chicago; *Don Giovanni* (Zerlina), Teatro San Lorenzo, Milan; *La bohème* (Mimì), Teatro Cristallo in Bergamo, Milan, and Teatro Lirico di Cagliari; *Turandot* (Liù), Teatro Filarmonico Verona, in Melbourne, Sydney and Cincinnati; *Carmen,* China Philharmonic Orchestra; *The Marriage of Figaro* (Countess), National Theater, Seoul



Michelle Mariposa

MEZZO-SOPRANO | SUZUKI

WNO History: *The Crucible* (Rebecca Nurse), *The Little Prince* (The Fox/A Rose), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Marcellina), 2025–2026; *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (Teacher), American Opera Initiative (Poly 2 in *Mud Girl*), *Jungle Book* (Raksha), *Gods & Mortals*, 2024–2025

Past: *The Nose* (Ensemble, Countess, Podtochina cover), Chicago Opera Theater; winner, 2025 Metropolitan Opera Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition, the Lynne Cooper Harvey Foundation Award in the Musicians Club of Women 2024 Vocal Competition, the Sullivan Award from the Sullivan Foundation



Matthew White

TENOR | PINKERTON

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Carmen* (Don José), Malmö Opera, Macau International Music Festival, Cincinnati, Santa Fe, Vancouver, and Arizona operas; *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton), Calgary Opera, Opéra de Montréal; *Don Carlo* (title role), Royal Danish Opera; *Khovanshchina* (Prince Vassily), Salzburg Easter Festival; *Manon Lescaut* (Des Grieux), Opera Festival of Chicago; *La bohème* (Rodolfo), Theatro Municipal de Sao Pãulo, Detroit Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, Opera Naples; *La traviata* (Alfredo) Houston Grand Opera; Rigoletto (Duca), Utah Opera, Edmonton Opera



Will Liverman

BARITONE | SHARPLESS

WNO History: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Count Almaviva), 2025– 2026; Marian Anderson Award, 2020–2021

Past: *X: The Life and Times of Malcom X* (title role), *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Charles), *The Magic Flute* (Papageno), *Marnie* (Malcolm Fleet), *Akhnaten* (Horemhab), Metropolitan Opera; *La bohème* (Marcello), Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Peter Grimes* (Ned Keene), Dutch National Opera: *Pelléas et Mélisande* (title role), LA Opera; *The Marriage of Figaro* (Figaro), Houston, Seattle, Virginia, Kentucky, Madison, and Utah operas; *The Love of Three Oranges* (Pantalone), Opera Philadelphia; *Le Comte Ory* (Raimbaud) Seattle Opera

Meet the Artists



Thandolwethu Mamba

BARITONE | SHARPLESS (November 13)

WNO History: *Treemonisha* (Andy), *The Little Prince* (The Businessman/ Baobab/Hunter), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Count Almaviva), 2025–2026

Past: *Don Giovanni* (title role), Opera Wilmington; *Beatrice & Benedict* (Claudio), Opera Orlando; *La Fanciulla del West* (Sonora), North Carolina Opera; *The Marriage of Figaro* (Figaro), Opera Wilmington; *Carmen* (Dancaïro), Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; performances with the Metropolitan Opera, Frost Opera Theater, and Florida Grand Opera



Rodell Rosel

TENOR | GORO

WNO History: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Don Basilio), 2025–2026

Past: *Der Rosenkavalier* (Valzacchi), Metropolitan Opera; *The Letter* (Ong Chi Seng), Santa Fe Opera; *Great Scott* (Anthony Candolino), Dallas Opera; The Magic Flute (Monostatos), Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Los Angeles Opera, Metropolitan Opera; *Turandot* (Calaf), Opera Southwest; *Pagliacci* (Beppe), Austin Lyric Opera; *Das Rheingold* (Loge), Calgary Opera; Grand Prize Winner, Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition



Atticus Rego

BASS| BONZE

WNO History: *The Crucible* (Francis Nurse), *The Little Prince* (The King/ Baobab/Hunter), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Dr. Bartolo), 2025–2026

Past: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Dr. Bartolo), *Agrippina* (Claudio), *Sweeney Todd* (Judge Turpin, cover), *Carmen* (Zuniga, cover), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Dr. Bartolo, cover), performances with Chautauqua Opera Company



Lauren Carroll

SOPRANO | KATE PINKERTON

WNO History: *The Crucible* (Abigail Williams), *The Little Prince* (The Rose), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Barbarina), *Aida* (Priestess), 2025–2026

Past: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Babarina), *Roméo et Juliette* (Juliette, cover), *La traviata* (Violetta, cover), Palm Beach Opera; *Così fan tutte* (Fiordiligi), Aspen Music Festival; *Carmen* (Frasquita, cover), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Helena, cover), Des Moines Metro Opera; National Semifinalist, Metropolitan Opera Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition; third-prize winner, 2025 Houston Grand Opera's Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers



Chandler Benn

BARITONE | YAMADORI / REGISTRAR

WNO History: *The Crucible* (Thomas Putnam), *The Little Prince* (The Pilot), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Antonio), 2025–2026

Past: *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (Joe Kavalier), world premiere co-production, Metropolitan Opera and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; title roles, *Don Giovanni,The Marriage of Figaro*; *The Merry Widow* (Danilo Danilovich)

Meet the Artists



Robert Frazier
BASS-BARITONE | IMPERIAL COMMISSIONER
WNO History: *The Crucible* (Reverend John Hale), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Figaro), 2025–2026
Past: *The Marriage of Figaro* (Figaro); *Così fan tutte* (Don Alfonso, Guglielmo); *The Magic Flute* (Sarastro, Sprecher); *Cendrillon* (Pandolfe); *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Marquis de la Force); John Carroll's *Troubleshooting* (Rory): Leigha Amick's *Rhiannon's Condemnation* (Iorwert); *Salome* (Cappadocian), *American Apollo* (Jimmy O'Donnelly/Mr. Carhart)

Meet the Creative Team



Erina Yashima
CONDUCTOR
WNO History: *Così fan tutte,* 2021–2022
Past: First Kapellmeister, Komische Oper Berlin, 2022–2024; *The Magic Flute*, Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera; *Madama Butterfly, La bohème*, Opera Australia; *The Marriage of Figaro*, Lyric Opera of Chicago; *L'elisir d'amore*, Irish National Opera, among others; guest conducting apperances including London Philharmonic Orchestra, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz, Omaha Symphony, Orchestre della Toscana, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and more



E. Loren Meeker
DIRECTOR
WNO History: *Don Giovanni,* 2019–2020, *Carmen*, 2015–2016
Past: Executive Director, Opera San Antonio, since 2019; *Madama Butterfly*, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Austin Opera, Opera San Antonio, Portland Opera, Florida Grand Opera; *Acis and Galatea,* Florentine Opera; *The Marriage of Figaro*, Wolf Trap Opera; *La bohème, Showboat,* The Glimmerglass Festival; *Lucia di Lammermoor, Hansel and Gretel, Turandot*, New Orleans Opera; *Così fan tutte*, Arizona Opera; *La traviata,* Opera Omaha; *Les pêcheurs de perles, Florencia en el Amazonas,* Houston Grand Opera, among many others



Kanji Segawa
CHOREOGRAPHER
WNO History: *Turandot*, 2023–2024 (co-choreographer)
Past: Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (dancer, 2011–2023; assistant rehearsal director, 2024); *Nixon in China* (principal dancer), Metropolitan Opera; American Ballet Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Royal Ballet, National Ballet of Japan (creative associate to choreographer Jessica Lang)

Meet the Creative Team

Walt Spangler
SET DESIGNER
WNO History: WNO Debut
Past: Designs for theater, opera and dance across the nation and around the globe. Opera designs include world premieres for *The Bonesetter's Daughter,* San Francisco Opera: *Edward Tulane, The Fix*, Minnesota Opera; *La traviata*, Lithuanian National Opera; *Don Giovanni*, Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Poppea*, English National Opera; *Dido and Aeneas*, Handel & Haydn Society

Timm Burrow
NEW COSTUMES DESIGNER
WNO History: Productions since 2007 including *Samson et Dalila*, *The Barber of Seville*, *La fille du régiment*, *Carmen*, American Opera Initiative, *Così fan tutte*, *Ariadne auf Naxos, Falstaff, Lucrezia Borgia, Macbeth, Hansel and Gretel*
Past: *Hamden and the Gate of Tears* (Howard University); productions for Kennedy Center Family Programming; National Gallery of Art; *The Sound of Music* (NBC); *Goodnight Moon the Musical; Sweeney Todd,* Wolf Trap Opera; *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Signature Theatre)

Duane Schuler
LIGHTING DESIGNER
WNO History: *Un ballo in maschera,* 2010–2011; *A View from the Bridge,* 2007–2008; *Susannah,* 1999–2000
Past: New York Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, De Nederlandse Opera, Opera National de Lyon, San Francisco Opera, Salzburg Festival, La Scala, American Ballet Theatre, Lincoln Center Koch Theater renovation

Alexander V. Nichols
PROJECTION DESIGNER
WNO History: WNO debut
Past: Resident visual designer (Margaret Jenkins Dance Company); resident designer, (Pennsylvania, Hartford and American Repertory ballet companies); lighting designer (American Ballet Theatre); video designer, *Broadway to Oz* (Australia tour); Broadway credits as projection designer (*Wishful Drinking, Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway, Nice Work If You Can Get It*); lighting/projection designer, *Cree* (Opera Philadelphia); scenic projection, *Nixon in China* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); scenic/lighting designer, *Svabda*, San Francisco Opera

Andrew Harper
SOUND DESIGNER
WNO History: *West Side Story*, 2025–2026; *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, 2022–2023; *Written in Stone*, 2021–2022
Past: *West Side Story*, Los Angeles Opera; *Silent Night, Porgy and Bess, West Side Story, The Sound of Music, El Milagro del Recuerdo, The Phoenix, Der fliegende Holländer, Cruzar la Cara de la Luna, The House Without a Christmas Tree, It's a Wonderful Life, Carousel, Sweeney Todd, A Coffin in Egypt, A Little Night Music*, Houston Grand Opera; *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna*, New York City Opera; *West Side Story*, The Atlanta Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City; *The Magic Flute, Songbird, Il trovatore, The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, The Glimmerglass Festival; *Guys and Dolls*, Shakespeare Theatre Company

Production Team



Diane Lin▲
STAGE MANAGER
WNO History: Over 60 productions since 2004. Favorites include: *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025–2026; *Macbeth*, 2024–2025; *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, 2023–2024, 2018–2019, 2013–2014; *Silent Night*, 2018–2019; *Candide*, 2017–2018; *The Little Prince, 2025*–2026, 2016–2017, 2014–2015; *The Ring Cycle, Appomattox*, 2015–2016; *Peter Grimes*, 2008–2009
Past: *Carmen, Silent Night, Semele, Don Giovanni*, Wolf Trap Opera, 2025–2026; *Radamisto*, Opera Lafayette; *The Marriage of Figaro,* Opera Philadelphia; Central City Opera stage management staff, 2006–2016; surtitles coordinator, Vocal Arts DC



Helen Aberger
ASSOCIATE/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
WNO History: *Aida*, 2025–2026
Past: Aberger is a director, assistant director and intimacy choreographer. Assistant directing credits include: *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Charlottesville Opera; *Così fan tutte, Carmen, Don Giovanni, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Siegfried*, Virginia Opera. Directing credits include: *L'étoile,* L'Opera Comique de Washington; *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*, Virginia Opera; *Proving Up*, Maryland Opera Studio/University of Maryland; *The Zoo/Trial By Jury*, *H.M.S. Pinafore, Princess Ida, The Mikado,* Victorian Lyric Opera Company

Sara Gehl
Allison Ann Bailey
Laurel McIntyre
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

Raeya Garcia
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Lucia Schneckner
PRODUCTION DRAMATURG

Catherine Girardi
Emily Pan
ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNERS

Kim Zhou
ASSISTANT SCENIC DESIGNER

Isabel Martin
SURTITLES COORDINATOR AND OPERATOR

▲ Washington National Opera AGMA Production staff member with 10 or more years of service

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Jennifer Royall Anderson§
David Artz§
Anthony P. Ballard
Suzanne S. Chadwick§
Cornelius David
Alice Dillon§
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Douglas S. Dykstra§
Angeli Jemilda Ferrette§
Lance Fisher
Andrew Goldstein
Rachel Hahn
Leah Inger§
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Danielle McKay
Colby Mullen
Isabel O'Hagan
Reyna Sawtell
Louisa Waycott
Abigail Wright

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Alexa Gajeton
Miku Hirayama
Amarachi Valentina Korie
Megan Krauszer
Sabrina Lobner
Alexandra Love Strouse
Leah Suskind
Linnea Swarting
Hannah Zin

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NIXON IN CHINA

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Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

Robert Spano
Music Director

PRESENTS

Nixon in China

MUSIC BY **John Adams**
LIBRETTO BY **Alice Goodman**

In English with projected English and Mandarin titles
This performance is approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes, including a 25-minute intermission.

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Surtitles by Paul Hopper, used by arrangement with Houston Grand Opera.

Mandarin titles translated by Zhihao Zhang.

Pat Nixon wig provided by Opéra national de Paris.

The WNO Orchestra's performance is generously sponsored by the
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WNO's production of *Nixon in China* is generously supported by
Robert L. Turner and Peter N. Speliopoulos.

Thomas Hampson and Renée Fleming are generously sponsored by Noémi Neidorff.

Cast & Creative Team

Nixon in China

Music by John Adams
Libretto by Alice Goodman
November 14, 19 & 21, 2026

PAT NIXON | **Renée Fleming**
RICHARD NIXON | **Thomas Hampson**
CHIANG CH'ING (MADAME MAO TSE-TUNG) | **Kathleen Kim***
MAO TSE-TUNG | **John Matthew Myers***
CHOU EN-LAI | **Joo Won Kang***
HENRY KISSINGER | **Robert Pomakov***
NANCY T'ANG (FIRST SECRETARY TO MAO) | **Veronica Siebert^**
SECOND SECRETARY TO MAO | **Anna Maria Vacca^***
THIRD SECRETARY TO MAO | **Cecelia McKinley^^**
SOLO DANCERS | **Kayla Mei-Wan Thomas*, Jaryd Farcon***

Washington National Opera Orchestra
Washington National Opera Chorus
Washington National Opera Corps Dancers

CONDUCTOR | **Robert Spano**
DIRECTOR | **Elkhanah Pulitzer***
CHOREOGRAPHER | **Jessica Lang**
SET DESIGNER | **Alexander V. Nichols**
COSTUME DESIGNER | **Elisabeth Scott***
LIGHTING DESIGNER | **Duane Schuler**
PROJECTION DESIGNER | **Bill Morrison***
SOUND DESIGNER | **Mark Grey***
COVER CONDUCTOR | **Stephen Mulligan**
ASSISTANT CONDUCTORS | **Michael Baitzer, Joy Schreier*, Ken Weiss**
DICTION COACH | **Ken Weiss**
CHORUS PREPARATION | **Steven Gathman**

* Washington National Opera Debut
^ Member, Cafritz Young Artists Program
^^ Alumni, Cafritz Young Artists Program

Synopsis

The action takes place in Peking (Beijing), China, February 1972

ACT I
The airfield outside Peking: it is a cold, clear, dry morning: Monday, February 21, 1972. Contingents of army, navy, and air force circle the field and sing "The Three Main Rules of Discipline and the Eight Points of Attention." Premier Chou En-Lai, accompanied by a small group of officials, strolls onto the runway just as the *Spirit of '76* taxis into view. President Nixon disembarks. They shake hands and the President sings of his excitement and his fears.

An hour later he is meeting with Chairman Mao. Mao's conversational armory contains philosophical apothegms, unexpected political observations, and gnomic jokes, and everything he sings is amplified by his secretaries and the Premier. It is not easy for a Westerner to hold his own in such a dialogue.

After the audience with Mao, everyone at the first evening's banquet is euphoric. The President and Mrs. Nixon manage to exchange a few words before Premier Chou rises to make the first of the evening's toasts, a tribute to patriotic fraternity. The President replies, toasting the Chinese people and the hope of peace. The toasts continue, with less formality, as the night goes on.

ACT II
Snow has fallen during the night. In the morning, Mrs. Nixon is ushered onstage by her party of guides and journalists. She explains a little of what it feels like for a woman like her to be First Lady and accepts a glass elephant from the workers at the Peking Glass Factory. She visits the Evergreen People's Commune and the Summer Palace, where she pauses in the Gate of Longevity and Goodwill to sing, "This is prophetic!" Then, on to the Ming Tombs before sunset. In the evening, the Nixons attend a performance of The Red Detachment of Women, a revolutionary ballet devised by Mao's wife, Chiang Ch'ing. The ballet entwines ideological rectitude with Hollywood-style emotion. The Nixons respond to the latter; they are drawn to the downtrodden peasant girl—in fact, they are drawn into the action on the side of simple virtue. This was not precisely what Chiang Ch'ing had in mind. She sings "I am the wife of Mao Tse-tung," ending with full choral backing.

ACT III
The last evening in Peking. The pomp and public displays of the presidential visit are over, and the main players all return to the solitude of their bedrooms. The talk turns to memories of the past. Mao and his wife dance, and the Nixons recall the early days of their marriage during the Second World War, when he was stationed as a naval commander in the Pacific. Chou concludes the opera with the question of whether anything they did was good.

—Adapted from a synopsis by librettist Alice Goodman

Background

Composer John Adams grew up in New Hampshire, and through his mother, "an old-school liberal Democrat," became fascinated with American political life. Yet, he wasn't so sure of the idea of an opera about Richard Nixon, Mao Tse-Tung, capitalism and communism proposed by stage director Peter Sellars, as he recalled in his book *Hallelujah Junction:*

> By 1983 Nixon had become the stuff of bad, predictable comedy routines, and it was difficult to untangle my own personal animosity—he'd tried to send me to Vietnam—from the larger historical picture. But when the poet Alice Goodman agreed to write a verse libretto in couplets, the project suddenly took on a wonderfully complex guise, part epic, part satire, part a parody of political posturing, and part serious examination of historical, philosophical, and even gender issues. All of this centered on six extraordinary personalities: the Nixons, Chairman Mao and Chiang Ch'ing (a.k.a. Madame Mao), Chou En-Lai, and Henry Kissinger. Was this not something, both in the sense of story and characterization, that only grand opera could treat?
>
> To my mind, Alice Goodman's poem is one of the great as-yet-unrecognized works of America theater. Her words are a summary, an incantation of the American experience, and her Richard Nixon is our presidential Everyman: banal, bathetic, sentimental, paranoid. Yet she does not deny him an attempt, albeit couched in homely metaphors of space travel and good business practice, to articulate a vision of American life.

Premiere: October 22, 1987 at Houston Grand Opera, performances followed in 1988 by co-commissioners the Brooklyn Academy of Music and Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Firsts: *Nixon in China* was the first opera by John Adams; it quickly became popular and has been staged around the world. A related symphonic piece, *The Chairman Dances*, composed by Adams prior to the opera's premiere, is regularly performed by orchestras. It takes the form of a foxtrot inspired by the Act II banquet scene.

Nixon in China pulls back the curtain on political theater and cultivated public personality, as in the historic Act I meeting between Nixon and Mao, "bringing these two complex figures together face to face in a dialogue that oscillates between philosophical sparring and political one-upmanship."

Adams found particular meaning in the roles of Pat Nixon and Chiang Ch'ing, "the yin and the yang of the two alternatives to living with someone immersed in power and political manipulation." Pat Nixon was the quintessential political "good wife," stoically standing behind her man, come what may. Chiang Ch'ing had been a movie actress before joining forces with Mao and becoming a fearsome Party power in the social engineering experiment known as the Cultural Revolution. Adams writes:



Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon are greeted upon arrival by Chou En-Lai.

> In the music I composed for these two women I tried to go beyond the caricature of their public personae and look at the fragility of each's relationship to her spouse. In Act II we see each in her public role: Pat is the perfect diplomatic guest, being treated to a whirlwind tour of the city and "loving every minute of it." The shrill, corrosive Chiang Ch'ing interrupts the ballet to shout angry orders at the dancers and sing her credo of power and violence, "I am the Wife of Mao Tse-Tung." But in the final act, the focus of both text and music is their vulnerability, their desperate desire to roll back time to when life was simpler and feelings less compromised. Indeed, all five of the principals are virtually paralyzed by their innermost thoughts during this act. In the loneliness and solitude of his or her own bed, no one can avoid the feeling of regret, of time irretrievably lost and opportunities missed. It falls to Chou En-Lai, the only one with a modicum of self-knowledge, to ask the final question: "How much of what we did was good?"

Director's Note

By Elkhanah Pulitzer



Nixon raises a toast at the banquet.

Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong were both masters of the world stage, and their meeting on February 21, 1972 helped reorder the balance of global power, opening a new relationship between the United States and China. Yet what continues to fascinate about *Nixon in China* is what happens over the course of the visit and in the reflections that follow: what it means to become larger than life, to make history, and then to live with the human consequences of the life one has made. As the opera unfolds, these monumental figures shift into human beings, confronting the limits of what they can control and how they make meaning of their lives.

In addition to footage captured by the official press corps, members of Nixon's inner circle brought personal Super 8 cameras on the presidential visit. Their films captured the extraordinary spectacle from the inside. Edited with filmmaker Bill Morrison, this archival footage brings iconic images of the trip into the theatrical world—the arrival, the ceremony, the banquet, and the carefully orchestrated encounters. The images hover above the stage as a kind of collective memory, monumental and fixed, while the human beings beneath them are still moving, changing, performing, and finding themselves inside the history unfolding around them.

The ballet of Act II extends this collision between image and reality. The real *Red Detachment of Women* was itself political storytelling performed for the visiting Americans. Our dancers inhabit its spaces and iconography, creating a hall of mirrors in which history, propaganda, theater, and memory continually reflect one another.

At the center of this history are women whose relationships to power could hardly be more different. Pat Nixon arrives as part of her husband's carefully constructed public identity, yet as the journey unfolds, her attention moves beyond the role she has been given. She sees the people, landscapes, and ordinary lives around her, finding a voice distinctly her own. Madame Mao embodies another possibility: a woman who has claimed enormous public power and understands completely the theatrical force of her own image. Together, they offer very different visions of what it means for a woman to occupy the stage of history.



Pat Nixon tours Beijing, in a projected image used in *Nixon in China*

The questions of *Nixon in China* feel especially resonant now, when political life is so intensely mediated through images, screens, spectacle, and competing versions of reality. The relationship between the United States and China remains consequential to the entire world, while the boundary between documentation, performance, and propaganda increasingly blurs.

By the third act, the spectacle begins to dissolve. The television image gives way to static—the broadcast has ended. Through the TV snow, fragments of the journey return: a bicycle, winter branches, passing landscapes. The triumphant arrival has become memory; the public figures have become private human beings, looking back and confronting the uncertainty of what their lives have meant and what will remain of them. Perhaps this is the paradox at the heart of *Nixon in China*: we can change the course of history yet remain uncertain about the meaning of our own lives.

Eyewitness to History







In the winter of 1972, the world was enthralled by the sight of Air Force One, *Spirit of '76*, landing in Beijing (then identified as Peking in Western references), as Richard Nixon became the first US President to visit the People's Republic of China. WNO's *Nixon in China* pulls audience members back to that moment through projected archival footage. Projection Designer Bill Morrison scoured coverage from the trip for moments that echo scenes in the opera, such as *The Red Detachment of Women* ballet performance seen in Act II, along with Super-8 films shot by Nixon Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman and others that offer a first-person perspective. Morrison's work originated with a 2016 Los Angeles Philharmonic production, also directed by Elkhanah Pulitzer.

Nixon's visit to China proved a fascinating Cold War episode. Diplomatic relations between the two countries had been cut off since the Communist takeover in 1949; the US recognized the Republic of China on Taiwan, where nationalist leaders under President Chiang Kai-shek had retreated. The trip had been arranged through secret meetings between US National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger (later Secretary of State) and PRC Premier Chou En-Lai.

The week-long stay included a historic meeting with Chairman Mao Tse-tung, and visits to Shanghai and Hangzhou. Extensive media coverage introduced Americans to Chinese culture that had been unseen under Mao's tight control: elaborate banquets, glimpses of the Great Wall and Forbidden City, Chinese ballet, and giant pandas. After First Lady Pat Nixon delighted at pandas in the Beijing Zoo, a pair were gifted to the US—an overture in "panda diplomacy."

Although it had all begun with "ping-pong diplomacy." Following a conversation between American and Chinese players at the 1971 World Table Tennis Championship in Japan (an unusual occurrence as athletes from China and Soviet bloc countries were rarely allowed to speak with outsiders), Mao invited the US team to China.

Nixon's visit remains a diplomatic high point of a presidency that became shadowed by Watergate and his eventual resignation. (Haldeman's home movies were seized from the White House by the FBI during the Watergate investigation, eventually being archived at the Nixon Presidential Library.) For China, it opened conversations that enabled the country to become an economic and trade power in the decades following Mao's death in 1975. The US re-established full diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1979. Ping-pong became an Olympic sport in 1988.



The First Couple

Thomas Hampson and Renée Fleming have donned the wardrobes, and personas, of Richard and Pat Nixon for several productions of Nixon in China. *What's it like to portray these memorable, real-life figures?*

"To me, what is most compelling about *Nixon in China* is John Adam's stunning score. The music is epic, with lyrical vocal writing and constant rhythmic shifts. Among Adams' works, *Nixon in China* is completely unique. No wonder it is considered an American masterpiece. It's also exciting to play a real-life woman whom many of us can recall, if only from the news. I've been fortunate, in my research, to speak with people who knew Pat Nixon well; and I appreciate the chance to give voice to a woman who took the world by storm during this historic trip to China."
—Renée Fleming

"I have long admired *Nixon in China* because it is ultimately not simply about Nixon, but about how history becomes myth. The 1972 China visit caught Richard and Pat Nixon at an extraordinary moment—before Watergate was publicly understood, when the President stood near the zenith of his political life. I find myself continually searching within the opera for the private people behind those familiar historical images.

Adams and Goodman understand that history is made twice: first through events, and then through the stories—personal, political and televised—that give those events meaning. Nixon wants history to excuse him; Kissinger wants history to understand him. But Chou En-Lai finally asks the question that haunts the entire opera: "How much of what we did was good?"

That refusal to provide an easy verdict is what I admire most. The spectacle passes, the cameras disappear, and what remains is memory—and the human need to understand what we have done."
—Thomas Hampson

Meet the Artists



Renée Fleming

SOPRANO | PAT NIXON

WNO History: *American Rhapsody*, 2024–2025; Opera Gala, 2016–2017; *Lucrezia Borgia* (title role), 2008–2009

Past: *Rusalka, Thaïs, Armida, Susannah, Manon, Arabella, Alcina, Louise, Rodelinda, Daphne* (title roles), *Così fan tutte* (Fiordiligi), *Eugene Onegin* (Tatyana), *Don Giovanni* (Donna Anna, Donna Elvira), *Otello* (Desdemona), *Der Rosenkavalier* (Marschallin), *Faust* (Marguerite), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Blanche DuBois), *La traviata* (Violetta), *Capriccio* (Countess), *Carousel* (Nettie Fowler), *The Hours* (Clarissa Vaughan), *Nixon in China* (Pat Nixon)

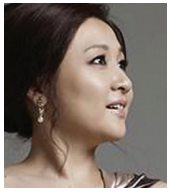


Thomas Hampson

BARITONE | RICHARD NIXON

WNO History: *American Rhapsody*, 2024–2025

Past: *Nixon in China* (Richard Nixon), *Wozzeck, Billy Budd, Doktor Faust, Giulio Cesare, Werther, Don Giovanni, Guillaume Tell, King Roger, Eugene Onegin, Hamlet, Macbeth, Simon Boccanegra* (title roles), *The Merry Widow* (Danilo), *Pagliacci* (Silvio), *Hérodiade* (Hérode), *Manon* (Lescaut), *Così fan tutte* (Guglielmo, Don Alfonso), *The Marriage of Figaro* (Count Almaviva), *Dido and Aeneas* (Aeneas), *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Figaro), *Arabella* (Mandryka), *Don Carlo* (Rodrigue), *Ernani* (Don Carlo), *Il trovatore* (Il Conte di Luna), *La traviata* (Giorgio Germont), *Otello* (Iago), *Tannhäuser* (Wolfram)



Kathleen Kim

SOPRANO | CHIANG CH'ING (MADAME MAO TSE-TUNG)

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Nixon in China* (Chiang Ch'ing), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tytania), *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Olympia), *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (Blondchen), *Un ballo in maschera* (Oscar), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Zerbinetta), *Der Rosenkavalier* (Sophie), *Cendrillon* (La Fée), Metropolitan Opera; *La traviata* (Violetta), *Hansel and Gretel* (Gretel), Korean Opera; *Nixon in China* (Chiang Ch'ing), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lucia), Opéra national de Paris



John Matthew Myers

TENOR | MAO TSE-TUNG

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Nixon in China* (Mao), Los Angeles Philharmonic, Opéra national de Paris; *Norma* (Pollione), Los Angeles Opera, (Flavio), Teatro Regio di Parma; *Tosca* (Cavaradossi), Arizona Opera; *Carmen* (Don Jose), Music Academy of the West; *La Fanciulla del West* (Trin), *Cold Mountain* (Junior/Charlie), Santa Fe Opera; *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Der Kaiser), San Francisco Opera; *Peter Grimes, Boris Godunov, Die Meistersinger, Der Rosenkavalier* (covers), Metropolitan Opera

Meet the Artists



Joo Won Kang

BARITONE | CHOU EN-LAI

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Turandot* (Ping), Metropolitan Opera; *La bohème* (Marcello), Met Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Minnesota Opera; *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Boston Symphony Orchestra; *Nixon in China* (Chou En-Lai), Los Angeles Philharmonic; *L'amore dei tre re* (Manfredo), New York City Opera; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Figaro), *La traviata* (Germont), *The Magic Flute* (Papageno), *La Cenerentola* (Dandini), *Madama Butterfly* (Sharpless), *Eugene Onegin* (title role)

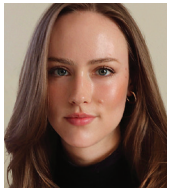


Robert Pomakov

BASS | HENRY KISSINGER

WNO History: *Don Giovanni* (Leporello), 2002–2003

Past: *Madama Butterfly* (Bonze), and more than 20 productions at Metropolitan Opera; *Roméo et Juliette* (Frère Laurent), *Werther* (Le Bailli), and numerous other roles with Canadian Opera Company; *Attila* (title role), Opernfestspiele Heidenheim; *Götterdämmerung* (Hagen), *Das Rheingold* (Falsot), Tiroler Festspiele; *Il trovatore* (Ferrando), *Andrea Chénier* (Mathieu), San Francisco Opera; appearances with Houston Grand Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera and others

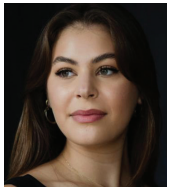


Veronica Siebert

MEZZO-SOPRANO | NANCY T'ANG (FIRST SECRETARY TO MAO)

WNO History: *The Crucible* (Betty Parris), T*he Marriage of Figaro* (Cherubino), 2025–2026

Past: Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Mustardseed, Hermia cover), Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (Rosa Saks), Indiana University, world premiere; National Opera Association Carolyn Bailey Argento Fellowship; Ravinia Steans Institute Fellow; Gerdine Young Artist, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Barbara and Stanley Richman Career Development Award recipient



Anna Maria Vacca

MEZZO-SOPRANO| SECOND SECRETARY TO MAO

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Le Tragédie de Carmen* (Carmen), New Camerata Opera; *Cendrillon* (title role), *La Finta Giardiniera* (Ramiro), *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (L'Enfant), *Le Portrait de Manon* (Jean); *Svadba* (Ljubicia); *The Magic Flute* (Dritte Dame)

Meet the Artists



Cecelia McKinley

CONTRALTO | THIRD SECRETARY TO MAO

WNO History: *Gods & Mortals,* 2024–2025*, Songbird* (Mastrilla), *Romeo and Juliet* (Gertrude), *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* (Cat/Brother 1/Silk Merchant 2), American Opera Initiative (Tardigrade, *Forever*), *Partenope* (Arsace), 2023–2024; American Opera Initiative (Bubbie, *Bubbie and the Demon*; Sylvan, *What the Spirits Show*), *Elektra* (Second Maid), 2022–2023

Past: *Eugene Onegin* (Filipjevna), *Susannah* (Mrs. Ott), Wolf Trap Opera*; El Último Sueño de Friday y Diego* (Frida Image 3), Metropolitan Opera; *Aci, Galatea, e Polifemo* (Galatea), *Clori, Tirsi, e Fileno* (Fileno), Ars Lyrica Houston; *Beethoven's Symphony No. 9,* National Symphony Orchestra, Denyce Graves Foundation; Handel's *Messiah,* Roanoke Symphony Orchestra

Meet the Creative Team



Robert Spano

CONDUCTOR, WNO MUSIC DIRECTOR

WNO History: T*he Crucible, The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025-2026: *Fidelio, Gods & Mortals*, 2024–2025, *Written in Stone*, 2021–2022

Past: Robert Spano, conductor, pianist, composer, and teacher, is known worldwide for the intensity of his artistry and distinctive communicative abilities, creating a sense of inclusion and warmth among musicians and audiences that is unique among American orchestras. He has been music director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra since 2022. As music director of the Aspen Music Festival and School since 2011, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and young performers. After 20 seasons as music director with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, he now serves as music director laureate.



Elkhanah Pulitzer

DIRECTOR

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Nixon in China,* John Adams' *The Gospel According to the Other Mary,* Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony; Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*, Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu; David Lang's *prisoner of the state*, New York Philharmonic, London's Barbican, Rotterdam's De Doelen; Bernstein's *Mass*, Lincoln Center Mostly Mozart Festival; live tour of esperanza spalding's album *12 Little Spells*; *DIORAMA* art installation, I.O.U., San Francisco; *Wozzeck, Lulu, Powder Her Face, Quartett,* West Edge Opera



Jessica Lang

CHOREOGRAPHER

WNO History: *Aida,* 2025–2026, 2017–2018; *Turandot*, 2023–2024;

Past: Resident choreographer, Pacific Northwest Ballet; artist in residence, Sarasota Ballet; *Stabat Mater*, The Glimmerglass Festival, Lincoln Center White Light Festival; *Aida*, San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, LA Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Her Notes, Garden Blue, ZigZag, Let Me Sing Forevermore*, American Ballet Theatre; founder, Jessica Lang Dance

Meet the Creative Team

Alexander V. Nichols

SET DESIGNER

WNO History: *Madama Butterfly*, 2026–2027

Past: Resident visual designer (Margaret Jenkins Dance Company); resident designer, (Pennsylvania, Hartford and American Repertory ballet companies); lighting designer (American Ballet Theatre); video designer, *Broadway to Oz* (Australia tour); Broadway credits as projection designer (*Wishful Drinking, Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway, Nice Work If You Can Get It;* lighting/projection designer, *Cree* (Opera Philadelphia); scenic projection, *Nixon in China* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); scenic/lighting designer, *Svabda*, San Francisco Opera

Elisabeth Scott

COSTUME DESIGNER

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: Costume designer for numerous feature films, diverse prestigious and notable television series, commercials and music videos, classic and contemporary opera and theater productions, and performance and installation events. Production designer and art director for dozens of feature films, beloved television series,,opera and theater productions, and commercial and video projects.

Duane Schuler

LIGHTING DESIGNER

WNO History: *Madama Butterfly,* 2026–2027; *Un ballo in maschera,* 2010–2011; *A View from the Bridge,* 2007–2008; *Susannah,* 1999–2000

Past: New York Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, De Nederlandse Opera, Opera National de Lyon, San Francisco Opera, Salzburg Festival, La Scala, American Ballet Theatre, Lincoln Center Koch Theater renovation

Bill Morrison

PROJECTION DESIGNER

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: Best known for the films *Decasia* (2002), *Dawson City: Frozen Time* (2016), and the Oscar-nominated short *Incident* (2023). Recent live performance collaborations include Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; Gavin Bryars' *The Sinking of the Titanic*, Cinema Galleggiante, Venice; Bill Frisell's *The Great Flood*, Torino Jazz Festival, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; David Lang's *darker*, PS21, New York, Parco della Musica, Rome; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*, Metropolitan Opera

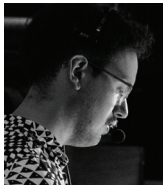
Mark Grey

SOUND DESIGNER

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: Emmy Award-winning sound designer and composer; first sound designer for the New York Philharmonic (John Adams' *On the Transmigration of Souls*) and Metropolitan Opera (John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and many others); composer, opera *Frankenstein*, mobile chamber opera, *Birds in the Moon* (New York Philharmonic); resident sound designer, Park Avenue Armory, New York City

Production Team



Dustin Z West
STAGE MANAGER
WNO History: *West Side Story, Aida*, 2025–2026; *Fidelio, Porgy and Bess*, 2024–2025; *Grounded, Songbird*, *Turandot*, 2023–2024; *Elektra, The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, 2022–2023
Past: Production Stage Manager, The Glimmerglass Festival; *Guys and Dolls*, Shakespeare Theatre Company; *Before and After, Dialogues des Carmélites, The Turn of the Screw, Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi,* Juilliard; *West Side Story*, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari; *Fidelio*, Heartbeat Opera; *Portrait and a Dream*, Contemporaneous; *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Royal Opera de Versailles; REV. 23, Prototype; JoAnne Akalaitis' *Bad News!*, Skirball Center for the Performing Arts



Frances Rabalais
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
WNO History: *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs,* 2024–2025; *Songbird,* 2023–2024; *Carmen,* 2021–2022; *The Magic Flute,* 2019–2020; *Eugene Onegin,* 2018–2019
Past: Director of *Madama Butterfly*, Fort Worth Opera; *The Magic Flute*, University of Houston; *Giulio Cesare,* Texas State University; *Maria de Buenos Aires*, Madison Opera. Assistant director: *The Magic Flute*, Los Angeles Opera; *Pelleas et Melisande, Così fan tutte,* Dallas Opera; *The Wreckers, The Magic Flute,* Houston Grand Opera; *Samson and Delilah, Tosca, i Pagliacci, La traviata,* Opera Colorado

Sean Corcoran▲
Leslie Sears
Adrian Speth
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

Isabella Tapia
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Lucia Scheckner
PRODUCTION DRAMATURG

Liv Jin
Catherine Girardi
Emily Pan
ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNERS

Isabel Martin
SURTITLES OPERATOR

Corinne M. Hayes
SURTITLES COORDINATOR

▲ Washington National Opera AGMA Production staff member with 10 or more years of service

Washington National Opera Chorus

Spencer Adamson§
Alex Alburqueque§
Anthony Anderson
Alexandra Baker
Marta Kirilloff Barber§
Jihanna Charlton-Davis§
Alexandra Christoforakis§
Keith Craig§
Daniel Fleming
Harvey D. Fort§
Gene Galvin
Denise Gulley§
Jonathan Hoffman§
Case Hope
Nicholas Houhoulis§
Alizon Hull§
Jennifer Jellings
William Jones§
Zoe-Elizabeth McCray
Neema Meena
Vito Pietanza§
Patricia Portillo§
James Shaffran§
Pamela Simonson Parker§
Alia Waheed§

§ Washington National Opera Chorus members with 10 or more seasons of service

Washington National Opera Corps Dancers

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Kateryna Derechyna
Alyssa Manguiat
Chivas Merchant-Buckman
Antonio Montalvo
Giana Parlin
Sophia Schwinghammer
Jamal Story

Washington National Opera Supernumeraries

Helen Cheng Mao
Raul Heredia
Hanna Kim
Reiniero "Rey" Rivera
Theresa Puhr
Katy Qui
John Tinpe
Margaret Lin Waagner

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Please consider helping WNO during this historic moment of transition as we set the stage for the future of our National Opera company.

Your support directly supports our artists, our productions, our commitment to the future of opera through our Cafritz Young Artists program and American Opera Initiative, our dedication to artistic excellence, and our mission to make opera accessible to all.

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DAR CONSTITUTION HALL
NOVEMBER 22, 2026

WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Timothy O'Leary
General Director

Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

Robert Spano
Music Director

PRESENTS

We the People

A Musical Celebration of Liberty & Independence

This performance is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes, without intermission.

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GENERAL DYNAMICS

Jacqueline Badger Mars

Dallas Morse Coors

Cast & Creative Team

We the People

November 22, 2026

RENÉE FLEMING | **Soprano**
JONATHAN TETELMAN* | **Tenor**
THOMAS HAMPSON | **Baritone**

Marian Anderson Award Winner
AMBER R. MONROE^^ | **Soprano**

with
LAUREN CARROLL^ | **Soprano**
VIVIANA GOODWIN^ | **Soprano**
VERONICA SIEBERT^ | **Mezzo-Soprano**
ANNA MARIA VACCA^ | **Mezzo-Soprano**
REED GNEPPER^* | **Tenor**
HAKEEM HENDERSON^ | **Tenor**
CHANDLER BENN^ | **Baritone**
THANDOLWETHU MAMBA^ | **Baritone**
ROBERT FRAZIER^ | **Bass-Baritone**
ATTICUS REGO^ | **Bass**

CONDUCTOR | **Robert Spano**
DIRECTOR | **Peter McClintock**
LIGHTING DESIGNER | **A.J. Guban**
PROJECTION DESIGNER | **Alexander V. Nichols**
SOUND DESIGNER | **Mark Grey**
SURTITLES CREATOR | **Corinne M. Hayes**
COVER CONDUCTOR | **Stephen Mulligan**
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR | **Michael Baitzer**
DICTION COACH | **Ken Weiss**

* Washington National Opera Debut
^ Member, Cafritz Young Artists Program
^^ Alumni, Cafritz Young Artists Program

Program

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827)
Overture to *Egmont*, Op. 84

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)
"Ah, la paterna mano," from *Macbeth*
JONATHAN TETELMAN

Giuseppe Verdi
"O patria mia," from *Aida*
AMBER R. MONROE

Giachino Rossini (1792–1868)
"Sois immobile," from *Guillaume Tell*
THOMAS HAMPSON

Francesco Cilèa (1866–1950)
"Io son l'umile ancella," from *Adriana Lecouvreur*
RENÉE FLEMING

Giuseppe Verdi
"Va pensiero," from *Nabucco*

Giuseppe Verdi
"Dio, che nell'alma infondere," from *Don Carlo*
JONATHAN TETELMAN, THOMAS HAMPSON

PRESENTATION OF THE MARIAN ANDERSON AWARD

Nkeiru Okoye (b. 1972)
"I Am Harriet Tubman," from *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*
AMBER R. MONROE

John Musto/ Langston Hughes (b. 1954)/(1901–1967)
"Litany," from *Shadow of the Blues*
THOMAS HAMPSON

Richard Rodgers/ Oscar Hammerstein (1902–1979)/(1879–1960)
"Oklahoma!," from *Oklahoma!*

Sherman Edwards (1919–1981)
"The Egg," from *1776*
REED GNEPPER, CHANDLER BENN, ATTICUS REGO

Richard Rodgers/ Oscar Hammerstein
"You'll Never Walk Alone," from *Carousel*
RENEE FLEMING, JONATHAN TETELMAN

Stephen Flaherty (b. 1960)
"Wheels of a Dream," from *Ragtime*
AMBER R. MONROE, THANDOLWETHU MAMBA

Program

Margaret Bonds (1913–1972)	"Lament," from *Montgomery Variations*
Aaron Copland (1900–1990)	"At the River" **THOMAS HAMPSON**
Augustín Lara (1897–1970)	"Granada" **JONATHAN TETELMAN**
Traditional orch. R. Moody	"In the Pines" **RENÉE FLEMING**
J. Rosamond Johnson (1873–1954)	"Lift Every Voice and Sing" **AMBER MONROE**
Aaron Copland	"The Promise of Living," from *The Tender Land*

About the Program

We the People is a powerful concert experience that reminds us that freedom is not merely a national ideal, but a human right. Through some of opera and musical theater's most stirring masterpieces, the evening traces the universal struggle for liberation and dignity. From the songs of resistance in Verdi's *Nabucco*, to the dreams of racial equality and hope for a new generation in *Ragtime* and beyond, these works embody the spirit of *risorgimento*—Italian for the "rising again" of a people. At the center of this sweeping musical journey are four extraordinary voices: Renée Fleming, Thomas Hampson, Jonathan Tetelman and Marian Anderson Award Winner Amber R. Monroe, plus WNO's Cafritz Young Artists. *We The People* is a reminder that the desire to be free is one of humanity's oldest and most urgent songs—and it is still being written.

Meet the Artists



RENÉE FLEMING

SOPRANO

Renée Fleming is internationally celebrated for her vocal and dramatic artistry, as well as her dedicated advocacy for the powerful impacts of the creative arts in health. Honored with five Grammy awards and the US National Medal of Arts, she has sung not only in the world's leading opera houses and concert halls, but also for momentous occasions from the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the Super Bowl. In 2023, the World Health Organization appointed her as a Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health.

Fleming's anthology *Music and Mind: Harnessing the Arts for Health and Wellness* was published in 2024. She created a live program called *Music and Mind*, which she has presented in more than 70 cities around the world. She is now an advisor for major initiatives in this field, including the NeuroArts Blueprint at Johns Hopkins University. In 2024 she launched the Renée Fleming NeuroArts Investigator Awards, funding interdisciplinary research projects by early career scientists in collaboration with creative artists.

Her other honors include the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal, Germany's Cross of the Order of Merit, France's Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, and honorary doctorates from 10 major universities.



JONATHAN TETELMAN

TENOR

Jonathan Tetelman has emerged as one of the most exciting and sought-after tenors on the international stage, acclaimed for the beauty of his voice, magnetic stage presence, and emotionally charged performances across the Italian and French repertory.

Born in Chile and raised in the United States, Tetelman has quickly established himself as a regular guest at many of the world's leading opera houses, including the Wiener Staatsoper, Bayerische Staatsoper, Zurich Opera, Royal Opera House, Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Salzburg Festival. He has collaborated with many of today's foremost artists and conductors, including Plácido Domingo, Elīna Garanča, Jonas Kaufmann, Asmik Grigorian, Andris Nelsons, Teodor Currentzis, and Kirill Petrenko.

An exclusive artist with Deutsche Grammophon, Tetelman has earned international recognition through his acclaimed recordings *Arias* and *The Great Puccini,* further establishing himself as one of opera's most distinctive voices of his generation.

During the 2026–2027 season, Tetelman makes his role debut as Samson in *Samson et Dalila* at Staatsoper Unter den Linden and his role debut as Radamès in a new production of Aida at Houston Grand Opera. He returns to the Bayerische Staatsoper for a new production of Werther and performances of *Rigoletto,* while also returning to the Wiener Staatsoper as Cavaradossi in Tosca. Additional highlights include a gala performance of *La bohème* in Bonn, concerts with the Berliner Philharmoniker under Kirill Petrenko, recital appearances across Europe, and gala performances in Germany, Austria, and Monaco.

Meet the Artists



THOMAS HAMPSON

BARITONE

Thomas Hampson has long been recognized as one of the most innovative and multifaceted musicians of our time, receiving countless international honors for his singular artistry and cultural leadership. With more than 80 operatic roles in his repertoire, Hampson shines across a vast array of styles, languages, and periods.

Highlights of Hampson's 2026–2027 season include two signature roles: Richard Nixon in Adams' *Nixon in China* with Teatro alla Scala and Washington National Opera, and Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* at the Salzburg Festival. He will also appear with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Swiss Orchestra, Rothko String Quartet, Kammerakademie Potsdam, Dresdner Philharmonie and the Youth Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine. He will also appear in recital at the Hungarian State Opera.

A celebrated "ambassador of song," Hampson is a tireless advocate for the art of the recital, where his ability to connect with audiences through the intimacy of song has made him a beloved figure on stages worldwide. His programs often highlight the rich tradition of German Lieder, particularly the works of Mahler, Schubert, Brahms and Schumann, as well as American song, a genre he has championed with unparalleled dedication. As a recording artist, Hampson's discography includes more than 170 albums, with multiple nominations and winners of the Grammy Award, five Edison Awards, and the Grand Prix du Disque.

In 2003, Hampson founded the Hampsong Foundation, a non-profit organization which creates platforms to highlight the art of classic song.

CAFRITZ YOUNG ARTISTS

We the People features members of the Cafritz Young Artists Program, which recognizes singers on the verge of international operatic careers. The WNO program provides intensive study with renowned vocal and dramatic coaches and offers voice lessons, language classes, career guidance and individual coaching and classes with WNO staff and guest artists. Cafritz Young Artists also perform in WNO productions and create roles in WNO's new works program, the American Opera Initiative.

Cafritz Young Artists graduates have gone on to successful careers including performances with the Metropolitan Opera; New York City Opera; the opera companies of San Francisco, Los Angeles, Santa Fe and Seattle; Carnegie Hall; the Glimmerglass, Bayreuth and Glyndebourne festivals; Vienna State Opera; Berlin State Opera; Teatro Real in Madrid; Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; and Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

Cafritz Young Artists appearing on this program:

LAUREN CARROLL | Soprano
VIVIANA GOODWIN | Soprano
VERONICA SIEBERT | Mezzo-Soprano
ANNA MARIA VACCA | Mezzo-Soprano
REED GNEPPER | Tenor
HAKEEM HENDERSON | Tenor
CHANDLER BENN | Baritone
THANDOLWETHU MAMBA | Baritone
ROBERT FRAZIER | Bass-Baritone
ATTICUS REGO | Bass

Meet the Artists



AMBER R. MONROE

SOPRANO | 2026–2027 MARIAN ANDERSON AWARD

Recognized by *Seen and Heard International* as "a crystalline lyric soprano and a superb singing actress," soprano Amber R. Monroe has established herself as an artist of uncommon versatility.

The 2026–2027 season places her at the center of some of the most significant productions of the year. Recipient of the WNO's Marian Anderson Award, she also makes her Komische Oper Berlin debut as Serena in *Porgy and Bess*—a production that will travel to the Royal Danish Opera, Théâtre du Châtelet and Opéra National de Lyon. She makes her role debut as Tosca with Pensacola Opera and continues with the national tour of Gregory Spears's *Fellow Travelers* as Mary Johnson, in her house debut with Austin Opera.

The 2025–2026 season marked a turning point for Monroe, with her role debut as the title character of Verdi's *Aida* at WNO and her European debut in the role at Theater St. Gallen. The season also brought house debuts at Seattle Opera, San Diego Opera and Portland Opera as Mary Johnson in *Fellow Travelers*, and she covered the role of Sister Rose in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* at San Francisco Opera. Concert work included Handel's *Messiah* with the Chattanooga Symphony.

Monroe's operatic career has been shaped by a series of formative institutional homes and an expanding repertoire of American works. With WNO's Cafritz Young Artists Program, she made her Kennedy Center debut as Ines in *Il trovatore* before returning as Isabelle in Carlos Simon's *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, as Mimi in *La bohème* and as Serena in *Porgy and Bess*. At Cincinnati Opera, she originated the role of Clarissa in the world premiere of Gregory Spears's *Castor and Patience*, and with Cleveland Opera Theater she performed the title role in the Midwest premiere of Nkeiru Okoye's *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed That Line to Freedom*.

Monroe is a 2023 winner of the Sullivan Foundation Award and the George and Nora London Foundation Competition, and a 2021 recipient of the Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Shoshana Foundation. She graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and holds a master's degree and artist diploma from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

ABOUT THE MARIAN ANDERSON AWARD

The Washington National Opera Marian Anderson Vocal Award celebrates excellence in performance by recognizing a young American singer who has achieved initial professional success in the area of opera, oratorio, or recital repertory, and who exhibits promise for a significant career. It is named to honor Marian Anderson's legacy as a groundbreaking American contralto who became an international opera star and a pioneering figure in the fight against racial discrimination in the arts.

The Award also recognizes the late singer's personal and humanitarian achievements, by encouraging Award-winners to continue in her example of service and educational achievement. In addition to receiving a $10,000 cash prize, award winners are given a significant performance opportunity, such as a dedicated recital or mainstage performance, and are asked to participate in a short residency at the opera workshop program of Washington's Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

In keeping with its mission to develop programs and initiatives that connect exemplary artists with the community, Washington National Opera will mentor the Marian Anderson Vocal Award recipients to create an education program aligning with the singer's skills and interests aimed to positively impact vocal music students at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts through master classes or workshops. The Duke Ellington School of the Arts is the District of Columbia's public arts magnet high school. The school offers a pre-college preparatory and comprehensive arts curriculum that includes a major in vocal music. Prior recipients of the Marian Anderson Vocal Award include Ryan Speedo Green, John Holiday, Sylvia McNair, Denyce Graves, Philip Zawisza, Nancy Maultsby, Patricia Racette, Michelle DeYoung, Nathan Gunn, Marguerite Krull, Eric Owens, Lawrence Brownlee, Indira Mahajan, Sasha Cooke, J'nai Bridges, Jamie Barton, Janai Brugger, Justin Austin, Key'mon Murrah and Nicholas Newton.

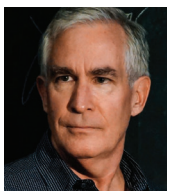
Meet the Creative Team



Robert Spano
CONDUCTOR, WNO MUSIC DIRECTOR

WNO History: *The Crucible, The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025-2026: *Fidelio, Gods & Mortals*, 2024–2025, *Written in Stone*, 2021–2022

Past: Robert Spano, conductor, pianist, composer, and teacher, is known worldwide for the intensity of his artistry and distinctive communicative abilities, creating a sense of inclusion and warmth among musicians and audiences that is unique among American orchestras. He has been music director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra since 2022. As music director of the Aspen Music Festival and School since 2011, he oversees the programming of more than 300 events and educational programs for 630 students and young performers. After 20 seasons as music director with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, he now serves as music director laureate.



Peter McClintock
DIRECTOR

WNO History: *Samson et Dalila*, 2004–2005, *Pique Dame*, 2001–2002

Past: More than 70 productions as stage director, Metropolitan Opera, including revivals of *Pique Dame, Elektra, La clemenza di Tito, Ernani, Andrea Chénier, Khovanshchina, Simon Boccanegra, I vespri siciliani, Die Walküre, Götterdämmerung, Moses und Aron, Il trovatore, Faust, Eugene Onegin, Carmen, Samson et Dalila, Manon*, and *Die Meistersinger*; director: Lyric Opera of Chicago, Teatro alla Scala, Staatsoper Berlin, Liceu Opera Barcelona, Opéra de Paris, Canadian Opera Company, Rome Opera, Matsumoto Festival, Finnish National Opera, National Center for the Performing Arts (Beijing), Mariinsky Theater, Houston Grand Opera, Vancouver Opera

A.J. Guban
LIGHTING DESIGNER

WNO History: More than 70 productions, including *West Side Story, The Little Prince*, 2025–2026; *Porgy & Bess, Gods & Mortals, Macbeth*, 2024–2025; *La bohème, Il trovatore, The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*, 2022–2023; WNO Galas 2017–2021; American Opera Initiative, 2016–2026

Past: *Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs*, National Symphony Orchestra; Kennedy Center 50th Anniversary Concert, PBS; *The Turn of the Screw*, Opera Cleveland; *Silvain*, Opera Lafayette; *A Tale of Two Cities*, Synetic Theater; *Champion*, Opéra de Montréal, New Orleans Opera; *La traviata*, The Atlanta Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Seattle Opera; *West Side Story*, Teatro di Cagliari

Alexander V. Nichols
PROJECTION DESIGNER

WNO History: *Nixon in China*, 2026–2027; *Madama Butterfly*, 2026–2027

Past: Resident visual designer (Margaret Jenkins Dance Company); resident designer, (Pennsylvania, Hartford and American Repertory ballet companies); lighting designer (American Ballet Theatre); video designer, *Broadway to Oz* (Australia tour); Broadway credits as projection designer (*Wishful Drinking, Hugh Jackman: Back on Broadway, Nice Work If You Can Get It;* lighting/projection designer, *Cree* (Opera Philadelphia); scenic projection, *Nixon in China* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); scenic/lighting designer, *Svabda*, San Francisco Opera

Meet the Creative Team

Mark Grey
SOUND DESIGNER

WNO History: *Nixon in China*, 2026–2027

Past: Emmy Award-winning sound designer and composer; first sound designer for the New York Philharmonic (John Adams' *On the Transmigration of Souls*) and Metropolitan Opera (John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and many others); composer, opera *Frankenstein*, mobile chamber opera, *Birds in the Moon* (New York Philharmonic); resident sound designer, Park Avenue Armory, New York City

Production Team



Mike Janney
STAGE MANAGER

WNO History: WNO debut

Past: *Rodelinda, The Magic Flute, Le nozze di Figaro, Die Walküre, La traviata Der Rosenkavalier, The Flying Dutchman, Orfeo, Carmen, M. Butterfly, The Lord of Cries, The Pearl Fishers, Jenüfa, Madama Butterfly, Ariadne auf Naxos, A Midsummer's Night Dream,* Santa Fe Opera; *William Tell, Macbeth, Das Lied von der Erde, La fille du régiment, La Cenerentola, Omar, La bohème,* Boston Lyric Opera; *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X, 1,000 Splendid Suns, Orfeo,* Seattle Opera

Adrian Speth
Laurel McIntyre
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS

Diane Lin▲
SURTITLES OPERATOR

Liv Jin
Catherine Girardi
Emily Pan
ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNERS

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DAR Constitution Hall

Special thanks to Jack Forrest and Nate Harrington for their invaluable collaboration in bringing WNO's Fall productions to DAR Constitution Hall.

Lance Lewis
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Vinnie Lamendola
HOUSE RIGGER/STAGE CREW CHIEF

Mike O'Reilly
HOUSE ELECTRICIAN

Warren Johnson
HOUSE AUDIO

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HOUSE LIGHTING DIRECTOR / LIGHTING TECH

Chris Crabtree
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ROBERT SPANO
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Matt Morgan
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Director of Artistic Planning and Operations

Emmet Sellars
Manager of Orchestra & Artistic Operations

Olivia Rose
Artistic & Music Operations Coordinator

Sydney Wilson
Artistic & Orchestra Personnel Coordinator

Music Staff

Michael Baitzer
Head of Music Staff

Steven Gathman
Chorus Master

Ken Weiss
Music Administrator

Shelley Friedman
Music Librarian

CAFRITZ YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM & THE AMERICAN OPERA INITIATIVE

Christopher Cano
Director, Cafritz Young Artists Program and the American Opera Initiative

Caitlin Oldham
Assistant Manager, Cafritz Young Artist Program

Kelley Rourke
Artistic Advisor, American Opera Initiative

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Director of Development

Jessica Wisser
Director of Major and Leadership Gifts

Cristina Blough
Director of Institutional Giving

Lauren Breen
Senior Manager of Institutional Giving

Tyler Teagle
Senior Major Gifts Officer

Soumya Tadepalli
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Advancement Advisor

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Tony Donghyuk Yoon
Producer, Promotional Videos

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Bethany Windham
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Diane Lin
Production Stage Manager

Rehearsal

Elizabeth Ventura
Senior Manager of Rehearsal Department

Ashley Mapley-Brittle
Rehearsal Assistant Manager: Artist Services

Liam Hurley
Rehearsal Coordinator: Artist Services

Justin Torres
Rehearsal Coordinator: Studio Operations

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Costume Director

Timm Burrow
Costume Design Manager

AnaMarie Nelson
Costume Workroom Manager

Samantha M. Wootten
Wig Master

Megan Repetski
Wardrobe Supervisor

Katherine Blobner
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Draper

Amy Vander Staay
Alterations Lead

Stella Pivnik
Stacey Hamilton
First Hand

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Joshua Kelley
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Technical

Christy Blackham
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A.J. Guban
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Ian Millholland
Brice Hiburn
Assistant Electrician

Dave Crook
Head of Sound

Tim Hache
Head of Properties

Washington National Opera Orchestra

Robert Spano, Music Director

VIOLIN I
Oleg Rylatko *Concertmaster*
Eric Lee *Associate Concertmaster*
Ko Sugiyama *Assistant Concertmaster*
Zino Bogachek +
Ryan Huo
Kayleigh Kim
Michelle Kim
Karen Lowry-Tucker
Susan Midkiff
Lucia Nowik

VIOLIN II
Kayla Moffett *Principal*
Najin Kim *Assistant Principal*
Richard Chang +
Xi Chen
Jessica Fan
Martha Kaufman
Timothy Macek
Victoria Noyes

VIOLA
Allyson Goodman *Principal*
Johanna Nowik *Assistant Principal*
Philippe Chao *Acting Assistant Principal*
Leon Neal +
Elizabeth Pulju-Owen
Uri Wassertzug

CELLO
Amy Frost Baumgarten *Principal*
Danielle Cho *Assistant Principal*
Ignacio Alcover +
Alastair Eng^
Kristen Wojcik
Igor Zubkovsky

BASS
Robert D'Imperio *Principal*
Frank Carnovale *Assistant Principal*

FLUTE
Adria Sternstein Foster *Principal*
Stephani Stang-Ferry *Assistant Principal*
Sandra del Cid-Davies

PICCOLO
Sandra del Cid-Davies

OBOE
Igor Leschishin *Principal*
Emily Tsai *Assistant Principal*

CLARINET
David Jones *Principal*
Sara Han *Assistant Principal*

BASSOON
Joseph Grimmer *Principal*
Christopher Jewell *Assistant Principal*
Samuel Blair^

CONTRABASSOON
Samuel Blair^

HORN
Geoffrey Pilkington *Principal^*
Christy Klenke *Assistant Principal*
Wei-Ping Chou
Peter de Boor
Evan Geiger

TRUMPET
Tim White *Principal*
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Michael Rossi

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+ Begins alphabetical listing of musicians who participate in a system of revolving chairs within the string section
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