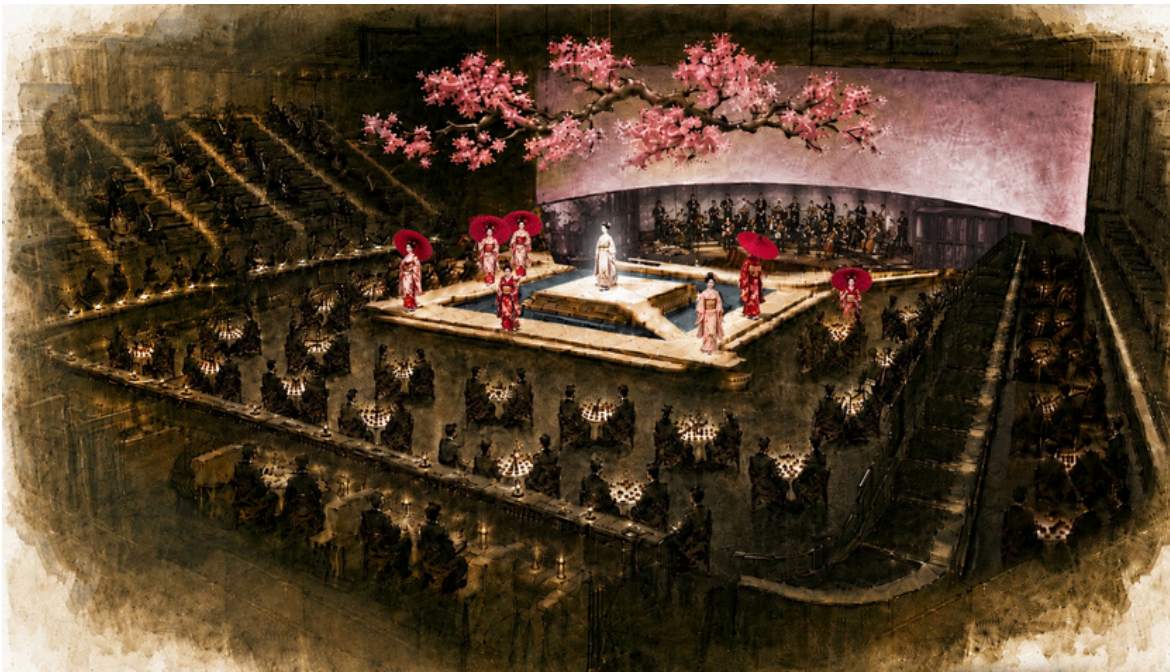


WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

WNO's (Temporary) New Digs

This fall, we're moving into the iconic DAR Constitution Hall. And we've done some redecorating.

By Laura Farmer



By now, you've probably heard that Washington National Opera has left its former home. The good news? Washington, D.C., is full of extraordinary places to experience live performance—and this season, WNO is making the most of them with eight productions in five distinctive venues.

To hear WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello describe it, we're on a "creative odyssey." This season's tagline speaks to this adventure: Bold. Forward. Together. We're boldly moving forward into new experiences, most importantly—together with you! Each venue brings its own character, opportunities and ways to experience opera, creating a spectacular season like you've never seen before. ***First up***—Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Constitution Hall.

Get to Know the DAR

This historic venue is the setting for this season's first three productions—Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, John Adams's *Nixon in China*, and our special concert *We the People*.

You may know Constitution Hall as the grand concert hall just blocks from the White House. This historic hall was built in 1929 specifically to house the annual convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution? Today, it's Washington's largest concert hall, welcoming more than half a million people each year. The National Symphony Orchestra was founded here in 1930 and called the Hall home for 41 years. The building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1985.



The Exterior of DAR Constitution Hall



Washington National Opera in Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Die Fledermaus*
Performed September 2003. Photo by Carol Pratt

You may also know the DAR for an unfortunate chapter in its history: in 1939, the venue prohibited contralto Marian Anderson from performing there, leading to her legendary concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial—a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights movement. Today, DAR has become among the late Ms. Anderson’s most passionate advocates for the preservation and celebration of her legacy. Of special note, WNO’s *We the People* concert will feature soprano Amber Monroe, the winner of WNO’s Marian Anderson Award, which gives a talented Black singer access to performance opportunities and training.

(Spoiler Alert: Our next edition of WNO eNews will include a deeper-dive into the story of Marian Anderson at DAR and our talented Marian Anderson Award-winner Amber Monroe—along with insider insights into the We the People concert!)



Washington National Opera in Ludwig van Beethoven's *Fidelio*
Performed May 2003. Photo by Carol Pratt.



Marian Anderson, photographed by Carl Van Vechten, 1940.
Library of Congress.

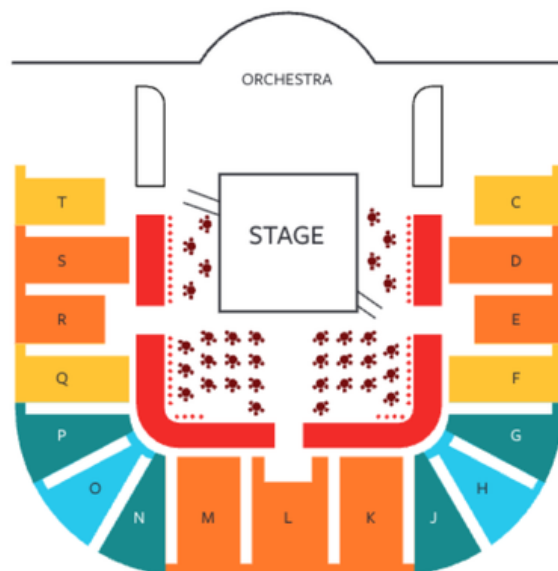
And there’s a little WNO history at the DAR, too. When Washington Opera needed a temporary home during the Kennedy Center’s renovation, Constitution Hall stepped in for the 2003–04 season. For longtime WNO fans who remember that chapter, our return may feel familiar—but what you’ll experience is anything but a repeat. Artistic Director Francesca Zambello has reimagined the historic venue from the ground up, creating something completely fresh and unlike anything you’ve seen before.

Welcome to the Revolutionary Stage

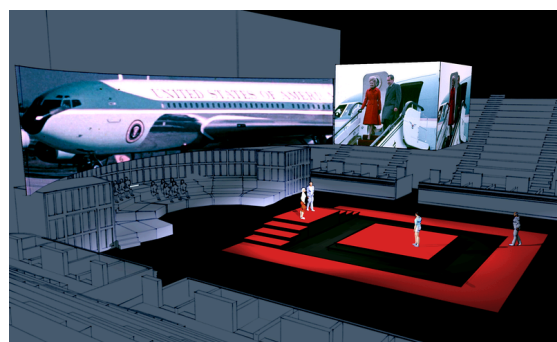
What's the first thing you do when you move into a new house? Redecorate! Rather than simply putting an opera stage inside a concert hall, 'Cesca and her team are reimagining the room itself. WNO's new Revolutionary Stage extends into the audience on three sides, surrounded by a mix of café- and theater-style seating.

"In the spirit of reinvention, WNO will bring you a season of classics and world premieres in all new productions. We will unleash our creativity and imagination to bring you aural and visual experiences that will be both novel and unique. We believe that by bringing you physically even closer to the action, the power of opera will impact you more deeply. Whether you've seen a specific title 100 times before or you're completely new to the genre, we will bring you on a fresh and new journey," shares WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello.

"I will always be troubled at what has transpired at 'the venue that shall not be named.' But there is a silver lining: we are able to dream up completely new approaches and make use of the unique assets of each of the five different venues where we will take you. You will see and hear opera in new and dynamic ways while we continue to hold to our values of quality and excellence. The challenge for all of us—audiences and creators alike—will be invigorating and exciting!"



The Seating Layout for WNO's 2026/27 Fall Season at DAR Constitution Hall



Stage Rendering of Nixon in China



Renée Fleming and Thomas Hampson as Pat and Richard Nixon in Nixon in China

Better Together

The new design changes the experience dramatically. For starters, we've added two bars in the orchestra section, so guests can relax with a beverage during the show. Also, the new design includes a huge screen for projected scenery, as well as the English surtitles—translations of the text so you can always follow the dramatic story. For *Nixon in China*, we'll also have Mandarin along with the English surtitles!

Most importantly, in our reimagined DAR Constitution Hall, instead of hundreds of people sitting in rows, all facing the same direction, some audience members will sit around tables, that surround three sides of the thrust stage, close to the action—and close to one another. Lining the back of the orchestra will be a row of bar chairs—similar to the chairs in an opera house's box seats—elevated to guarantee great sight lines over the table seating.



A Working Model of the Stage Design for Madama Butterfly,
by Walt Spangler Design, LLC

That's important because opera has always been a communal art form. We gather together to experience a story, music and performers in real time. We laugh, gasp, listen and react alongside strangers who, for a few hours, become our companions in the story.

In fact, going even deeper, there's a special energy that happens when people experience something together.

The French sociologist Émile Durkheim called this phenomenon “**collective effervescence**”—the heightened sense of connection, emotion and shared purpose that can arise when people gather in person—not via screens!—for a common experience. It's part of what makes live performance so powerful: We don't simply watch the story unfold; we experience it together, breathing, reacting and responding in the same room.

WNO's Revolutionary Stage is designed to amplify that connection, bringing audiences closer to the artists and to one another. And that idea gets to the heart of WNO's new chapter: embracing the possibilities of a new space, taking creative risks and inviting our community to experience opera in a new way. **Bold. Forward. Together.** That's where we're headed—and we hope you'll join us.