

Washington National Opera Announces Spring Performances Will Move to New D.C. Venues

(Washington, D.C.) – Washington National Opera announces its spring performances in the company's 70th anniversary year will continue in new venues across the greater-Washington, D.C. area. WNO's previously-announced spring programs include the premiere of a new version of **Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha*** directed by Denyce Graves and **Robert Ward's** Pulitzer Prize-winning ***The Crucible***, starring J'Nai Bridges and Ryan McKinny, both taking place at the historic Lisner Auditorium, the same venue where WNO gave its very first performances 70 years ago. **WNO Cafritz Young Artists** and **Washington National Opera Orchestra** will also perform several events throughout the region. *Please see below for complete event details or visit WashNatOpera.org.*

This transition follows WNO's [announcement](#) to end the affiliation agreement with the Kennedy Center and resume operations as an independent nonprofit organization. Following WNO's announcement, the organization saw an outpouring of support, including donations from more than 500 donors in 72 hours.

WNO is committed to serving its audiences by performing at a variety of venues throughout the region. WNO will announce details and venues at a later date for its May productions of ***West Side Story***, conducted by **Marin Alsop** and featuring the original choreography of **Jerome Robbins** as recreated by **Joshua Bergasse**, and annual **Opera Gala**, which will be hosted this year by famed *Wicked* composer **Stephen Schwartz**, as previously announced. WNO also announces that **Jamie Bernstein**, author and daughter of Leonard Bernstein, will co-host. The Opera Gala will mark the company's milestone anniversary season in grand fashion with a program that celebrates the connections between opera and the American musical, including excerpts of operas by Verdi, Wagner and more. WNO's **American Opera Initiative (AOI)** performances have been postponed; rescheduled dates and venues will be announced shortly. AOI is an important pillar of WNO's enduring vision for building the future of American opera by giving world premieres each year to three new works, created by a diverse array of first-time opera composers and librettists.

"The artists, trustees, and staff of WNO are beyond grateful for the inspiring support we have received," said WNO **General Director Timothy O'Leary**. "We will soon announce our 2026-2027 season at an array of great venues. For this moment, returning to Lisner Auditorium is both a homecoming and renewal. Thanks to our community of support, WNO will continue to be a source of beauty, connection, and free expression for another 70 years and beyond."

"This spring, we will present three American works that explore themes at the heart of what makes our country great," shares WNO **Artistic Director Francesca Zambello**. "*Treemonisha* celebrates the triumph of education over ignorance, while *The Crucible* is a cautionary tale about a righteous mob that murders innocent women and tears families apart. We close with *West Side Story*, a modern spin on the Shakespeare play that Leonard Bernstein called 'an out and out plea for racial tolerance.' I am thrilled that

audiences in our nation’s capital will have the opportunity to experience these profound works of art. I hope our productions can serve as a springboard for dialogue and perhaps even a source of healing.”

“At the heart of Washington National Opera is its ensemble of remarkable musicians whose artistry bring this repertoire to life. WNO recognizes that this esteemed group of musicians which make up Washington National Opera Orchestra has elevated the artistic excellence of every WNO production for the past 70 years,” shares WNO **Music Director Robert Spano**.

About WNO’s 2026 Spring Main Season

WNO performs the world premiere of a new version of Scott Joplin’s *Treemonisha*, on **March 7, 8 and 15 at Lisner Auditorium**. Joplin, known as America’s “King of Ragtime,” died before he could complete this opera. One of the richest operas in the American repertoire, it blends ragtime, Black folksongs, spirituals, ballet, and traditional operatic elements. Set in 1884, the story follows Treemonisha, an educated freedwoman on a former plantation, as she challenges superstition and defies “conjurers” to become her community’s teacher and leader. WNO brings this powerful work to the stage in a newly commissioned adaptation by composer **Damien Sneed** and playwright **Kyle Bass**, under the direction of legendary mezzo-soprano **Denyce Graves**. The production stars WNO Cafritz Young Artist **Viviana Goodwin**, lauded by WNO as one of its emerging stars, in the title role, as well as Marian Anderson Award-winner **Justin Austin** as Remus, and Grammy Award-winning **Tichina Vaughn** as Monisha. **Kedrick Armstrong** conducts the **Washington National Opera Orchestra**. WNO also partners with the **Library of Congress** for a free community event on **Monday, February 23** featuring a performance of selections from the opera by Viviana Goodwin and fellow Cafritz Young Artists, followed by a panel discussion with the creative team.

On **March 21, 23, 25, 27, and 29 at Lisner Auditorium**, WNO Artistic Director **Francesca Zambello** and WNO Music Director **Robert Spano** lead Robert Ward’s Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *The Crucible*, based on Arthur Miller’s Tony Award® winning play, which tells the story of the 17th-century Salem witch trials and serves as an allegory for the 1950s Red Scare—widespread fear of communism in the United States that led to political oppression and blacklisting. Anchoring the drama in important role debuts are Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano **J’Nai Bridges** as Elizabeth Proctor with American baritone **Ryan McKinny** as John Proctor. The cast is rounded out by a mix of company favorites, debuts, as well as alums and current members of the Cafritz Young Artists Program.

Additional Spring Programs

WNO Cafritz Young Artists will perform several times this spring, including with the Alexandria Symphony Orchestra in “**Beethoven & Bohème**,” on **February 14** at Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, and **February 15** at George Washington Masonic Memorial. The program features scenes from Puccini’s *La Bohème*. On **April 16**, Cafritz Young Artists will perform **Gian Carlo Menotti’s *The Old Maid and the Thief***, which was staged by the composer, who had a long association with the company, as part of WNO’s inaugural season.

The musicians of the **Washington National Opera Orchestra** will perform in several area concerts this season. Events include a recital of **Russian opera and songs** on **January 23** at St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church; **Mendelssohn Piano Trio** benefit concert for Jamaica on **February 15** at National Presbyterian Church; works by **Caroline Shaw and Mendelssohn** at St. Thomas Episcopal Church on **February 22**; a

program of **favorite operatic moments** featuring the Cafritz Young Artists on **March 1** at the Hylton Center; and a program by **women composers** on **March 17** at The Rectory on Princess Street.

Ticket Information

Patrons who have already purchased tickets for WNO events previously held at the Kennedy Center are receiving refunds. Tickets will go on-sale to the public for *Treemonisha* and *The Crucible* on January 23, with a special pre-sale option for WNO Subscribers opening January 20. To purchase tickets and for more information, visit www.WashNatOpera.org.

ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the renowned leadership team of General Director Timothy O’Leary, Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, and Music Director Robert Spano, the company presents a diverse repertory of grand opera. From classic operas to contemporary works, each season the WNO’s artistic output also includes several commissioned American works and a variety of special concerts, youth operas, and events.

Recent celebrated productions include this season’s stagings of Verdi’s *Aida* and Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, and last season’s landmark production of *Turandot*, with a newly commissioned ending to complete Puccini’s unfinished final opera by Grammy- and Emmy-winners Christopher Tin and Susan Soon He Stanton. WNO’s wide-ranging and diverse repertoire has included grand works, like Strauss’ *Elektra*, starring Christine Goerke, and Zambello’s internationally acclaimed Ring Cycle, to the D.C. premiere of Jeanine Tessori and Tazewell Thompson’s *Blue* and the world premiere of Philip Glass’ reconceived *Appomattox*.

Founded in 1956, WNO became an artistic affiliate of the Kennedy Center in 2011; in 2026, WNO ended this affiliation and returned to operating as a fully independent entity. WNO has a storied legacy of more than 100 new productions, plus world premieres, international tours, live recordings, and radio broadcasts, digitally streamed content, as well as innovative education and community-engagement programs. Throughout its history, WNO has been led by titans in the opera field, including the legendary Plácido Domingo who headed the company for 15 years, as well as luminaries such as Music Director Heinz Fricke and Director of Artistic Operations Christina Scheppelmann. Current Artistic Director Zambello is a 2026 Opera America Hall of Fame inductee.

Among the company’s most successful programs is the American Opera Initiative (AOI), which was founded in 2012. This commissioning program develops new one-act works for WNO’s annual festival. By mentoring emerging composers and librettists, the Initiative works to expand the American operatic repertory and enhance its relevance to our time. Since its inception, AOI has commissioned 40 chamber operas, with some going on to future productions around the country. Alumni of the Initiative have gone on to contribute more than 55 operas to the American repertory.

With a commitment toward youth, WNO contributes to the future of opera through two signature artist-development programs. The Cafritz Young Artist Program, now in its 21st season, is one of the nation’s most competitive professional training programs, providing two years of intensive study to a highly selective cadre of young singers and collaborative pianists. Alumni of the program have won major competitions and gone on to successful careers at major opera houses worldwide. For many years, WNO

has offered the WNO Opera Institute, which nurtures the ambitions of high-school-age singers from across the nation during an intensive three-week summer program held at American University in Washington. WNO recently initiated a commitment to young people in the juvenile justice system, empowering youth to speak, sing, and express their truth through art.

The most popular of WNO's community-engagement programs is Opera in the Outfield®, a free WNO Opera production broadcast on the high-definition scoreboard at Nationals Park. The company also offers free pre-concert lectures before every performance. Washington National Opera also produces a robust variety of digital content that enhances patrons' understanding of and appreciation for opera and WNO productions.

MEDIA CONTACT:

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WNO Main Season Productions

Treemonisha

Music and Libretto by Scott Joplin

Musical Adaptation and Orchestration by Damien Sneed

Additional Lyrics by Kyle Bass

George Washington University, Lisner Auditorium - 730 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20037.

In English with Projected English Titles

Saturday, March 7, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Sunday, March 8, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Sunday, March 15, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Cast

Viviana Goodwin†, Treemonisha

Justin Austin, Remus

Tichina Vaughn*, Monisha

Jonathan Pierce Rhodes‡, Zodzetrick

Kevin Short, Ned

Nina Evelyn*, Lucy

Angeli Jemilda Ferrette*, Ella

Brittani McNeill, Rose

Alexandria Crichlow, Beth

Hakeem Henderson†, Andy

Ernest Jackson, Cephus

Nicholas LaGesse, Parson Alltalk

Thandolwethu Mamba†, Simon

Jim Williams, Luddud

Creatives

Kedrick Armstrong*, Conductor

Denyce Graves, Director

Damien Sneed, musical adaptation and orchestrations

Kyle Bass*, Dialogue and Additional Lyrics

Lawrence E. Moten III*, Set Designer

Lynly A. Saunders, Costume Designer

Jason Lynch*, Lighting Designer

Eboni Adams, Choreographer

*WNO mainstage debut †Cafritz Young Artist

‡Former Cafritz Young Artist

The Crucible

Music by Robert Ward

Libretto by Bernard Stambler

George Washington University, Lisner Auditorium - 730 21st Street NW, Washington, DC 20037.

In English with Projected English Titles

Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Monday, March 23, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Friday, March 27, 2026 at 7 p.m.

Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 2 p.m.

Cast

J’Nai Bridges, Elizabeth Proctor
Ryan McKinny, John Proctor
Lauren Carroll†, Abigail Williams
Ronnita Miller*, Tituba
Chauncey Packer, Judge Danforth
Robert Frazier†, Reverend John Hale
Alexander McKissick‡, Reverend Samuel Parris
Michelle Mariposa†, Rebecca Nurse
Atticus Rego†, Francis Nurse
Joshua Dennis, Ezekiel Cheever
Nicholas Huff†, Giles Corey
Kresley Figueroa‡, Mary Warren
Tiffany Choe‡, Ann Putnam
Chandler Benn†, Thomas Putnam
Anneliese Klenetsky†, Sarah Good/Ruth Putnam
Veronica Siebert†, Betty Parris
Alexandra Christoforakis, Susanna Walcott

Creatives

Robert Spano, Conductor
Francesca Zambello, Director
Neil Patel, Set Designer
Mark McCullough, Original Lighting Designer
Jason Lynch, Lighting Designer
Jessica Jahn, Costume Designer

*WNO mainstage debut

†Cafritz Young Artist

‡Former Cafritz Young Artist

WNO’s Treemonisha: Behind the Scenes

Monday, February 23, 2026 at 6-7 pm at Library of Congress, Thomas Jefferson Building - Coolidge Auditorium (LJG45A), 10 1st Street SE, Washington, DC 20540

Francesca Zambello, Damien Sneed, Denyce Graves – Panelists
Viviana Goodwin and Hakeem Henderson – Cafritz Young Artists

Free event, reservations required: <https://www.loc.gov/item/event-419365/washington-national-operas-treemonisha-behind-the-scenes/2026-02-23/>

Additional Spring 2026 Programs

My Genius, My Angel, My Friend

Friday, January 23, 2026 at 7:30pm

St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church, 5450 Massachusetts Ave., Bethesda, MD 20816

Igor Zubkovsky, cello

Christian Simmons‡, baritone

Rob McGuinness, baritone

Zoya Gramagin, soprano

Nina Mutalifu, soprano

Ryan Lustgarten, tenor

Katerina Souvorova, piano

‡Former Cafritz Young Artist

Website: <https://www.belcantanti.com/> | Tickets: <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/554133974>

Beethoven & Bohème

February 14, 2026 at 7:30 p.m. at the Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center,

Northern Virginia Community College, 4915 E Campus Dr, Alexandria, VA 22311

February 15, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. at the George Washington Masonic Memorial.

Alexandria Symphony Orchestra

James Ross, conductor

Singers from the Cafritz Young Artists Program

For tickets, visit <https://alexsym.org/performance/beethovenandboheme/>.

Mendelssohn Piano Trio: Benefit recital for Jamaica

Sunday, February 15, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

National Presbyterian Church | 4101 Nebraska Ave NW, Washington, DC 20016

Heather Green, violin

Danielle Cho, cello

Grace MacFarlane, piano

Free admission, donations accepted to benefit Jamaica.

Caroline Shaw and Mendelssohn - Presented by Orange Music Society and Sound Impact
Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 4 p.m.
St Thomas Episcopal Church | 119 S Caroline Street, Orange, VA 22960

Kayla Moffett, violin
Angelia Cho, violin
Ashley Vandiver, viola
Danielle Cho, cello
Free admission

Hylton Presents Washington National Opera Orchestra

with the Cafritz Young Artists

Sunday, March 1, 2026 at 4 p.m. at Hylton Performing Arts Center, Merchant Hall, George Mason University, 10960 George Mason Circle, Manassas, Virginia 20110

For tickets, visit <https://hylton.calendar.gmu.edu/washington-national-opera-orchestra-featuring-the-cafritz-young-artists>

“Serenade to the Stars”: Featuring works by women composers - Presented by Classical Movements
Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

The Rectory on Princess Street, 711 Princess Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Susan Robinson, harp
Adria Sternstein Foster, flute
Kayla Moffett, violin
Erika Gray, viola
Amy Frost Baumgarten, cello

Website: <https://www.classicalmovements.com/secretgardenconcerts/> ; Tickets:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chamber-music-serenade-to-the-stars-tickets-1977636434813>
