

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
announces**

DIRECT CURRENT

**Annual Contemporary Culture Immersion to Launch in March 2018
D.C. Premieres on every program**



(WASHINGTON)—Modern masterpieces, cutting-edge composition, dance, drag, film, jazz, electronica, ecology, and activism all converge at the **inaugural season of *DIRECT CURRENT***, the [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#)' new 10-day celebration of contemporary culture with works new to Washington audiences on every program. With a focus on interdisciplinary creations in which artistic worlds collide, this new spring immersion is designed to showcase some of the most potent voices in American arts today. Three of the Kennedy Center's resident artistic leaders: Composer-in-Residence **Mason Bates**, Artistic Director for Jazz **Jason Moran**, and *DEMO* series director **Damian Woetzel**, contributed to the inaugural season programming, which will take place **March 5–16, 2018**. With **John Adams**, **Derek Bermel**, **Philip Glass**, **Paola Prestini**, **Nathaniel Stookey**, and **Julia Wolfe** among the composers in attendance, and with performers ranging from the **National Symphony Orchestra** under incoming Music Director **Gianandrea Noseda** to the radically subversive playwright and drag artist **Taylor Mac**, *DIRECT CURRENT* aims to expand the growing audience for contemporary culture in the nation's capital.

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“As artists and programmers, I think we should constantly be asking ourselves whether the work we present on our stages is fresh and provocative,” explains Kennedy Center President Deborah F. Rutter. “Especially with the Kennedy Center’s home in the nation’s capital, it is our mission to boldly embrace, promote, and present the very best of contemporary work in the U.S.—not just music, but all the art forms imaginable. We are proud of the work we have presented and produced in our theaters to date. Now we embark on a new venture and begin this effort with a concentrated window of programming featuring artists and creators who are the arts pioneers and the risk-takers of today. Washington, D.C. is long overdue for a contemporary culture immersion like *DIRECT CURRENT* and I look forward to it becoming a mainstay of our artistic offerings.”

In its first season, *DIRECT CURRENT* traces an artistic narrative from the 1960s to the present through a thoughtfully curated collection of work—almost all of which draws on multiple disciplines—by some of America’s foremost cultural pioneers. Highlights include an appearance by Taylor Mac, the genre-defying winner of the 2017 Kennedy Prize for Drama Inspired by American History, who kicks off the opening week with the D.C. premiere of *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (1776–2016)* in a condensed version featuring local D.C. performers. Marking Philip Glass’s Kennedy Center debut, the 80-year-old American master composer takes part in a five-pianist account of his *Etudes* that, in an unprecedented collaboration, also draws on the jazz improvisations of Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz and MacArthur fellow Jason Moran. A highlight of Gianandrea Noseda’s much-anticipated first season as Music Director of the National Symphony Orchestra will be the D.C. premiere of John Adams’s unorthodox Passion oratorio, *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*. Dancer-turned-director Damian Woetzel offers the next installment of his celebrated *DEMO* series, in which dancers from widely differing genres, with equally varied musical forces, come together for collaborations that include the Kennedy Center premiere of Alexei Ratmansky’s acclaimed solo *Fandango*, set to the music of Boccherini. The opening week concludes with *California Mystics*, a new edition of Mason Bates’s immersive *KC Jukebox* series. Exploring the trajectory of visionary California composers from Lou Harrison and Steve Reich to the present day, this *KC Jukebox* program will include Bates’s *Mass Transmission*, which looks to early radio broadcasts to comment on today’s interconnected communication, and will conclude with Sō Percussion’s East Coast premiere of Nathaniel Stookey’s *Junkestra*, played on instruments created for the occasion from locally sourced garbage.

To launch the second week of *DIRECT CURRENT*, the Bang on a Can All-Stars, Choir of Trinity Wall Street, and conductor Julian Wachner present the D.C. premiere of Julia Wolfe’s *Anthracite*

Fields, reprising their Grammy®-nominated account of the Pulitzer Prize–winning oratorio in which historic photomontages help recall Pennsylvania’s coal-mining past. Grammy Award®-winning vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth anchors the live D.C. premiere of *The Colorado*, a groundbreaking music-driven eco-documentary from filmmaker Murat Eyuboglu, set to original compositions by Paola Prestini, Shara Nova, Bill Brittelle, Glenn Kotche, and Pulitzer Prize laureate John Luther Adams, with narration by Academy Award® winner Sir Mark Rylance. New music meets electronica and immersive stagecraft in Mason Bates’s signature series *Mercury Soul*, which features the D.C. premieres of works by Derek Bermel, Ted Hearne, Jennifer Higdon, Missy Mazzoli, and Bates himself, who does double duty as house DJ alongside DJ Justin Reed of Chicago’s illmeasures collective. The inaugural season of *DIRECT CURRENT* draws to a close with the D.C. premiere of the film *Koyaanisqatsi*, Philip Glass’s classic multimedia collaboration with experimental filmmaker Godfrey Reggio, in which the Philip Glass Ensemble makes its eagerly anticipated Kennedy Center debut performing the score live. A prescient meditation on the imbalance between humans and our environment, Glass’s cult cinematic tone poem resonates anew with audiences today.

Each evening during *DIRECT CURRENT*, free live multi-genre performances, sourced from local D.C. artists, will be presented on the Kennedy Center’s Millennium Stage to amplify the wealth of D.C. art and artists’ creative contributions. Additional *DIRECT CURRENT* programming, including talks, panel discussions, and other audience engagement opportunities, will be announced in the coming months.

**The Kennedy Center presents *DIRECT CURRENT*
Highlights of inaugural season, March 2018
ALL WORKS D.C. PREMIERES unless otherwise noted**

WEEK 1

Tuesday, March 6 at 8 p.m.

Eisenhower Theater

Taylor Mac: *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music (1776–2016)*

Live vocal and theatrical presentation offers a radical, queer reading of American history

Taylor Mac with local D.C. performers

Wednesday, March 7 at 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Damian Woetzel: *DEMO* series

*Live cross-genre, thematic dance commissions and collaborations curated by Damian Woetzel, including the Kennedy Center premiere of *Fandango*, with choreography by Alexei Ratmansky*

Thursday, March 8 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, March 10 at 8 p.m.

Concert Hall

John Adams: *The Gospel According to the Other Mary*

*Live orchestral performance offers an unorthodox retelling of the Passion story,
National Symphony Orchestra / Gianandrea Noseda*

Friday, March 9 at 8 p.m.

Concert Hall

Philip Glass: *20 Etudes*

*Contemporary classical piano meets jazz improvisation in a live musical performance
Five pianists to include Jason Moran and Philip Glass (Kennedy Center debut)*

Sunday, March 11 at 7:30 p.m.

California Mystics: a journey in ambience, rhythm and texture

Atrium

*Live musical performances explore the past eight decades of visionary Californian composition
in an immersive bohemian environment; performers to include Sō Percussion*

Lou Harrison	Excerpts from Flute Concerto (previously presented in D.C.)
Steve Reich	<i>Drumming</i> (previously presented in D.C.)
Mason Bates	<i>Mass Transmission</i>
Lou Harrison	"Kyrie" from <i>Mass to Saint Anthony</i> (previously presented in DC)
Nathaniel Stookey	<i>Junkestra</i> (East Coast premiere)

WEEK 2

Tuesday, March 13 at 7:30 p.m.

Terrace Theater

Julia Wolfe, *Anthracite Fields*

*Multimedia presentation pairs live musical performance with photomontages in a tribute to
Pennsylvania's coal-mining history
Bang on a Can All-Stars; Choir of Trinity Wall Street / Julian Wachner, director*

Wednesday, March 14 at 7:30 p.m.

Venue TBD

John Luther Adams, Shara Nova, Bill Brittle, Glenn Kotche, and Paola Prestini: *The Colorado* (D.C. live performance premiere)

*A conservationist call to arms combines documentary film by Murat Eyuboglu, as narrated by
Sir Mark Rylance, with live musical performance
Roomful of Teeth, vocal ensemble; Jeffrey Zeigler, cello; Jason Treuting, percussion*

Thursday, March 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Venue TBD

Mercury Soul (KC Jukebox presentation)

*Multimedia event on multiple stages combines live chamber music and electronica with
immersive stagecraft and elaborate production*

Missy Mazzoli	<i>Set That On Fire</i>
Derek Bermel	<i>Harmonica</i> (first movement)
Derek Bermel	<i>A Short History of the Universe</i> (Clarinet Quartet, third movement)
Ted Hearne	<i>SNOWBALL</i>
Jennifer Higdon	<i>Dash</i>
Mason Bates	<i>Digital Loom</i>

Friday, March 16 at 8 p.m.

Concert Hall

Philip Glass: *Koyaanisqatsi* (Kennedy Center premiere)

Seminal experimental film with live musical performance explores imbalanced relationship between humans and nature

Philip Glass Ensemble (Kennedy Center debut)

Pre-concert talks and panel discussions with composers and performers and a full program of free live multi-genre performances on the Millennium Stage will be among the additional DIRECT CURRENT programming announced in the coming months.

About the Kennedy Center

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is America's living memorial to President Kennedy. Under the guidance of Chairman [David M. Rubenstein](#), and President [Deborah F. Rutter](#), the nine theaters and stages of the nation's busiest performing arts facility attract more than three million visitors to more than 2,000 performances each year, while center-related touring productions, television, and radio broadcasts reach 40 million more around the world.

The Center produces and presents performances of music, dance, comedy, and theater; supports artists in the creation of new work; and serves the nation as a leader in arts education. With its artistic affiliates, the [National Symphony Orchestra](#) and [Washington National Opera](#), the Center has produced more than 300 theatrical productions, and dozens of new ballets, operas, and musical works, in addition to hosting numerous international cultural festivals. The Center's Emmy® and Peabody Award-winning [The Kennedy Center Honors](#) is broadcast annually on CBS and annual [The Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for American Humor](#) is broadcast on PBS.

The education programs of the Kennedy Center, including those of its affiliate [VSA](#), the international organization on arts and disability, have become models for communities across the country and have unlocked the door to learning for millions of young people. [Education at the Kennedy Center](#) produces and presents age appropriate performances and educational events, and fosters innovative programming, curriculum, and professional development for students, teachers, and families.

The Center and its affiliates stage more than 400 free performances by artists from throughout the world each year on the Center's main stages, and every day of the year at 6 p.m. on its Millennium Stages, which are also streamed live, online. The Center also offers reduced and complimentary tickets to young people, active members of the military, and the underserved through its [MyTix program](#) and offers a Specially Priced Tickets program for students, seniors, persons with disabilities, and others with fixed low incomes.

To learn more about the Kennedy Center, please visit www.kennedy-center.org.

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