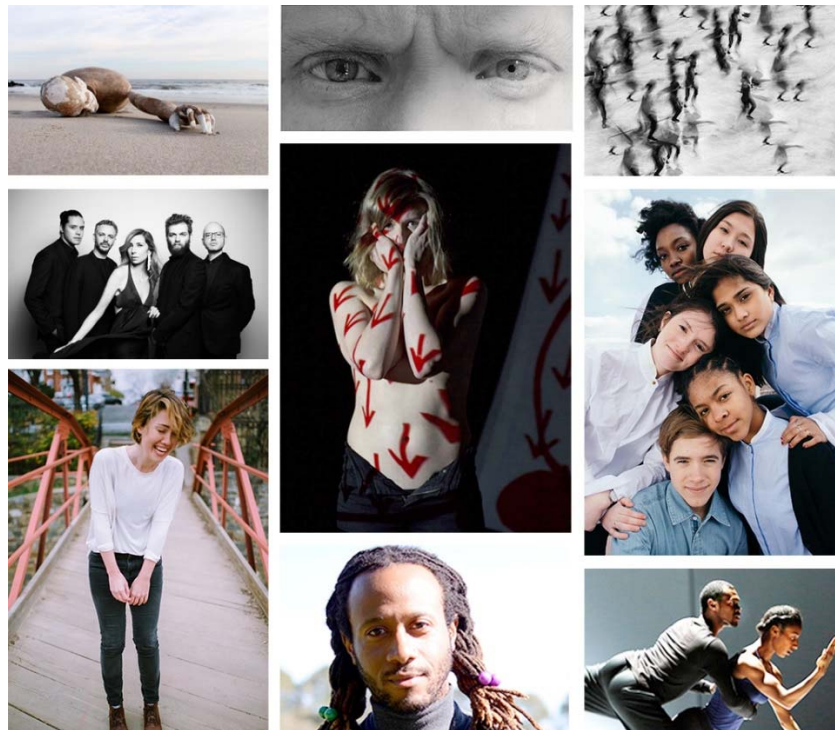


Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

September 4, 2018

**The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts  
Announces Lineup for Second  
DIRECT CURRENT,  
Its Contemporary Culture Immersion  
(March 25–April 7)**



Press photos available [HERE](#)

(WASHINGTON)—***DIRECT CURRENT***, the [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts's](#) two-week celebration of contemporary culture, returns for a second season. Training its focus on new works, interdisciplinary creations in which artistic worlds collide, and creative responses to topical concerns, the 2019 spring immersion showcases some of the most provocative, original, and pioneering voices in the arts today. *DIRECT CURRENT* takes place on **March 25–April 7** at

the Kennedy Center and beyond, extending throughout the District of Columbia through collaborations with a number of alternative venues, to expand the growing audience for contemporary culture in the nation's capital.

A divided America, the refugee experience, the Japanese nuclear disaster, societal marginalization, and environmental conservation are among the pressing themes addressed in the 2019 programming. All told, *DIRECT CURRENT*'s second season offers a snapshot of contemporary culture through a thoughtfully curated collection of work—almost all of which draws on multiple disciplines—by some of today's foremost cultural risk-takers.

*DIRECT CURRENT*'s wealth of offerings spans the artistic spectrum, from the world premiere of a new orchestral commission to Middle Eastern-jazz fusion, and bold new experiments in dance. 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 second season's programming, which includes talks with prominent thought leaders to supplement selected events. **Caroline Shaw** and **Du Yun** are among the renowned composers in attendance, performers range from the **National Symphony Orchestra** to **Bon Iver**, and other world-class collaborators including the great **Bill T. Jones**.

### **Mainstage events**

The *DIRECT CURRENT* mainstage season kicks off with **TU Dance + Bon Iver's *Come Through***, a cohesive, cross-genre collaboration between two artistic powerhouses. This evening-length performance features new music from Justin Vernon, of two-time Grammy Award®-winning indie folk band **Bon Iver**, and new choreography from contemporary dance troupe **TU Dance**, a diverse 10-member company founded by Toni Pierce-Sands and Uri Sands and known for works that combine the language of modern dance and classical ballet with African-based and urban vernacular movements (Concert Hall, March 25). *Come Through* was commissioned by the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra's Liquid Music Series, in which it premiered this past April, prompting the *Star Tribune* to marvel: "As the two art forms connect to each other, they become an exponentially more powerful force."

Next, singer-songwriter **Gabriel Kahane**, "one of the most visible representatives of a generation of Brooklyn musicians who bring individual voices to many genres" (*Washington Post*), performs his new song cycle **8980: Book of Travelers** to his own piano accompaniment. With an evocative video backdrop by Drama Desk Award-winner **Jim Findlay**, the cycle draws on the conversations and stories Kahane gathered on an 8,980-mile trip just after the 2016 election, when he spent two phone- and internet-free weeks crisscrossing America by train, talking to as many people as possible (Terrace Theater, March 27).

The **Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company** returns to the Kennedy Center for ***Analogy Trilogy***, a series of three evening-length works choreographed by Artistic Director and Kennedy Center honoree **Bill T. Jones**, a living legend of the dance world, and Associate Artistic Director **Janet Wong**. Dancers move, sing, and speak to the accompaniment of live music, videos, and

projections in the three-part work. This comprises ***Dora: Tramontane***, which recounts the experiences of Jones's French-Jewish mother-in-law during World War II; ***Lance: Pretty aka the Escape Artist***, which follows his nephew's hardships and emotional struggle in the late-1980s and 1990s club culture and sex trade; and ***Ambros: the Emigrant***, in which he explores the impact of trauma on the psyche through a fictionalized narrative inspired by W. G. Sebald's historical novel *The Emigrant* (Eisenhower Theater, March 28–30).

**Damian Woetzel**, the former New York City Ballet principal turned director, choreographer, and thought leader who recently launched his tenure as the seventh president of New York's Juilliard School, curates and hosts the fourth season of his interdisciplinary **DEMO** series. This new installment of the series presents recent commissions and **D.C. premieres** from some of today's most creative voices in dance and music (Terrace Theater, March 29 & 30).

The **National Symphony Orchestra** gives the **world premiere** performance of **ARCTICA: An Artistic Exploration**, a new NSO and National Geographic Society co-commission from composer **Lera Auerbach**, who is known for "music of extraordinary power and intensity" (*New Yorker*). Created in collaboration with **Dr. Enric Sala**—*National Geographic's* Explorer-in-Residence, marine ecologist, and global conservationist—Auerbach's work for orchestra and chorus forms the centerpiece of a major new multimedia project for which she traveled to the Arctic to collect stories, images, and sounds. With Auerbach at the piano, **ARCTICA's** first performance will be led by **Teddy Abrams**, the transformative young Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra (Concert Hall, March 30).

*DIRECT CURRENT* presents the **U.S. premiere** of ***Where We Lost Our Shadows***, a video oratorio documenting the experience of refugees in Germany, by Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Du Yun** and Palestinian videographer **Khaled Jarrar**, who introduce their work together in a post-concert talk. Co-commissioned by the Kennedy Center with Carnegie Hall, the American Composers Orchestra, London's Southbank Centre, and Cal Performances, this timely new video oratorio will be performed by vocalists **Helga Davis** and **Ali Sethi**, with **Shayna Dunkelmann** on percussion and **Joseph Young** leading the **Peabody Student Orchestra** (Terrace Theater, March 31).

Known for its "searing musicianship and tender vocals" (*The Guardian*), female folk supergroup **I'm With Her** makes its *DIRECT CURRENT* debut. The trio is made up of **Sara Watkins**, a founding member of progressive bluegrass outfit Nickel Creek; **Sarah Jarosz**, a Grammy Award®-winning singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist; and **Aoife O'Donovan**, the Grammy Award®-winning lead singer of progressive string band Crooked Still (Concert Hall, March 31).

Hailed as "one of the most socially aware artistic events in New York this year" (WQXR), **Lovestate** is the third installment of "**Silent Voices**," a multimedia, multi-composer, and multi-season series of concert works conceived, produced, and performed by the **Brooklyn Youth Chorus**, a choir of culturally and socioeconomically diverse young New Yorkers aged 12–18.

Featuring commissions from composers including **Nico Muhly, Bryce Dessner, Shara Nova, Paola Prestini, Toshi Reagon, Angélica Negrón, Julia Adolphe, Bora Yoon**, and Pulitzer Prize-winners **David Lang** and **Caroline Shaw**, *Lovestate* confronts the challenges of division and categorization while envisioning a more inclusive and compassionate future (Concert Hall, April 1).

San Francisco's three-time Grammy Award®-winning male vocal group **Chanticleer**—"the world's reigning male chorus" (*New Yorker*)—returns to the Kennedy Center in the immersive **KC Jukebox series**, with "**Sirens**," a program of 20th- and 21st-century choral music. Anchored by "Sirens," a song cycle by Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence **Mason Bates**, this also features composers ranging from Ned Rorem and Steven Stucky to Freddie Mercury of Queen (Family Theater, April 2).

Harlem-based interdisciplinary artist **Sanford Biggers**—"an under-sung artist [who] upends received ideas about race and history" (*New Yorker*)—is best-known for installations, videos, and performances intended to broaden and complicate our read on American history. As creative director and keyboardist, he fronts the multimedia concept band **Moon Medicin**, which performs original compositions and re-imagined covers against a backdrop of curated sound effects and images of sci-fi, punk, sacred geometry, coded symbology, film noir, minstrels, world politics, and ceremonial dance (Atrium, April 4).

Co-founded by artist, director, and set designer **Jessica Grindstaff** and composer and puppet-maker **Erik Sanko**, New York's **Phantom Limb Company** is known for its work with marionette puppetry and its focus on collaborative, multimedia theatrical production and design. The company makes its **Kennedy Center debut** with ***Falling Out***, a response to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Created in collaboration with *butoh* dancer **Dai Matsuoka**, a member of Japan's famed Sankai Juku troupe, the work represents the final installment of Phantom Limb Company's environmental trilogy exploring our changing relationship to nature over time. For this production, Phantom Limb is creating an interactive visual and audio installation in the style of an old rotary-dial phone booth. Inspired by those in Japan, where survivors of the 2011 tsunami were able to record thoughts about lost loved ones, this "Memory Phone" will offer concert-goers the opportunity to voice their thoughts and feelings on love, water, nature, and loss in an enclosed and serene environment. Both performances also include a post-concert discussion, curated in collaboration with Georgetown University's Laboratory for Global Performance and Politics (Terrace Theater, April 4 & 5).

One of only three jazz musicians to be recognized with the Pulitzer Prize, **Henry Threadgill** makes his long-awaited **Kennedy Center debut**. A mentor of Jason Moran, Kennedy Center's Artistic Director for Jazz, who calls Threadgill his "favorite living composer," the saxophonist/flutist showcases his avant-garde innovations and intense originality in ***Double Up Plays Double Up Plus***. For this set, he will be joined by his own ensemble on piano, saxophone, tuba, cello, and drums (Family Theater, April 5).

American jazz pianist, composer, bandleader, producer, electronic musician, and writer **Vijay Iyer** was named Artist of the Year in the 2018 DownBeat International Jazz Critics Poll, marking the third time he has been so honored. Also recognized with a 2013 MacArthur “genius grant” Fellowship, Iyer mines core rhythmic, melodic, and structural elements from a wide range of sources to construct richly varied, improvisation-driven solo and ensemble music (Family Theater, April 6).

Thirty years after the untimely death of photographer and visual artist **Robert Mapplethorpe**, his work remains emotionally complex, influential, and compelling. *DIRECT CURRENT* is thrilled to present the **East-Coast premiere** of a **Kennedy Center co-commission** that pairs his photography with music and poetry in a theater piece exploring the impact of his art on the lives and careers of librettist **Robert O’Hara** and composer **Bryce Dessner**, best-known as a member of the band The National. Combining music from the Grammy Award®-winning choral ensemble **Roomful of Teeth** and poetry by **Essex Hemphill** and others with large-scale projections of Mapplethorpe’s images, the work is directed by “magical manipulator” (*New York Times*) **Daniel Fish** (Eisenhower Theater, April 6).

**Brooklyn Rider**, the omnivorous string quartet hailed as “the future of chamber music” (*Strings*), draws the mainstage season to a close in company with **Magos Herrera**, who is “without a doubt the best jazz singer out of Mexico” (*Jazz Times*). Together they reinterpret classics from Mexico, Cuba, Peru, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Spain, celebrating such luminaries as Octavio Paz, Federico García Lorca, and Rubén Darío (Family Theater, April 7).

### **Beyond the concert hall: collaborations with key D.C. venues**

*DIRECT CURRENT* takes Kennedy Center artists and programming out into the world beyond the traditional concert hall, reaching new audiences throughout the Washington area by means of innovative ongoing collaborations with a number of key alternative D.C. performance spaces.

In the **Phillips Collection**, the gallery where more than 4,000 major artworks make their home, there will be a **pop-up concert** with composer-guitarist **Mary Halvorson** (March 27). Likewise, at the **Dupont Underground**, an experimental arts space housed in a converted subterranean trolley station, cellist **Amanda Gookin** presents the **Forward Music Project**, for which she commissioned new works encouraging social change and empowerment for women and girls from **Leila Adu, Angélica Negrón, Amanda Feery, Allison Loggins-Hull, Nathalie Joachim, Jessica Meyer, and Morgan Krauss** (March 29).

A free pop-up concert inaugurates a new relationship with the **National Gallery of Art**, one of the largest museums in North America, when **Vijay Iyer** teams up with pioneering cellist **Matt Haimovitz** for a program that juxtaposes Iyer’s own compositions with a diverse array of works by Bach, Zakir Hussain, Ravi Shankar, and Billy Strayhorn (April 7).

## **Free multi-genre performances on the Millennium Stage and other KC spaces**

Each evening during *DIRECT CURRENT*, free live multi-genre performances will be presented on the **Millennium Stage** and in other Kennedy Center theaters to amplify the wealth of mainstage contributions.

In addition to the nightly Millennium Stage offerings (all TBD), there will be a series of Club events in the KC Jazz Club, three of which will be co-presented as part of the jazz season.

**Mary Halvorson**—“one of the most exciting and original guitarists in jazz – or otherwise” (*Wall Street Journal*)—draws from her recent album ***Code Girl*** (March 28), while composer and multi-instrumentalist **Tyshawn Sorey**, the recipient of a 2017 MacArthur “genius grant” Fellowship, shares his unique brand of avant-garde jazz in two club sets the following night (March 29).

Composer, trumpeter, *santur* player, and vocalist **Amir ElSaffar**, who is “uniquely poised to reconcile jazz and Arabic music” (*The Wire*), performs with the **Two Rivers Ensemble**, a sextet that uses the maqam modal system to transform the idioms of jazz (March 30). Next in the series is an appearance by Grammy®-nominated German jazz singer and contemporary composer **Theo Bleckmann** (April 4) as part of the Renée Fleming VOICES series. Then **Du Yun**—heralded as an “indie pop diva” by the *New York Times*—takes the stage with **OK Miss**, her own experimental band, for a set featuring excerpts from her musical, *Dim Sum Warriors* (April 5). The series will conclude with an appearance from Pulitzer Prize-winning composer **Caroline Shaw**, the versatile New York-based musician who is not only the youngest recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music but also a member of the Grammy Award®-winning vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth (April 6).

## **What critics said about key 2018 DIRECT CURRENT productions:**

### **About the D.C. premiere of Julia Wolfe’s *Anthracite Fields*:**

“A haunting, atmospheric triumph. ... An aural, choral, and visual feast; full of bittersweet beauty, felt physical textures, and colorization that drew upon American folk, rock, and classical music and the utter gorgeousness of 24 human choral voices.”

– DC Metro Theater Arts

### **About *DEMO* by Damian Woetzel: *Now***

“An eclectic excursion into choreographic experimentation, innovative instrumental accompaniment, and exciting vocalizing. ... Kudos to all who participated.”

– DC Metro Theater Arts

### **About Philip Glass’s *Etudes*:**

“Having pianists from different backgrounds and styles ... showed the welcome fact that this work is part of a living dialogue. ... A striking evening, bringing a form of music linked with aficionados (a two-plus-hour recital of solo piano playing) to a large audience not necessarily familiar with that particular ritual, but who seemed to enjoy this exposure.”

– *Washington Post*

**About the D.C. premiere of *Taylor Mac: A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*:**

***Abridged:***

“Divinely beautiful. ... I can’t recommend this show enough. ... It was a profoundly moving demonstration of how elements which may seem incompatible can come together in a thrilling way. ... Five stars.”

– *DC Theatre Scene*

**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, visit [www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org).

**The Kennedy Center presents *DIRECT CURRENT*  
Second season, March 25–April 7, 2019**

*All events take place at the Kennedy Center unless otherwise noted.*

For tickets and full schedule, visit [kennedy-center.org/DIRECTCURRENT](http://kennedy-center.org/DIRECTCURRENT). Tickets are available to Kennedy Center members on September 4, and to the general public on September 12, unless otherwise noted. (\*Denotes performances with a later on-sale date.)

**Mon, March 25 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Mon, March 25 at 7:30pm\***

Concert Hall

TU Dance + Bon Iver *Come Through*

\* On sale at a later date

**Tues, March 26 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Wed, March 27 at 5:30pm**

Phillips Collection

Mary Halvorson

**Wed, March 27 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Wed, March 27 at 7:30pm**

Terrace Theater

Gabriel Kahane: *8980: Book of Travelers*

**Thurs, March 28 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Thurs, March 28 at 7pm & 9pm**

KC Jazz Club

Mary Halvorson, composer-guitarist: "Code Girl"

**Thurs, March 28–Sat, March 30 at 8pm**

Eisenhower Theater

Bill T. Jones: *Analogy Trilogy*

**Fri, March 29 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage



TBD

**Fri, March 29 at 7pm & 9pm**

KC Jazz Club

Tyshawn Sorey, composer and percussionist

**Fri, March 29 & Sat, March 30 at 7:30pm**

Terrace Theater

Damien Woetzel: *DEMO*

**Fri, March 29 at 9pm**

Dupont Underground

Amanda Gookin, cello: "Forward Music Project"

**Sat, March 30 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Sat, March 30 at 7pm & 9pm**

KC Jazz Club

Amir ElSaffar and Two Rivers Ensemble

**Sat, March 30 at 8pm**

Concert Hall

National Symphony Orchestra / Teddy Abrams / Lera Auerbach

Lera Auerbach: *ARCTICA* (world premiere of NSO co-commission)

**Sun, March 31 at 5pm**

Terrace Theater

Du Yun: *Where We Lost Our Shadows* (video oratorio; U.S. premiere)

**Sun, March 31 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Sun, March 31, immediately after performance**

Terrace Theater

Post-concert talk

Speakers:

Du Yun, composer

Khaled Jarrar, videographer

**Sun, March 31 at 7pm**

Concert Hall

I'm With Her

**Mon, April 1 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Mon, April 1 at 7:30pm**

Concert Hall

Brooklyn Youth Chorus: "Silent Voices": *Lovestate*

**Tues, April 2 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Tues, April 2 at 7:30pm**

Family Theater

Mason Bates KC Jukebox series

Chanticleer: "Sirens"

**Wed, April 3 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Thurs, April 4 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Thurs, April 4 at 9pm**

Atrium

Sanford Biggers and Moon Medicin

**Thurs, April 4 at 9pm**

KC Jazz Club

Renée Fleming VOICES series

Theo Bleckmann

**Thurs, April 4 & Fri, April 5 at 7:30pm**

Terrace Theater

Phantom Limb Company: *Falling Out*

**Thurs, April 4 & Fri, April 5, immediately after performances**

*Falling Out*: post-concert talk

**Fri, April 5 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Fri, April 5 at 7:30pm**

Family Theater

Henry Threadgill: *Double Up Plays Double Up Plus*

**Fri, April 5 at 9pm**

KC Jazz Club

Du Yun and OK Miss

**Sat, April 6 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Sat, April 6 at 7pm and 9pm**

Family Theater

Vijay Iyer

**Sat, April 6 at 8pm**

Eisenhower Theater

Mapplethorpe (East Coast premiere of Kennedy Center co-commission)

**Sat, April 6 at 9pm\***

KC Jazz Club

*Caroline Shaw and Friends*

\* *On sale at a later date*

**Sun, April 7 at 6pm**

Millennium Stage

TBD

**Sun, April 7 at 7:30pm**

Family Theater

Brooklyn Rider and Magos Herrera

**Sun, April 7 at TBD**

National Gallery

Vijay Iyer and Matt Haimovitz



#DirectCurrentDC #KennedyCenter

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**PRESS CONTACTS**

Eileen Andrews/Kennedy Center  
(202) 416-8448  
[ETAndrews@kennedy-center.org](mailto:ETAndrews@kennedy-center.org)

Sabrina Skacan/Kennedy Center  
(202) 416-8453  
[SMSkacan@kennedy-center.org](mailto:SMSkacan@kennedy-center.org)

Glenn Petry/21C Media Group  
(212) 625-2038  
[GPetry@21cmediagroup.com](mailto:GPetry@21cmediagroup.com)

**TICKETS & INFORMATION**

(202) 467-4600; (800) 444-1324  
[www.kennedy-center.org](http://www.kennedy-center.org)  
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