

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 25, 2016

**MUSIC DIRECTOR CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH AND
PRINCIPAL POPS CONDUCTOR STEVEN REINEKE LEAD
NSO IN GALA CONCERT CELEBRATING
OPENING OF 86TH SEASON**

**Lang Lang is Piano Soloist with Eschenbach Leading First Half of
Program**

**Second Half Features Special Salute to Opening of Smithsonian's
National Museum of African American History and Culture**

**Vocalists Brian McKnight and Nnenna Freelon Featured in Varied
Program that Includes Premiere of an NSO-Commissioned Work by
Mervyn Warren**

(WASHINGTON)—On Sunday, September 25, 2016, the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) launches its 86th season with a traditional black-tie Season Opening Gala, a festive start to the new season and the Orchestra's largest annual fundraiser. The concert, which begins at 8 p.m., will be led by both Music Director Christoph Eschenbach and Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke. Featured performers include superstar pianist Lang Lang, R&B singer-songwriter Brian McKnight and American jazz singer Nnenna Freelon.

This year's NSO gala performance—a one-night-only celebration of both the NSO's classical and pops traditions—salutes the opening of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. The evening's program, which varies in repertoire, opens with two classical favorites led by Eschenbach: Dvořák's *Carnival Overture* and Rachmaninoff's First Piano Concerto, with Lang Lang as soloist. The second half, led by Reineke, features songs by Milton Nascimento, Duke Ellington, Victor Young, and Nat King Cole, and recognizes the highly anticipated opening of this museum. The program concludes with the world premiere of Warren's *We Are All America*, a work commissioned for the occasion.

A portion of the concert will be recorded by Classical WETA, the NSO's long-time radio partner, for broadcast in a special airing of NSO Showcase on Wednesday, September 28, at 11 a.m. This broadcast marks the start of the ninth consecutive season of NSO Showcase, the monthly WETA-produced series that features previously recorded NSO concert performances. The series airs locally on the first Wednesday of every month at 9 p.m. at 90.9 FM, and is streamed online at the [Classical WETA website](#) for listeners around the globe.

This year's Gala Chairs are Denise Grant and Franklin Raines and Catherine and Michael R. Mayton. The Gala, the single largest social event for the National Symphony Orchestra, traditionally draws leading figures from Washington's political, society, diplomatic, and cultural sectors. Gala packages include cocktails at 6 p.m., a pre-concert dinner at 6:30 p.m., and post-concert dessert and dancing. Gala package information is available by calling (202)416-8102. Concert-only tickets are also available.

Sunday, September 25, at 8 p.m.
Kennedy Center Concert Hall
Season Opening Gala

National Symphony Orchestra

Christoph Eschenbach, music director

Steven Reineke, principal pops conductor

Lang Lang, piano

Brian McKnight, vocals

Nnenna Freelon, vocals

Mervyn Warren, composer and vocals

Steven Ford Singers, vocals

Washington Performing Arts Children of the Gospel Choir, Michele Fowlin, Director;
Stanley Thurston, Artistic Director.

Dvořák	<i>Carnival Overture</i>
Rachmaninoff	Piano Concerto No.1
Adolphus Hailstork	Fanfare on "Amazing Grace"
Nascimento/Brant	"Bridges"
Ellington/Mills/Carruthers	"Black Butterfly"
Cole/Mills	"Straighten Up and Fly Right"
Taylor/Morgan	"Bless This House"
Chaplin/Turner/Parsons	"Smile"
Young/Heyman	"When I Fall in Love"
McKnight	"Back at One"
Mervyn Warren	<i>We are All America</i> (World Premiere - commissioned for the opening of the NMAAHC)

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the NSO's Season Opening Concert on Sunday, September 25, start at \$69 and are available [online](#), in person at the Kennedy Center Box Office, and by calling (202) 467-4600 or (800) 444-1324.

Patrons interested in the Season Opening Gala packages and dinner should call (202) 416-8102.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The 2016-2017 season is the NSO's 86th, and its seventh led by Music Director Christoph Eschenbach, also the Music Director of the Kennedy Center. Founded in 1931, the Orchestra has been committed to artistic excellence and music education throughout its history. In 1986, the National Symphony Orchestra became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed subscriptions seasons every year since the Center opened in 1971. The National Symphony Orchestra regularly participates in events of national and international importance, including performances for state occasions, presidential inaugurations, and official holiday celebrations. Its regularly televised appearances for Capitol Concerts and radio broadcasts on WETA make the NSO one of the most-heard orchestras in the country.

The Orchestra itself numbers 96 musicians who perform approximately 150 concerts each year. These include classical subscription series, pops concerts, summer performances at Wolf Trap and on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol, chamber music performances in the Terrace Theater and on the Millennium Stage, and an extensive educational program, with performances designed for ages three years and up, and audience engagement activities, as well. Additionally, the NSO's community engagement projects are nationally recognized, including NSO In Your Neighborhood (which comprises a week of approximately 50 performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other neighborhood venues) and NSO Sound Health, which has taken the NSO to the National Institutes of Health, Children's Inn at NIH, Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Children's National Medical Center, and Inova Health System. Career development opportunities include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its Summer Music Institute. nationalsymphony.org.

CHRISTOPH ESCHENBACH

Christoph Eschenbach is about to begin his seventh and final season as music director of both the National Symphony Orchestra and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He is regularly in demand as one of the most sought-after conductors of both opera and orchestra, and is also distinguished as a pianist. His many honors include the 2015 Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, Légion d'Honneur; Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; Officer's Cross with Star and Ribbon of the German Order of Merit; and the Commander's Cross of the German Order of Merit for outstanding achievements.

STEVEN REINEKE

Steven Reineke's boundless enthusiasm and exceptional artistry have made him one of the nation's most sought-after pops conductors, composers, and arrangers. The 2016-2017 season is his sixth as Principal Pops Conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra. In that capacity he has led performances of Broadway favorites, jazz, hip-hop, and shows featuring such notable performers as Jason Moran, Kendrick Lamar, Trey Anastasio, Seth MacFarlane, and John Legend.

FUNDING CREDITS

David and Alice Rubenstein are the Presenting Underwriters of the NSO.

The NSO Music Director Chair is generously endowed by **Victoria and Roger Sant**.

For more information about the NSO, visit nationalsymphony.org
For more information about the Kennedy Center, visit kennedy-center.org.

Patrons 30 and under and active-duty members of the military are invited to join the Kennedy Center's *MyTix* program for special discount offers and chances to win free tickets.

For more information, visit kennedy-center.org/mytix

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