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

2018–2019 SEASON:
PERFORMANCES FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

Six World Premiere Productions

*Long Way Down*
Based on the book by Jason Reynolds

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*
From the book by Christopher Paul Curtis

*How to Catch a Star*
Based on the book by Oliver Jeffers

*She A Gem*
An original play by Josh Wilder

*Cartography*
Co-Commission with ArKtype
(Brooklyn, NY)

*VOYAGERS: A Dance*
*Among The Planets*
Co-Commission with Company | E
(Washington, D.C.)

Plus
Music for Young Audiences;
*Me... Jane: The Dreams & Adventures of Young Jane Goodall* on tour;
*Sound Health: Second Saturdays*; and other special events

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(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts today announced programming for its 2018–2019 season of Performances for Young Audiences, featuring trailblazing journeys in theater, music, and dance that will inspire
and resonate with audiences of all ages. The Kennedy Center has commissioned and co-commissioned six world premiere works that will bring audiences on expeditions through time and place to Birmingham in the 1960s, through a young man’s imagination in present day New York City, and even to the stars and beyond.

The Theater for Young Audiences season begins with Long Way Down, the first of four new Kennedy Center-commissioned plays. A one-person show based on National Book Award finalist Jason Reynolds’s 2017 New York Times bestseller of the same title, this piercing and insightful one-hour work, directed by Timothy Douglas (Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea at Theater Alliance) and starring Justin Weaks (KCTYA’s Darius & Twig and Bud, Not Buddy), takes place over the course of 60 potent seconds—the time it takes 15-year-old Will to decide if he should retaliate after his brother has just been shot.

“I’m so excited for the Kennedy Center to take my novel Long Way Down and breathe new life into it on the stage,” said author Jason Reynolds. “Theater has a way of connecting to the core of our humanity, and with a story such as this, there is nothing more necessary.”

The next Kennedy Center commissioned play is intended for much younger audiences, taking them into outer space to follow a boy who loves stars so much that he tries to catch one. A multimedia, movement-based adaptation from New York Times bestselling author Oliver Jeffers’s beloved picture book, How to Catch a Star is created and directed by Obie Award winner Jared Mezzocchi, with music composed by Zak Engel, and choreography by Colette Krogol and Matt Reeves of Orange Grove Dance, a company that creates visually athletic experiences through the lenses of dance, film, and design. For older audiences, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Lorraine Hansberry Playwriting Award winner Josh Wilder will premiere his new play, She A Gem, about four friends living in a transition home in inner city Philadelphia who create a double-dutch team to compete in their neighborhood pageant. The final Kennedy Center commission, The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963, has been beautifully adapted from Christopher Paul Curtis’s Newbery Medal and
Coretta Scott King Award–winning book into a staged concert reading by playwright Christina Ham (Nina Simone: Four Women), accompanied by live music. Told through the perspective of ten-year-old Kenny, the show captures a family’s road trip alongside poignant observations of Birmingham’s tragic church bombing in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Kennedy Center has also partnered on two Springboard co-commissioned works. Developed by award-winning author/illustrator Christopher Myers and director Kaneza Schaal, Cartography, co-commissioned with Brooklyn, NY’s ArKtype, explores movement and migration, inspired by the artists' work with young refugees from around the world. With Washington, D.C.’s dance ensemble Company | E, the Kennedy Center has co-commissioned VOYAGERS: A Dance Among The Planets, a musical reimagining of Gustav Holst’s The Planets combining live music and movement to celebrate curiosity, compassion, and the natural world through the tale of one young stargazer who gets carried away on a journey through the Solar System.

Last November’s hit musical, Me... Jane: The Dreams & Adventures of Young Jane Goodall, which was nominated for five Helen Hayes Awards, including Outstanding Play or Musical Adaptation, will go on tour across the United States from January–May 2019. In this new musical adapted from Patrick McDonnell’s Caldecott Honor book, audiences join young Jane Goodall and her toy chimpanzee Jubilee as they learn about the world around them and the importance of protecting all living species. Me... Jane is adapted by Patrick McDonnell, Aaron Posner, and Andy Mitton, with music and lyrics by Andy Mitton, direction by Aaron Posner, and choreography by Christopher d’Amboise.

In addition to the previously announced NSO Family concerts and Washington National Opera’s family opera, The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me, the Kennedy Center will also offer three Music for Young Audiences concerts that explore classical, world music, and immersive contemporary music. In Timbalooloo Live!, the band Timbalooloo strives to reimagine the way music can be conceived by children during their early formative years by having their instruments come alive and actually speak the language of music,
adding character, humor and emotion to the music. Banda Magda is a unique experience in world music, combining South American rhythms with jazz improvisation, cinematic arranging, sophisticated audience participation, mid-century classics and world “chansons” sung in 6 languages. Finally, Break it Down is an energetic program that delights in dissecting the pieces and parts of music and musical instruments.

In the 2017–2018 season, the Kennedy Center began designing special opportunities to help young audiences and families explore themes surrounding the performances, and to engage with the art and the artists in meaningful ways. Continuing this season, there will be free activities before and/or after select shows that tie into the themes presented on stage. Visual art, dance, or music activities will begin an hour before show time and extend an hour after the show ends. Families can come early or stay late to enjoy activities related to How to Catch a Star, Timbalooloo Live!, Cartography, She A Gem, and The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963.

After select performances throughout the season, young audience members can ask questions and hear stories in up-close-and-personal post-show talks with some of the artists. Additionally, every performance of Long Way Down and She A Gem will be followed by a “Deeper Dive,” when special guest experts will engage audiences in a conversation that unpacks the themes presented on stage.

After a successful first season of workshops, Sound Health: Second Saturdays will also continue. Every second Saturday of the month, a local arts organization offers two 45-minute workshops that take place at 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. in the Grand Foyer. This series of free workshops is designed to help families with young children explore the power of the arts through the Kennedy Center’s Sound Health series focused on mind-and-body wellness.
## 2018–2019 Performances for Young Audiences Schedule

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Artists and performances are subject to change.

**American Revolution**
October 12–14, 2018 in the Family Theater
History in 50 minutes—seven actors, two feet off the ground, share 21 square feet of space and recreate the entire American fight for independence from Lexington to Yorktown. Using only the actors’ bodies, voices and (pantomimed) cannons, the show evokes an epic time period in American history. Combining tongue-in-cheek humor with a dash of derring-do, *American Revolution* displays Theater Unspeakable’s rowdy brand of bare-boned and imaginative physical theater. *Most enjoyed by ages 9 and up.*

**Long Way Down**
October 27–29, 2018 in the Family Theater
National Book Award finalist and *New York Times* bestseller Jason Reynolds’s fiercely stunning novel that takes place in sixty potent seconds—the time it takes a kid to decide whether or not he’s going to murder the guy who killed his brother. A piercing, insightful, and empathetic one-person show that will connect deeply with today’s young people. *Most enjoyed by ages 12 and up.*

**NSO Family Concert Halloween Spooktacular**
October 28, 2018 in the Concert Hall
The Concert Hall becomes a ghostly venue when the NSO performs new and old classics to celebrate Halloween and *Dia de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead)* with ghoulishly attired NSO musicians. Audiences can feel free to come in costume, and activities begin one hour early in the Atrium for trick-or-treating, plus a special Haunted Hall Musical Instrument “Petting Zoo.” *Most enjoyed by ages 5 and up.*

**How to Catch a Star**
November 21–December 16, 2018 in the Family Theater
Once there was a boy who loved stars so much that he decided to catch one for himself. The boy tries everything he can think of to reach the stars, but nothing seems to work. Just when he is about to give up, he realizes that things aren’t always found where we expect them to be. A multimedia, movement-based adaptation from Oliver Jeffers’s simple tale of reaching for the stars. *Most enjoyed by ages 3 and up.*

**Ballet West: The Nutcracker**
December 5–9, 2018 in the Opera House
Featuring Tchaikovsky’s timeless holiday score, Ballet West returns to the Kennedy Center with William Christensen’s beloved choreography in *The Nutcracker*. The fully redesigned production, unveiled last year in Salt Lake City, takes audiences on a dramatic, whimsical journey and features opulent sets, costumes, props, and spectacular effects, all while maintaining the integrity of the original choreography. Known as the longest-running full-length production in America, Christensen’s *Nutcracker* was originally choreographed for San Francisco Ballet in 1944. *Most enjoyed by ages 5 and up.*

**Washington National Opera: The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me**
December 14–16, 2018 in the Terrace Theater
Continuing its tradition of producing a family opera during the holiday season, WNO presents the first revival of its much-admired world-premiere production. Featuring a score by Tony® winner Jeanine Tesori (*Fun Home; Shrek The Musical; Caroline, or Change*), an English-language libretto by poet and playwright J.D. McClatchy, and direction by WNO Artistic
Director Francesca Zambello, this family-friendly opera is based on the award-winning children’s book by Jeanette Winterson and tells the story of the first Christmas from an unlikely point of view. *Most enjoyed by ages 6 and up.*

**Music for Young Audiences: Timbalooloo Live!**  
December 26–31, 2018 in the Family Theater  
Timbalooloo strives to reimagine the way music can be conceived by children during their early formative years. The band—led by Oran Etkin and featuring Clara Net and Big Mama Tuba—has performed at the Newport Jazz Festival, National Sawdust and Central Park SummerStage in New York, and around the world. For Timbalooloo, instruments come alive and actually speak the language of music, adding character, humor, and emotion to the music. This notion of instruments speaking to each other harkens back to Etkin’s experiences as a young boy falling in love with the music of Louis Armstrong—a musician who certainly was a master at making his trumpet come alive and expressing things that words cannot express. *Most enjoyed by ages 3 and up.*

**Cartography**  
January 11–13, 2019 in the Family Theater  
Inflatable rafts on the Mediterranean, dark cargo holds of trucks, and family photos wrapped carefully in a backpack that crosses several border checkpoints. The world is alive with movement, migration, and young people who set out into the unsure waters of their future fleeing the effects of climate change, war, or poverty, to build new lives. Developed by artists Christopher Myers (author and illustrator) and Kaneza Schaal (director) through their creative work with refugee youth from around the world, *Cartography* asks what part we all have to play in these evolving experiences, where have we come from, how have we moved, and where are we all going. The piece was workshoped as part of the Kennedy Center’s New Visons/New Voices 2018. *Most enjoyed by ages 9 and up.*

**Music for Young Audiences: Banda Magda**  
January 26–27, 2019 in the Family Theater  
Founded in 2010 in New York, Banda Magda has toured in more than 22 countries and 5 continents. Drawing on the band’s global background (Greece, Argentina, Japan, Colombia, USA), the group combines South American rhythms with jazz improvisation, cinematic arranging, sophisticated audience participation, mid-century classics and world “chansons” sung in six languages. By definition, everyone is unique. It is that uniqueness that Banda Magda wants students of all ages to embrace, while at the same time raising awareness and understanding of how all humans are connected. *Most enjoyed by ages 7 and up.*

**Chinese New Year Family Day**  
February 9, 2019 throughout the Center  
The Kennedy Center celebrates the Year of the Pig in 2019. For these annual festivities, patrons are invited to celebrate the Chinese New Year with a special Family Day, with numerous events, including many free activities and performances highlighting Chinese culture. *Appropriate for all ages.*

**She A Gem**  
February 15–24, 2019 in the Family Theater  
Four girls living in a transition home in inner city Philadelphia create a double dutch team to compete in the annual neighborhood pageant. The coveted prize? Every member of the winning team will get their fortune told by Ms. Mary, the neighborhood psychic. Straddling the boundaries between children and adults, each girl is faced with early responsibility while holding tight to the games that protect their playful childhoods. *Most enjoyed by ages 12 and up.*
NSO Family: Let’s Go to the Moon!
February 24, 2019 in the Concert Hall
In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the moon landing approaches, the NSO honors this landmark occasion with a program inspired by outer space. *Most enjoyed by ages 5 and up.*

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963
March 15–24, 2019 in the Eisenhower Theater
Enter the hilarious world of 10-year-old Kenny and his family, the Weird Watsons of Flint, Michigan. There’s Momma, Dad, little sister Joetta, and brother Byron, who’s 13 and an “official juvenile delinquent.” When Momma and Dad decide it’s time for a visit to Grandma, Dad comes home with the amazing Ultra-Glide, and the Watsons set out on a trip like no other. They’re heading south. They’re going to Birmingham, Alabama, toward one of the darkest moments in America’s history. *Most enjoyed by ages 9 and up.*

VOYAGERS: A Dance Among The Planets
March 29–31, 2019 in the Family Theater
A magic ride awaits a young stargazer carried away by the magician Uranus. Join her and her fellow VOYAGERS in a journey through the Solar System for the young and young at heart. In a world premiere co-commission, D.C.’s Company | E shares an interstellar display of modern dance set to Gustav Holst’s *The Planets.* Through a reimagining of Holst’s soaring suite, Company | E combines live music and movement and a bit of Einstein to celebrate curiosity, compassion, and the natural world. *Most enjoyed by ages 10 and up.*

NSO Family: Symphonic Storytelling: The Travels of Babar
April 7, 2019 in the Concert Hall
This concert mixes the magic of stories and music, including the U.S. premiere of *Return to the Land of Elephants*—a piece based on the famed *Babar* books—composed by Raphael Mostel. *Most enjoyed by ages 5 and up.*

The Me I Want to Sing
April 13, 2019 in the Family Theater
*The Me I Want to Sing* is a selection of opera legend Marian Anderson’s most memorable pieces woven together with spoken word, exploring the challenges of African American performers and more broadly, race in America. *Most enjoyed by ages 12 and up.*

Music for Young Audiences: Break it Down!
April 27–28, 2019 in the Family Theater
This energetic program delights in dissecting the pieces and parts of music and musical instruments. Children will be amazed by the way in which instruments from the wind and percussion family (and some interesting “outsiders”) are taken apart and put back together again. Instruments will even “transform” before their very eyes into other instruments, and a variety of useful objects. This highly engaging program is also an introduction to some of the basic structures of music. Watch, listen, and lend a helping hand as this dynamic duo of Paul Fadoul on marimba and Zara Lawler on flute build music from the ground up! *Most enjoyed by ages 3 and up.*

Colors
May 18–19, 2019 in the Family Theater
Dedicated to children’s perceptive, emotional, and creative relationship to colors—*Colors* is a physical dance piece from Italy’s Compagnia TPO that brings colors to life. The dancers enter a world where body, colors, and space become the place of relationships and emotions. In turn
these relationships extend outward to involve the members of the audience. *Most enjoyed by ages 5 and up.*

**Me... Jane: The Dreams & Adventures of Young Jane Goodall**  
KCTYA On Tour, January–May, 2019  
Before she was a renowned humanitarian, conservationist, and animal activist, Dr. Jane Goodall was a little girl with a very special toy chimpanzee named Jubilee. In this new musical from the team behind the Kennedy Center’s 2014 production of the MUTTS–inspired *The Gift of Nothing*, audiences across the country will join young Jane and her special friend as they learn about the world around them and the importance of protecting all living species. With anecdotes taken directly from Jane Goodall’s autobiography, this adaptation makes this very true story accessible for the very young—and young at heart.

**Cuesheets**  
School and public audiences attending Performances for Young Audiences productions and concerts will receive a Cuesheet—an informative performance guide designed for use before and after attending performances. Cuesheets contain introductory information, activities, and suggested reading lists appropriate for children to maximize the performing arts experience. New this season for the newly-commissioned work will be Grownup Guides, providing questions and activities to help adults expand their experience with their young theatergoers.

**Ticket Information**  
To purchase a subscription, patrons should call the Subscription office at (202) 416-8500 or go to [www.kennedy-center.org/subscriptions](http://www.kennedy-center.org/subscriptions). Subscriptions may be purchased in advance of general on-sale dates, which will be announced soon. Groups of 20 or more may contact the Kennedy Center Group Sales office at (202) 416-8400.

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PRESS CONTACT
Brendan Padgett
(202) 416-8004
REPadgett@kennedy-center.org

TICKETS & INFORMATION
(202) 467-4600, (800) 444-1324
www.kennedy-center.org