

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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1,000+ Artists, 500+ Free Events, Hands-On Learning and More: The REACH—First Expansion in Kennedy Center History—Opens in D.C. with Free 16-Day Multi-Genre Festival on Sep 7–22



The Reach, Angélique Kidjo, De La Soul, Renée Fleming, Judah Friedlander, Debbie Allen, Alan Menken (photos: courtesy of the Kennedy Center)

(WASHINGTON)—With more than 1,000 artists and more than 500 free events in three new sunlit pavilions and more than 130,000 square feet of new landscaped green space at the nation’s cultural capital, the **REACH** opens its doors in exactly one month’s time with 16 full days of creativity in action, providing artists and audiences with the opportunity to experience art as never before. Marking the first

expansion at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts** in its 48-year history, the REACH welcomes the public with an **inclusive, multi-genre, multidisciplinary Opening Festival** on **September 7–22**. See the video trailer [here](#).

The REACH represents the future of the arts, celebrating their essential role in American life and their unique ability to break down barriers, bringing people and communities together. Designed by preeminent architect **Steven Holl** as a home for non-traditional programming with an emphasis on active participation and access, the open, informal spaces of the new expansion draw visitors directly into the creative process and inspire new connections and collaborations between creators of multiple genres and disciplines.

The REACH Opening Festival features themed days with programs ranging from master classes and workshops to participatory performances, interactive installations, hands-on learning activities, DJ sets and dance parties. Local and national headliners include **Arrested Development, De La Soul, Kronos Quartet, Roomful of Teeth, The Second City, Thievery Corporation, Debbie Allen, Yalitza Aparicio, Bootsy Collins, Renée Fleming, Judah Friedlander, Robert Glasper, Angélique Kidjo, Alan Menken, Tiler Peck, Carrie Mae Weems, Mo Willems, and Dan Zanes**, many of whom will connect with audiences not only through performance but also through residencies and workshops for the creative spirit in us all.

Kennedy Center President **Deborah F. Rutter** says:

“The REACH Opening Festival celebrates our nation’s incomparable artistic diversity. Inviting full participation, immersion, and discovery, it’s the perfect way for people to experience what the REACH has to offer.”

Allen Parker, CEO of the festival’s presenting sponsor, **Wells Fargo**, adds:

“As a long-time supporter of the arts and the Washington, D.C. community, Wells Fargo is proud to sponsor the Opening Festival for the REACH at the Kennedy Center.”

“The arts play a critical role in fostering vibrant, healthy communities across the United States. This expansion marks a tremendous step forward in making the arts accessible to all those who live in and visit our nation’s capital.”

All REACH Opening Festival events are free; timed-entry passes are required for entry. Patrons can obtain **free passes** [here](#), by phone at (202) 467-4600, or in person at the Box Office. The following paragraphs offer a general overview of the Opening Festival, with details of selected highlights. To access the **full interactive schedule**, click [here](#) and use the filters provided to see complete programming. A fully **customizable scheduling app** can be also downloaded at the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

Sat, Sep 7: Opening Day

A microcosm of the festival, Opening Day illustrates the breadth of experience that the REACH is designed to foster. To kick off the day, **more than 200 artists** and the D.C. community take part in “**The Future Is Now and I Am It: A Parade to Mark the Moment**,” a campus-wide show of solidarity and pluralism conceived and curated by MacArthur Award-winning visual and performance artist **Carrie Mae Weems** and local D.C. nonprofit **The MusicianShip**. The **National Symphony Orchestra** and conductor **Thomas Wilkins** join soloists from Washington National Opera’s **Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program**, the **Heritage Signature Chorale**, and **Stanley**

Thurston's 300-voice, D.C.-based **Community Chorus** for an uplifting open-air performance of **Beethoven's** monumental **Ninth Symphony**. Rock & Roll Hall of Famer **Bootsy Collins**, legendary bassist for James Brown and Parliament-Funkadelic, and **The Chuck Brown Band** offer a joyful celebration of Go-Go, and **Underground Comedy** presents some of the city's best comedians and emerging talent in a **Standup Showcase**. The seminal trailblazers of the **Kronos Quartet** give a pop-up concert in **Skylight Soundscapes**, a specially commissioned installation series by Kennedy Center Composer in Residence **Mason Bates** and Haitian-American composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, who use themed projections and sounds to create an immersive, chill-out lounge space that will remain open throughout the festival. Shining a light on the REACH as a focal point for long-term community engagement, the day's performers also include some of the dedicated artists who work in the nation's schools through the Kennedy Center's **Turnaround Arts** program: roots singer-songwriter **Valerie June**, operatic soprano **Larisa Martínez**, performance poet **Jacqueline Suskin**, Hip Hop trailblazer **Speech**, who appears with his Grammy[®]-winning group, **Arrested Development**, and surprise guests. In an invitation-only event, open only to special guests and selected members of the media, Kennedy Center Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact **Marc Bamuthi Joseph** and First Nations artists **Rose Powhatan** and **Cryz Proctor** conduct a private **Land Recognition** blessing ceremony.

Sun, Sep 8: Spotlight on Jazz

Kennedy Center Artistic Director for Jazz **Jason Moran** curates a day devoted to one of the most quintessentially American art forms. Experiences range from a mainstage performance by pianist Moran and his trio **The Bandwagon**, with special guest star **Kelala**, a singer-songwriter known for otherworldly R&B that draws on U.K. club sounds, to a tap performance and workshop from the Emmy[®]-nominated **Syncopated Ladies**, a full-body workout to live jazz accompaniment from **Sidebarre DC**, and a **Jazz and Meditation Service** from San Francisco's historic **Saint John Coltrane Church**, in which the free-jazz pioneer's music is the source of spiritual wisdom. In Studio K, harpist **Brandee Younger** salutes her muse, Alice Coltrane, as the River Pavilion comes alive with an a cappella concert from Grammy[®]-winning vocal ensemble **Roomful of Teeth**. The day culminates on the mainstage with an immersive 3-D multimedia spectacle by **Flying Lotus**, the Grammy[®]-nominated grandnephew of Alice and John Coltrane.

Mon, Sep 9: Spotlight on Theater

Local and national theater communities come together for a day of inclusive, interactive, and innovative storytelling. Spoken-word artist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph** joins composer-violinist **Daniel Bernard Roumain** for **The Just and the Blind**, their searing multimedia treatment of racial profiling and the prison-industrial complex, and West Philadelphia poet and playwright **Dave Harris**, an alum of the Kennedy Center's American College Theater Festival, attends a reading of **Everybody Black**, his award-winning 2019 play satirizing approaches to black history. Among the day's other highlights, Helen Hayes Award-winning D.C. playwrights **Aaron Posner** and **Karen Zacarías** lead a conversation about community and the creative process, and New York's celebrated **Broadway Collective** offers acting, singing, and dancing master classes for young musical theater lovers. In a special session open only to select media, Grammy[®]-winning singer, songwriter, and bassist **Esperanza Spalding** and Kennedy Center honoree **Wayne Shorter** workshop their new jazz opera, **Iphigenia**, which is scheduled to premiere at the Center next year.

Tues, Sep 10: The People We Are: Celebrating First Nations Cultures

The Kennedy Center overlooks the Potomac River, whose name reflects our nation's Native American roots. "The People We Are" honors this legacy, showcasing work by local, national, and international artists who draw on their indigenous heritage, and addressing some of the challenges they face. The program begins with a Land Acknowledgement led by **Dr. Gabrielle Tayac** (Piscataway) and a Welcome Song by vocalists **Ralph and Dennis Zotigh** (Kiowa). Among the musical performers are 2019 Indigenous Music Award–nominee singer-songwriter **Thea Hopkins** (Aquinnah Wampanoag); Canadian electronic outfit **A Tribe Called Red** (Mohawk/Cayuga) with opening local act **Uptown Boyz** (Piscataway); Grammy®-nominated cellist and vocalist **Dawn Avery** (Mohawk) appearing with Grammy®-winning guitarist **Larry Mitchell**; and best-selling recording artist and famed Hawaiian hula teacher **Keali'i Reichel**. Other highlights include a performance-installation by Australian choreographer and dancer **Amrita Hepi** (Bundjulong/Ngapuhi), hoop dance by interdisciplinary artist **Ty Defoe** (Oneida/Anishinaabe Nations), didgeridoo demonstration by **David Williams** (Wakka Wakka), storytelling by **Rose Powhatan** (Pamunkey/Tauxenent), and live demonstrations by potter **Virgil Ortiz** (Cochiti Pueblo) and graffiti artist **Raiz Campos** (Amazon/Brazil). Panel discussions led by **Ofelia Medina** (Mexico), **Andrea Hanley** (Navajo), and **Christopher K. Morgan** (Hawaii) will feature perspectives from filmmaker **Steven Paul Judd** (Choctaw/Kiowa), painter and art writer **Frank Buffalo Hyde** (Onondaga/Nez Perce), and **Yalitza Aparicio** (Mixtec/Triqui)—the first Indigenous American to be nominated for a "Best Actress" Oscar for her role in *Roma* (2018).

Wed, Sep 11: Spotlight on Classical and Broadway

Long central to the Kennedy Center's offerings, classical music and Broadway become ever more accessible in the welcoming spaces of the REACH. The resident **National Symphony Orchestra (NSO)** presents a trio of **musical master classes**: on how to listen, by pianist and Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor for Chamber Music **Joseph Kalichstein**; on musical arrangement, by NSO Principal Pops Conductor **Steven Reineke**; and on songwriting, by Oscar, Tony® and Grammy® laureate **Alan Menken**, whose hit scores range from Broadway's *Little Shop of Horrors* to Disney's *Aladdin* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Reineke also conducts the NSO in ***Broadway Under the Stars: The Music of Alan Menken***, featuring **Megan Hilty, Adam Jacobs, Norm Lewis, Patina Miller** and the composer himself, while Kalichstein joins the gifted young musicians of the **Abeo Quartet** for chamber favorites by Dvořák and Debussy. The day's remaining highlights include a **Skylight Soundscape** takeover by Brooklyn's **National Sawdust**, and a series of TED-style **Classical Talks**, in which musicians of different genres and backgrounds share first-hand insights.

Thurs, Sep 12: Spotlight on Voices, Sound Health, and Washington National Opera

Superstar soprano and Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor **Renée Fleming** curates a day celebrating the resident **Washington National Opera (WNO)** and the wonders of the human voice. Diverse musical influences converge when three-time Grammy®-winning Beninese singer-songwriter and activist **Angélique Kidjo** joins Fleming and **Jason Moran** in concert. Hip Hop lovers can take workshops in rap improvisation, beatboxing, and more with the **Freestyle Love Supreme Academy**, the training program of the troupe co-founded by Lin-Manuel Miranda, and opera aficionados can enjoy **happy hour cocktails** with WNO singers while local cutting-edge opera company **UrbanArias** demonstrates **opera improvisation**. In the Kennedy Center's innovative **Sound Health** program, which explores connections between wellness and the arts, **Esperanza Spalding**, operatic bass **Soloman Howard**, and Freestyle Love Supreme beatboxer **Chris "Shockwave" Sullivan** discuss improvisation, vocal mastery, and the brain with renowned neuroscientist and musician **Dr. Charles Limb**.

Fri, Sep 13: Spotlight on Electronica/DJ Culture

The second weekend of the festival kicks off with a spotlight on today's thriving club culture, curated by **Eric Hilton**, one of the founders of **Thievery Corporation**, the internationally renowned, D.C.-based production duo whose trademark sound blends downtempo trip-hop with bossa nova and dub. After an opening set by progressive local reggae band **The Archives**, Thievery Corporation headlines the evening's mainstage performance. Other highlights include the ethereal synth-pop of **LouLou Ghelichkhani's** new project, **Night Glitter**, and an **improvisation and beat-making workshop** with local collective **Baltimore Boom Bap Society**. Visitors can also dance with Baltimore-bred club sensation **TT The Artist** and see selected scenes from her new documentary, **Dark City Beneath the Beat**, for which she will be joined by executive producer **Rose DiFerdinando** and cast members **DJ Mighty Mark** and the **TSU Dance Crew**.

Sat, Sep 14: Hip Hop Block Party

Emceeing, DJing, breaking, and graffiti-writing—the core tenets of Hip Hop culture and its intersections—take center stage at the REACH's Hip Hop Block Party. The brainchild of rapper-producer **Q-Tip**, the Kennedy Center's Artistic Director of Hip Hop Culture, this all-day event showcases members of the **Hip Hop Culture Council** and mainstage performances by iconic rap trio **De La Soul**; New York rapper **Pharoahe Monch**, who debuts **TH1RT3EN**, a new project featuring Marcus Machado and Daru Jones; West Coast emcee **Ill Camille** and D.C.'s own Grammy®-nominated rapper, producer, and educator **Kokayi**, presenting an eclectic set with special guests Nick Hakim, Kamau, and Substantial. MTV Award-winning DJ **J.Period** presents *The Live Mixtape (Healing Emotion)*, with Grammy®-nominated emcee and singer-songwriter **Maimouna Youssef** (a.k.a. Mumu Fresh). Guests can also dance, both to sets on the mainstage spun by Black Girls Rock! founder **Beverly Bond** and to guest DJ sets in the *Flava in Ya Ear Day to Night Dance Party*. Film screenings will take place throughout the day, including a special preview of AMC's new documentary series **Hip Hop: The Songs That Shook America**, executive produced by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson and Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter. Audience members can also take DJing and breaking workshops with transformative local nonprofit **Words Beats & Life** or record their personal Hip Hop story at the #LifeIn5 video booth.

Sun, Sep 15: Family Day

Forward-looking by design, the REACH helps inspire the next generation of art-lovers with a day of family-friendly events. Guests of all ages join beloved author and illustrator **Mo Willems**, the Kennedy Center's inaugural Education Artist in Residence, who hosts **MO-a-PALOOZA LIVE!**, a one-of-a-kind concert featuring songs from his stage adaptations, including the forthcoming *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! (The Musical)*. Grammy®-winning entertainer **Dan Zanes** sings his greatest hits with support from Haitian American jazz vocalists **Claudia Zanes** and **Pauline Jean** and Mexican percussionist **Yuriana Sobrino**. Interdisciplinary Pittsburgh ensemble **Squonk Opera** performs **Hand to Hand**, in which live music meets original storytelling and a pair of gargantuan puppet hands. In an interactive performance, New York- and Los Angeles-based arts educators **Story Pirates** adapt kid-created stories into a sketch comedy revue, and guests of all ages can create **Infinite Monsters** in an interactive installation program devised by Australia's **Terrapin Puppet Theatre**. Other highlights include a performance by the **Washington Performing Arts's Children of the Gospel Choir**.

Mon, Sep 16–Thurs, Sep 19: Spotlight on Local Youth & Schools

Expanding the Kennedy Center’s ongoing educational programs, the festival’s second week features a wide range of learning opportunities to introduce students and teachers from D.C.-area schools to the new campus and its possibilities. Serving students from Kindergarten through grade 12, each day will have a unique theme and developmentally appropriate activities, kicking off with a live performance followed by hands-on workshops for students. There will be an **open house for 250 educators** on the evening of September 16, and a series of educationally themed **Millennium Stage performances** over the course of the week. These will showcase **local music educators** who are also nationally recognized performing artists (Sep 16), young **step teams** from the greater D.C. area (Sep 17), award-winning **Latin dance teams** from local high schools (Sep 18), and the talented young voices of the **Children’s Chorus of Washington, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and WNO’s Opera Institute** (Sep 19), respectively.

Fri, Sep 20: Spotlight on Comedy

The REACH resonates with laughter as the second week draws to an uproarious close. Famed Chicago troupe and Kennedy Center partner organization **The Second City** presents celebrity alumni **Rachel Dratch** and **Jon Glaser** in sketches, workshops, and improv jams, and Emmy®- and Grammy®-winning comedian **Patton Oswalt**, *30 Rock*’s **Judah Friedlander**, *Last Comic Standing* finalist **Rachel Feinstein**, and other national headliners join emerging local voices for a series of “**District of Comedy**” **Standup Showcases**. Aspiring comics can try their hand at **Joke-E-Oke**, a game blending karaoke with standup, and mature audiences can attend a taping of **Brandon Wardell’s Yeah, But Still**, one of *Rolling Stone*’s “Best New Comedy Podcasts of 2018.”

Sat, Sep 21: National Dance Day

The REACH celebrates the 10th annual National Dance Day, now moved for the first time from July to September. Three-time Emmy®-winning *Fame* star and *So You Think You Can Dance* judge **Debbie Allen** guides visitors through the day’s mainstage activities and presents students from her own dance academy. New York City Ballet principal **Tiler Peck** discusses her Hulu documentary, *Ballet Now*, and performs her “pointe-to-pop” moves from Charlotte OC’s *Medicine Man* music video. Festival-goers of all ages and abilities can learn the official 2019 **National Dance Day routine**, take part in a locally inspired **line dance**, and attend **public dance classes** in styles ranging from Indian classical and Chinese ribbon to tap, salsa, and dancehall fusion, with a special session for those with Parkinson’s disease. This 12-hour non-stop extravaganza concludes with an evening performance of **Fela! The Concert**, an exuberant music and dance party inspired by the Broadway show about Nigerian Afrobeat master Fela Kuti, starring cast members from the original Tony®-winning production.

Sun, Sep 22: Closing Day

The festival’s final day brings the crowd together one last time. The entire 16-day immersion draws to a euphoric close with **DC Lovers Rock**, a West Indian-style sunset dance party. With DJs competing for the crowd in an authentic Jamaican **Sound Clash**, and performances headed by Bob Marley collaborator **Junior Marvin**, queer Cuban Hip Hop duo **Las Krudas**, and dancehall legend **Sister Nancy**, D.C. Lovers Rock unites festival audiences in a shared celebration of love and community. Four-time Grammy®-winning pianist and producer **Robert Glasper**, whose career straddles jazz, Hip Hop, and R&B, leads a special performance residency with accounts of his Miles Davis tribute, **Everything’s Beautiful**. With support from local mentors, the **Kennedy Center Youth Council** presents youth-focused and youth-led events in an all-day **Teen Takeover**, and the intimate Justice Forum hosts an

all-day film festival presented in collaboration with the **Peace Corps**, the changemaking overseas humanitarian volunteer program established by **President John F. Kennedy**, to whom the Kennedy Center stands as a living memorial.

Ongoing throughout the festival

Throughout the festival, visitors can enjoy a wealth of additional activities and experiences.

Sculptures and installations, by artists including **Deborah Butterfield**, **Sam Gilliam**, **Roy Lichtenstein**, and **Joel Shapiro**, will be on display both indoors and out. Located on the sprawling upper lawn of the REACH, the video wall will feature projected films and simulcasts, including a 40th-anniversary screening of family favorite ***The Muppet Movie; Amazing Grace***, winner of this year's NAACP Image Award; groundbreaking superhero blockbuster ***Black Panther; Slow Dancing*** (2007), a series of larger-than-life, hyper-slow-motion video portraits of dancers and choreographers by renowned photographer **David Michalek**; screenings of newly commissioned **silent shorts by local filmmakers**; and WNO's production of ***Show Boat***, in an encore presentation of the beloved annual "Opera in the Outfield" series. In the Justice Forum, documentarian **Steve James** (*Hoop Dreams*), experimental animator **Jodie Mack** (*The Grand Bizarre*), and **Charles Burnett** (*To Sleep with Anger*) will be in residence to host workshops accompanying screenings of their films. Other highlights include screenings of ***Primary*** and ***Crisis: Behind a Presidential Commitment***, as part of a series tracing the career of **John F. Kennedy**. Over the full 16 days of the festival, **KC Citizen Artist Fellows** from across the country will offer workshops, arts installations and performances, some taking place in the **Moonshot Studio**, the REACH's innovative new hands-on learning lab, where artmakers of all ages and experience levels are invited to roll up their sleeves and investigate, discover, linger, and learn. Visitors can also put on an Oculus headset and step into mind-bending new 3-D worlds from the comfort of the fully equipped new **Virtual Reality Lounge**, and experience the **Skylight Soundscapes** installation series in the expansive, light-filled **Skylight Pavilion**.

The River Pavilion will be filled with **daily curated food events**, featuring chefs from across the city under the direction of D.C. culinary leaders **Eric Hilton** and **Erik Bruner-Yang**, in conjunction with **Restaurant Associates**. Patrons can also enjoy a wide range of food and drink from **&Pizza** and other **food trucks** throughout the festival.

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