



Press Release

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KENNEDY CENTER EXTENDS CONTRACT OF COMPOSER-IN-RESIDENCE CARLOS SIMON THROUGH 2026–2027 SEASON



**Three-Year Extension Continues Transformative Collaboration
And Mentorship Across Genres at the Kennedy Center**

**National Symphony Orchestra to Release New Album
Four Symphonic Works by Carlos Simon with First EP,
Tales—A Folklore Symphony Available January 26**

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(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts President Deborah F. Rutter announces the extension of Composer-in-Residence Carlos Simon’s contract through the 2026–2027 season. Simon began his three-year residency at the Kennedy Center, the U.S. National Cultural Center, in the 2021–2022 season and in total, has had 19 of his works programmed including nine commissions across the many genres of the Kennedy Center, with more commissions to be announced. The extension acknowledges the contributions Simon has made to the Kennedy Center and music industry, and reaffirms the Center’s commitment to Simon’s creative endeavors. **[See Performance History.]**

Carlos Simon’s contract extension comes as the National Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Music Director Gianandrea Noseda, announces the release of its next recording, an album of *Four Symphonic Works* by Carlos Simon recorded live and released on the NSO’s label. The album will include *Tales—A Folklore Symphony*, *The Block*, *Songs of Separation*, and *Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra*. The first EP, *Tales—A Folklore Symphony*, will be available January 26.

“When Carlos Simon joined the Kennedy Center, he had big ambition, insatiable curiosity, and a voracious hunger to write music across disciplines, making him a perfect fit for this position,” said **Kennedy Center President Deborah Rutter**. “It has been a great joy for all of us at the Kennedy Center to collaborate with Carlos and share in his artistic triumphs both here and on stages around the world. We are proud to give artists, especially artists like Carlos—whose works reflect the most salient issues of our time—a platform to share their voices. If you know Carlos, you know he is a prolific composer, and it became clear to us that Carlos had much more to say here in the Nation’s capital. He wasn’t done yet and we can’t wait to hear what’s next.”

“My time here at the Kennedy Center has been amazing. It’s been rewarding creating many new works in partnership with the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, and the many other art forms here,” said **Composer-in-Residence Carlos Simon**. “I’m looking forward to the next three years of creating and working with so many accomplished musicians and artists. I am grateful that I continue to be supported in my growth in my career and in my artistic expression.”

Social Impact Work at the Kennedy Center

Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact, Marc Bamuthi Joseph: “Carlos and I graduated from Morehouse College 10 years apart, and our creative partnership feels like an extension of the brotherhood, aspiration, and moral urgency that is culturally imbued at the alma mater we share with Dr. King. Each of our collaborations speaks to the inherent possibilities of the classical idiom to engage fully with the social contract. As Vice President of Social Impact here, it thrills me that the Kennedy Center is clearly aware of Carlos’ exceptional talent, but also attuned to his ethical sensibilities, and looks to facilitate both his prodigious musical capacity as well as his composition of an equitable future.”

In addition to numerous compositions presented by the Kennedy Center, Carlos Simon is deeply involved in the Center’s Social Impact work, an initiative that advances justice and equity within society through the arts. Together with Kennedy Center Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Simon composed the opera ***it all falls down*** as part of ***Written in Stone***—a project commemorating the Kennedy Center’s 50th anniversary—for Washington National Opera. He also composed ***The Road Ahead***, as part of the Kennedy Center’s inaugural ***Cartography Project***, commissioned by the Kennedy Center and the Washington National Opera. The project focused on the concept of “Black Dignity” and created a musical map of incidents of extrajudicial violence. Simon also mentors composers whose works answer the question “What are we doing to shape the Black lives of tomorrow?” as part of the second iteration of the Cartography Project.

Washington National Opera

Washington National Opera General Director, Timothy O’Leary said, “Washington National Opera is proud that Carlos Simon’s first full-scale project at the Kennedy Center was part of our American Opera Initiative in 2020, which was just the beginning of Carlos’ prolific career here. Since that first commission, WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and Carlos have had a productive partnership that resulted in the universally acclaimed production of *it all falls down* and other works that confront the most important topics of today—as opera must do. WNO is thrilled that Carlos will be with us for another three years and we look forward to the projects we have planned in future seasons.”

Carlos Simon came to the attention of Washington National Opera through its prestigious annual American Opera Initiative (AOI). This program commissions and mentors three American composer-librettist teams, culminating in staged performances of their 20-minute operas. Selected for AOI in 2019, Simon's first commissioned work at the Kennedy Center was *Night Trip* with librettist Sandra Seaton. Following the success of *Night Trip*, WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello commissioned Simon and Seaton to write a chamber opera for the Glimmerglass Festival, ***The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson***, which the WNO performed in 2023 starring Denyce Graves. Furthermore, WNO commissioned Simon and Kennedy Center inaugural Education Artist-in-Residence Mo Willems to write an opera for families, ***Slopera! A Bite-Sized Opera***, which was performed during the pandemic. Upon that success, the pair was also commissioned to write a second family opera, ***Don't Let the Pigeon Sing Up Late!***. WNO also commissioned Simon's *it all falls down* and *The Road Ahead* as part of *Written in Stone* and the Cartography Project, respectively. [See Social Impact Work at Kennedy Center.]

National Symphony Orchestra

"Carlos has been a member of the NSO family from the beginning of his residency. He joins us on tour this February as we give the European premiere performances of his new work that the NSO has co-commissioned, *Wake Up!* Concerto for Orchestra. As the Kennedy Center's Composer-in-Residence, Carlos has contributed to the NSO's vitality over the last three seasons—and we have more of Carlos' works to present next season," said **Jean Davidson, National Symphony Orchestra Executive Director**. "We also have a lot to celebrate with the new album of four of Carlos' symphonic works that we'll be adding to the NSO's recording legacy."

Carlos Simon's relationship with the National Symphony Orchestra began in 2019 when he arranged charts for the orchestra's Pops concerts. The NSO recorded a concert of Simon's works for the Center's Digital Stage+ platform and performed his ***Tales—A Folklore Symphony***, ***The Block***, ***This Land***, and others in its subscription concerts and as part of NSO community outreach performances. The NSO commissioned Simon's ***Songs of Separation***, which it performed with mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, broadcast live from the Concert Hall on ***Medici.tv*** in the 2022–2023 season. The NSO will perform Simon's next orchestral commission, *Wake Up!* Concerto for Orchestra, at the Kennedy Center on January 25–27, 2024. The NSO will also present this work on its 2024 Europe Tour in February. Simon will join the Orchestra on tour in Berlin, Milan, and Madrid for the European premiere performances. In addition to his compositions, Simon has also mentored students in the National Symphony Orchestra's annual Summer Music Institute—a summer training program for high school and college instrumentalists across the country interested in pursuing a career as a professional musician.

Recording Release Schedule

National Symphony Orchestra will release four of Carlos Simon's orchestral works, all recorded live in concert in the Kennedy Center Concert Hall with the NSO and led by Music Director Gianandrea Noseda. This is the first full-length record of Simon's orchestral works. The release schedule is as follows:

Tales—A Folklore Symphony: digital release on January 26, pre-order on January 5

The Block: digital release on March 8

Songs of Separation: digital release on May 31, pre-order on May 17

Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra: digital release in early fall 2024

Four Symphonic Works continues the legacy of the NSO’s rich recording history, which began in the 1940s. Under its own label the NSO has released a pairing of Copland’s Suite from *Billy the Kid* and Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9, “From the New World;” *George Walker: Five Sinfonias* in September of 2023; and a complete Beethoven symphony cycle in 2024. For its achievement in performances and recordings, the NSO was nominated for the 2023 *Gramophone* Orchestra of the Year Award.

Other Artistic Highlights

- Simon wrote the theme music for the Kennedy Center Honors (2022 and 2023) and the Kennedy Center’s series on PBS, *NEXT at the Kennedy Center*.
- Simon composed music for a new dance, ***From Other Suns***, featuring 11 black dancers from historically white ballet companies as part of the Kennedy Center’s ***Reframing the Narrative***.

Performance History (Arranged by first performance)

January 10, 2020	American Opera Initiative: <i>Night Trip</i> (WNO commission)
April 5, 2021	<i>Slopera! A Bite-Sized Opera</i> (WNO commission)
April 10, 2021	<i>Elegy: A Cry from the Grave</i>
April 10, 2021	<i>Fate Now Conquers</i>
April 10, 2021	<i>This Land</i>
April 10, 2021	<i>Portrait of a Queen</i>
April 10, 2021	<i>Warmth of Other Suns</i>
September 3, 2021	<i>The Block</i>
March 3, 2022	<i>Tales—A Folklore Symphony</i>
March 5, 2022	<i>Written in Stone: it all falls down</i> (WNO commission)
March 15, 2022	The Cartography Project: <i>The Road Ahead</i> (Kennedy Center and WNO commission)
June 14, 2022	<i>Reframing the Narrative: Music for From Other Suns</i> (Kennedy Center commission)
October 14, 2022	<i>NEXT at the Kennedy Center</i> theme music
December 4, 2022	Kennedy Center Honors theme music
January 20, 2023	<i>The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson</i>
January 31, 2023	<i>Motherboxx Connection</i>
April 21, 2023	<i>Songs of Separation</i> (NSO Commission)
April 22, 2023	<i>Don't Let the Pigeon Sing Up Late!</i> (WNO Commission)
January 25, 2024	<i>Wake Up! Concerto for Orchestra</i> (NSO co-commission)*
March 14, 2024	<i>Requiem for the Enslaved*</i>

* *Upcoming performances*

Carlos Simon Biography

Grammy®-nominated Carlos Simon is a multi-genre composer and performer who is a passionate advocate for diversity in music. As Composer-in-Residence at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Simon is a unique voice and sought-after cultural ambassador for new music globally.

Simon is passionate about social outreach as his work addresses complex themes that include migration, belonging, and community—especially illuminating the transatlantic slave trade, the Jim and Jane Crow era, and the injustice people of African ancestry face today. Having a unique

upbringing as the son of a Pentecostal preacher has resulted in his music possessing both classical textures and structures in a contemporary aesthetic alongside strong jazz, hip hop, and heavy gospel influences as well as branching out into the world of film—Carlos Simon’s music transcends genre.

Listed in the Kennedy Center’s *Next 50*, his recent commissions have been granted by the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, Los Angeles Opera, PBS, and Washington National Opera as well as his work being set to ballets by Washington Ballet and American Ballet Theater. He is signed to Decca Records/Classics, on which he was nominated for a Grammy Award® for *Requiem for the Enslaved* in 2023.



#NSOrch

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