Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

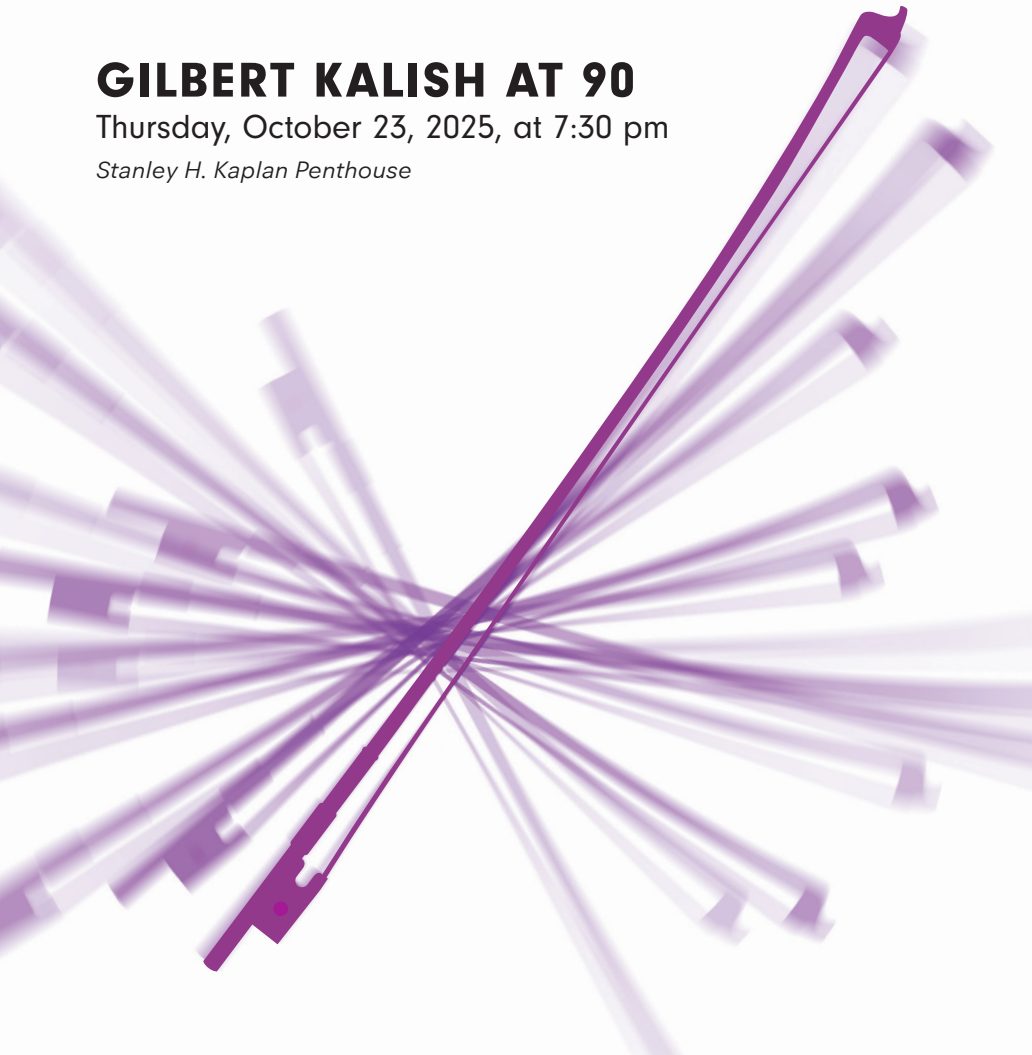
DAVID FINCKEL AND WU HAN,
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

2025-2026 SEASON

GILBERT KALISH AT 90

Thursday, October 23, 2025, at 7:30 pm

Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse



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Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center

GILBERT KALISH AT 90

THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 23, 2025, AT 7:30 ▸ 4,610TH CONCERT

Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse

Gilbert Kalish, piano
Tony Arnold, soprano
Erin Keefe, violin/viola
Nicholas Canellakis, cello
Tara Helen O'Connor, flute/piccolo
Jose Franch-Ballester, clarinet/bass clarinet

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Partita No. 6 in E minor for Keyboard, BWV 830 (1731)
- ▸ Toccata
- ▸ Allemande
- ▸ Corrente
- ▸ Air
- ▸ Sarabande
- ▸ Tempo di gavotta
- ▸ Gigue

KALISH

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Intermezzo in B minor for Piano, Op. 119, No. 1 (1893)
KALISH

Anton Webern (1883–1945)

Two Pieces for Cello and Piano (1899)
- ▸ Langsam
- ▸ Langsam

CANELLAKIS, KALISH

Program continues

Webern **Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7** (1910)

- Sehr langsam
- Rasch
- Sehr langsam
- Bewegt

KEEFE, KALISH

—INTERMISSION—

Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951) ***Pierrot lunaire* for Voice and Ensemble, Op. 21** (1912)

PART I

- Mondestrunken
- Colombine
- Der Dandy
- Eine blaße Wäscherin
- Valse de Chopin
- Madonna
- Der kranke Mond

PART II

- Nacht
- Gebet an Pierrot
- Raub
- Rote Meße
- Galgenlied
- Enhauptung
- Die Kreuze

PART III

- Heimweh
- Gemeinheit
- Parodie
- Der Mondfleck
- Serenade
- Heimfahrt
- O alter Duft

ARNOLD, O'CONNOR, FRANCH-BALLESTER, KEEFE, CANELLAKIS, KALISH

Essay on the Program

Separating Centuries: Brahms Between Bach and Schoenberg

BY NICKY SWETT

An intermezzo separates two stages of action, smoothing out an abrupt transition or stark juxtaposition by offering a moment of pause or reflection. The famous Intermezzo from Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* is a heart-rending, nostalgic orchestral interlude that comes immediately after a character has learned of an affair—a revelation that will lead to a deadly duel in the second half of the opera. Intermezzos occur as middle movements in many 19th- and 20th-century sonatas, symphonies, and chamber works. Felix Mendelssohn and Johannes Brahms both included them in piano quartets as tender substitutes for scherzos, and Robert Schumann used intermezzos as slow movements in several major works. In Brahms's 1853 F-minor Piano Sonata, the penultimate movement is a brief intermezzo that reframes music heard earlier in the piece and smoothly transitions to the impressive finale.

At the very end of his life, between 1892 and 1893, Brahms published twenty short works for solo piano in four volumes (Opp. 116–119). A full fourteen of these are intermezzos. What does it mean for a thoughtful transitional number to transition to another thoughtful transition? These collections are often performed as complete sets, with one nostalgic, late-Romantic reverie leading to the next in a long sequence of affecting meditations. But even when excerpted and performed independently, each of these works contains some ineffable sense that it is meant to stand not between two acts of a staged drama or two distinct parts of a composition but between the musical priorities of the 18th and 19th centuries and those of the first decades of the 20th.

On one hand, Brahms's late intermezzos are perfect encapsulations of Romantic-era concerns. They are miniatures that would have fit well into performances at salons and can be artfully tucked into recital programs. The **Intermezzo in B minor, Op. 119, No. 1**, is only about three minutes long, and yet it is brimming with references to the musical past. The piano texture at the start, in which each measure almost gets lost in the sorrowful arpeggios that peel down from every melodic note, is borrowed directly from the poignant keyboard postludes of Schumann's 1848 song cycle *Dichterliebe*.

There are also aspects of Brahms's intermezzos that sound like even earlier music. This program begins with one of J. S. Bach's most dramatic and structurally inventive keyboard works. He published his **Partita in E minor** in 1731, though it represented an expansion of a suite he had written in the 1720s. The improvisatory beginning of the *Toccata* from this Partita features wandering lines in which the keyboard plays seven notes per beat. The slow fugue that follows has only three voices, yet these parts interact in ways that produce a multitude of gnarly sonorities. After the fugue, Bach returns to more dissonant iterations of the opening arpeggios and septuplets, and the music remains quite dense until the close of the movement. Likewise, at the end of his B-minor Intermezzo, Brahms brings back the mysterious, cascading reverie from the opening, but he writes more notes into each falling arpeggio. This makes the figures sound less like Schumann and more like the ornamental gestures of Baroque keyboard music, and the additional pitches result in the kinds of sweeping dissonances that were typical of Bach's harmonic language.

At the same time, it is hard not to notice

in Brahms's intermezzos certain hints of sounds and styles that came to the fore after his death. He himself had ambivalent feelings about the direction he saw music taking in the 1890s. He both admired and criticized Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler, whom he famously described as musical "insurrectionists." Though Brahms maintained that he would not let these new trends influence his music making, there are aspects of his works that proved very important to early 20th-century composers. Arnold Schoenberg identified in Brahms an uncanny ability to build endless melodies from simple, small units and to shape those melodies in ways that were free from many of the tired tropes of tonality. In the middle section of the B-minor Intermezzo, Brahms writes a hopeful tune in which a climbing, two-note motif reaches up many times. The figure always appears on different parts of the measure and coincides with chords of various flavors. This creates a sense that the tune is a constantly developing set of variations on a tiny shape. It is this capacity to simultaneously display the expressive continuity of the Romantic era and to anticipate some of the fragmentation associated with modernism that attracted Schoenberg to Brahms's music.

In the 1890s, as Brahms was writing his final works, the teenage Anton Webern was attending a boarding school in Klagenfurt in southern Austria, where he studied cello and piano. At the end of his time in secondary school, he also began experimenting with composition. His **Two Cello Pieces** date from 1899, and along with a few short songs, they are his earliest extant original pieces. In them, he displays a knack for writing long, constantly developing melodies, much like those found in the slow movement of Brahms's 1886 F-major Cello Sonata. But Webern's pieces feature a striking lack of verbatim repetition. If he had been following a typical miniature or song model, he probably would have brought back the initial tune at the end of each number. Instead, in his early, Romantic miniatures, the melody is an evolving statement; when it runs out of steam, the composer simply brings the piece to a close and starts another one.

In 1902, Webern moved to Vienna, where he studied musicology with Guido Adler at the university there. He kept composing and he eventually established gained Schoenberg as a mentor. The first pieces that Webern published, which date from the late 1900s and early 1910s, were heavily influenced by the harmonic and melodic language that Schoenberg and his acolytes had been toying with. Even when composing in this new milieu, Webern stuck with his idea of creating extremely small works that communicate a lot very efficiently. His 1910 **Four Pieces for Violin and Piano, Op. 7**, take only about five minutes to play. In each piece, the violin part calls for a number of extended techniques, including *col legno trattato*, in which the player drags the wood of the bow against the string, and ponticello, in which the player gets very close to the bridge in order to achieve a glassy, overtone-rich timbre. Webern puts detailed dynamics, articulations, and other markings into the music, so there is truly an abundance of action in each miniscule movement.

One of Webern's complaints about how people played his music was that they got a bit bogged down in all of this instructional language and wound up performing it very academically. He hoped that musicians would play the melodies, figures, and harmonies he wrote in his less tonal works in the same way they would present Romantic tunes like those he composed early on in his career, or those of Brahms. A passionate, emotional impulse can be found in all of the Op. 7 pieces. There is a tender duet between the piano's left hand and the violin's *espressivo* descending melody in the opening *Sehr lagsam*; constantly building dynamics in the violin part of the second piece, which come to a head in octaves and then later with violent, strummed chords; a haunting, wispy piano line in the particularly brief third piece; and an explosion of feeling from both players at the very start of the closing *Bewegt*. As in his early cello pieces, the

trick is that these moments of overwrought, direct expression don't happen twice. It takes a certain amount of attention, and also faith that he is in fact trying to say something very personal and not abstract or intellectual, to get something out of what he writes.

A similarly concise expressive intensity is fundamental to Schoenberg's groundbreaking 1912 melodrama ***Pierrot lunaire***. This piece quickly became a milestone work for a growing strain of modernist music, it codified a chamber ensemble that developed into a standard instrumentation during the 20th and 21st centuries, and it has been disturbing and intriguing listeners since its debut. But it had rather inauspicious origins in the form of a commission from a reportedly mediocre actress by the name of Albertine Zehme. She wanted to create a stage work based on a cycle of poems by Belgian writer Albert Giraud that report the miserable musings of Pierrot, a stock clown from *commedia dell'arte*, who is enchanted by the moon but embittered by life. After unsuccessful attempts at getting some incidental music for the production, she turned to Schoenberg, who promptly took over the project.

He picked 21 of Giraud's poems, in the German translation by Otto Erich Hartleben, and set them for voice and an ensemble of piano, violin, cello, flute, and clarinet. In a move that prefigured the practices of present-day musical theater bands, the violin doubles on viola, the flute sometimes switches to piccolo, and the clarinetist plays A, B-flat, and bass clarinets. Zehme wasn't much of a singer, and so Schoenberg wrote her part in *Sprechstimme*, a vocal style halfway between speech and song. Each of the vocalist's words is associated with specific notes in the score, but in performance most of these pitches are approximated. As a result, the singer contributes contours that are like parodies of the ups and downs involved in everyday language; the musicians often then take up these contours and present them with a proper sequence of notes.

At the work's premiere in Berlin in October of 1912, Schoenberg rigged up a system of curtains so the musicians were invisible and the only person on stage was Zehme, in full costume as Columbine, the wife of Pierrot. There were more than a few snickers in the audience, and indeed some hissing and booing. Some progressive, younger listeners recognized that Schoenberg was doing something quite special, but most of the crowd was outraged. The Viennese actress Salka Viertel, who attended the premiere, was impressed that the show continued to the end: "One could not help admiring her courage, as she went on from poem to poem, disregarding the hissing, booing, and insulting invective shouted at her and Schoenberg. . . . A well-known virtuoso, his face purple with rage, shouted: 'Shoot him.'"

What stirred people up, more than the spectacle and Zehme's "dilettantism," to use Viertel's word, was Schoenberg's unapologetic employment of atypical, unpredictable harmonies and melodies. Scholars often refer to this period of his compositional output as his "free atonal" stage, but "atonal" is not an entirely fair description of what Schoenberg and his compatriots at the time were doing. They did not want to discard tonality entirely, but rather aimed to put its relevance to musical experience further in the background in order to reorient our attention toward melody and toward the smaller contours that make up a melody. Schoenberg does this by repeating, transposing, and altering quite short motifs. Many of the methods of variation Schoenberg uses are contrapuntal techniques that had been around for centuries. The *Gigue* from Bach's E-minor Keyboard Partita is a fully realized fugue that is rather shocking for its leaping, fragmented subject and for the dissonant interactions between the three voices created from repetitions of the material. The second half of Bach's *Gigue* is another fugue based on the initial subject in inversion—that is, turned upside down in one of Schoenberg's favorite means of varying a sequence of melodic intervals. But Bach inevitably finds

ways to resolve the moments of tension he creates, often in an unexpected but elegant manner, while Schoenberg leaves many of the clashing sonorities he introduces hanging in the air before moving on to something else.

There are plenty of moments in *Pierrot lunaire*, and in all of Schoenberg's works from this period, that imply a tonal tonic in a sweet and unaffected manner. The final notes that the cello and violin play in this piece sound like something we might hear in a symphonic tone poem by Richard Strauss. But Schoenberg figured out ways to achieve the other possibility too: to write a stretch of music in which every vertically sounding chord results from the intervals in a melody, and not from a pre-ordained tonal trajectory. In the eighth number, "Nacht" (Night), he writes a passacaglia, a Baroque variation form that is generally based on continuous repetitions of a short harmonic pattern. Instead of varying a chord progression, Schoenberg repeats a three-note melodic shape again and again, constantly developing new harmonic and timbral possibilities by layering the entries of the vocalist and instruments. In No. 17, "Parodie," the instruments and voice closely imitate one another. Here, the *Sprechstimme* of the singer, in which the vocalist produces hazy, speech-like contours, is crucial. Schoenberg writes strictly defined instrumental melodies that follow from these vague contours, and from these instrumental melodies a set of chords emerges. By distilling very specific note combinations from the highly approximate voice part, Schoenberg achieves his goal of putting traditional tonal implications further in the background.

Though the harmonic language is at times quite dissonant, Schoenberg regularly draws on musical forms and movement types from the past. The descending arpeggios found throughout the first few numbers recall the poignant, wandering arpeggios of Brahms's Intermezzo, Op. 119, No. 1. The fourth piece in *Pierrot* includes a stunning chorale for piano, flute, clarinet, and violin. In the sixth number, an appeal to the holy Madonna, the combination of a pleasantly walking bassline and a lazy, floating flute melody brings to mind arias in many of Bach's cantatas. The twentieth piece is a rolling barcarolle, a Gondolier's song. Though the $\frac{6}{8}$ time that is characteristic of such a composition is a bit difficult to perceive, the instrumental ups and downs give us a sense of the waves that gently rock the boat as the singer intones the boatman's dark and ironic ditty.

Schoenberg saw himself as an inheritor of the Viennese musical tradition, and like a good Viennese composer, he uses waltz rhythms liberally in *Pierrot*. Sometimes he does this quite explicitly, as in the fifth number, in which the text describes a macabre "Valse de Chopin." Even when plain oom-pah-pahs are absent, Schoenberg gives his melodies a Viennese lilt—a little bit of expressive sway and character that generally results from a combination of dotted rhythms and chains of sighing, descending lines. At the start of No. 2, "Columbine," and in No. 15, "Heimweh" (Homesickness), the violin's tunes are almost cinematic in their level of delicious schmaltz, though the composer doesn't linger on these moments of pathos long enough to be accused of being sentimental or indulgent. As with Webern, abstaining from exact repetition is a way in which Schoenberg distinguishes his brand of expressive composing from that of Brahms, whom he so admired. Modernists of this period were not in the business of writing arresting arrays of ruminative intermezzos, but were constantly jumping ahead to the next dramatic act.

About the Artists

CLAUDIA HANSEN

Tony Arnold

Soprano Tony Arnold is internationally acclaimed as a leading proponent of contemporary music in concert and recording. Her unique blend of vocal virtuosity and communicative warmth, combined with wide-ranging skills in education and leadership, was recognized with the 2015 Brandeis Creative Arts Award. Her extensive repertory includes major works written for her by many leading composers of our time. She is a member of the International Contemporary Ensemble and enjoys regular guest appearances with leading ensembles and presenters worldwide. With more than 30 discs to her credit, she has recorded a broad segment of the modern vocal repertory with esteemed chamber music colleagues. She is a first-prize laureate of the Gaudeamus International and the Louise D. McMahon competitions. A graduate of Oberlin College and Northwestern University, Arnold was twice a fellow of the Aspen Music Festival as both conductor and singer. She currently teaches at the Peabody Conservatory and the Tanglewood Music Center.

SOPHIE ZHAI

Nicholas Canellakis

Nicholas Canellakis has become one of the most sought-after and innovative cellists of his generation, praised in the *New Yorker* as a "superb young soloist." Recent highlights include solo debuts with the Virginia, Albany, Bangor, and Delaware symphony orchestras; concerto appearances with the Erie Philharmonic, the New Haven Symphony, and the American Symphony Orchestra; Europe and Asia tours with CMS; and recitals throughout the US with his longtime duo collaborator, pianist-composer Michael Stephen Brown. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, he is a regular guest artist at many of the world's leading music festivals. Canellakis is the Artistic Director of Chamber Music Sedona in Arizona and is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music (where he was recently appointed to the cello faculty) and New England Conservatory.

ASHLEIGH TAYLOR

Jose Franch-Ballester

Spanish clarinetist Jose Franch-Ballester is the recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a winner of both the Young Concert Artists and Astral Artists auditions. He is Assistant Professor of Clarinet and Chamber Music at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, and regularly performs as the Principal Clarinetist at Camerata Pacifica in Santa Barbara, California. As a soloist, he has performed with orchestras such as the BBC Concert Orchestra, Louisville Orchestra, Santa Barbara Chamber Orchestra, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México, I Musici Montreal, and Orquesta Sinfónica Radio Televisión Española. Born in Moncofa into a family of musicians, Franch-Ballester graduated from the Joaquín Rodrigo Music Conservatory in Valencia, continuing his studies at the Curtis Institute of Music. He is an alum of CMS's Bowers Program.

LILLIAN FINCKEL

Gilbert Kalish

The profound influence of Gilbert Kalish as an educator and pianist in myriad performances and recordings has established him as a major figure in American music. In 2002 he received the Richard J. Bogomolny National Service Award for his contributions to chamber music, and in 2006 he was awarded the Peabody Medal by the Peabody Conservatory. He was the pianist of the Boston Symphony Chamber Players for 30 years and was a founding member of the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, a group that flourished during the 1960s and 70s in support of new music. He is particularly well known for his partnership of many years with mezzo-soprano Jan DeGaetani, as well as for current collaborations with soprano Dawn Upshaw and cellists Timothy Eddy and Joel Krosnick. A distinguished professor at Stony Brook University, Kalish first performed with CMS in 1979 and has done so regularly since 2004.

Erin Keefe

Violinist Erin Keefe is the Concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra and on the violin faculty of the Curtis Institute of Music. Winner of an Avery Fisher Career Grant as well as numerous international competitions, she has appeared as soloist in recent seasons with the Minnesota Orchestra, New York City Ballet Orchestra, Korean Symphony Orchestra, Iceland Symphony, Lahti Symphony, Sendai Philharmonic, and Gottingen Symphony, and has given recitals throughout the United States, Europe and Asia. An alum of CMS's Bowers Program, she has been performing with CMS since 2005, and has recorded for Naxos, CMS Studio Recordings, BIS, Onyx, and Deutsche Grammophon. Her festival appearances have included Music@Menlo, La Jolla SummerFest, Mainly Mozart, Ravinia, and the Seattle, Bravo! Vail, Colorado College, Skaneateles, Music in the Vineyards, and Bridgehampton Chamber Music Festivals. Keefe has appeared as guest concertmaster with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic, and São Paulo Symphony Orchestra.

LISA MARIE MAZZUCCO

Tara Helen O'Connor

Tara Helen O'Connor, recipient of an Avery Fisher Career Grant and a two-time Grammy nominee, was the first wind player to participate in CMS's Bowers Program. A regular performer at major music festivals around the country, she is also the Co-Artistic Director of the Music from Angel Fire Festival in New Mexico, the Artistic Director of the Essex Winter Series, a member of the woodwind quintet Windscape, and a founding member of the Naumburg Award–winning New Millennium Ensemble. She has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, EMI Classics, Koch International, CMS Studio Recordings, and Bridge Records, and can be heard on numerous film and television soundtracks. She has premiered hundreds of new works and has collaborated with the Orion, St. Lawrence, and Emerson String Quartets. A Wm. S. Haynes flute artist, O'Connor is on faculty at Yale School of Music. Additionally, she teaches at Bard College and the Manhattan School of Music.

About the Chamber Music Society

Founded in 1969, the **Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center (CMS)** brings the transcendent experience of great chamber music to more people than any other organization of its kind worldwide. Under the artistic leadership of cellist David Finckel and pianist Wu Han, the multi-generational and international performing artist roster of 140 of the world's finest chamber musicians enable us to present chamber music of every instrumentation, style, and historical period.

Each season, we reach a global audience with more than 150 performances and education programs in our home at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on tour with residencies worldwide.

We offer a wide range of learning formats and experiences to engage and inform listeners of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of musical knowledge through our education and community engagement programs. The Bowers Program, our competitive three-season residency, is dedicated to developing the chamber music leaders of the future and integrates this selection of exceptional early-career musicians into every facet of CMS activities.

Our incomparable digital presence, which regularly enables us to reach millions of viewers and listeners annually, includes our weekly national radio program, heard locally on WQXR 105.9 FM on Saturday and Monday evenings; radio programming in Taiwan and mainland China; and appearances on American Public Media's *Performance Today,* the monthly program *In Concert with CMS* on the PBS ALL ARTS broadcast channel, and SiriusXM's Symphony Hall channel, among others. The PBS documentary film *Chamber Music Society Returns* chronicles CMS's return to live concerts at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall and on a six-city national tour. It is currently available to watch on PBS Passport. Our website also hosts an online archive of more than 1,700 video recordings of performance and education videos free to the public.

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