Press Contact:

Elizabeth Boone, The WNET Group, 212.560.8831, booneb@wnet.org

Press Materials: [pbs.org/pressroom](http://pbs.org/pressroom) or [thirteen.org/pressroom](http://thirteen.org/pressroom)

*Great Performances* Explores Jessye Norman and Kathleen Battle’s Legendary Spirituals Concert at Carnegie Hall in Documentary’s U.S. Broadcast Premiere February 24 on PBS

**Synopsis:**

Discover the behind-the-scenes story of **Jessye Norman** and **Kathleen Battle’s** famed concert at Carnegie Hall on March 18, 1990, in ***Great Performances: The Magic of Spirituals***, premiering Friday, February 24 at 9 p.m. on PBS ([check local listings](http://www.pbs.org/tv_schedules/)), [pbs.org/gperf](http://www.pbs.org/gperf) and the [PBS App](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/) as part of Black History Month. With legendary African American contralto **Marian Anderson** in attendance, many wondered if the two singers would compete or join forces and sing together. Showcasing extended excerpts of Norman and Battle in performance, the documentary examines the preparation required and the historic concert’s enduring impact. New interviews and reminiscences are featured from the concert’s producer **Peter Gelb** (currently Met Opera General Manager), soprano **Angel Blue**, author and playwright **Darryl Pinckney**, arranger and composer **Evelyn Simpson-Curenton**, Harlem Gospel Singers’ founder **Queen Esther Marrow**, Fisk Jubilee Singers Musical Director **Paul T. Kwami**, and jazz and opera singer **Jocelyn B. Smith**.

**Notable Talent:**

* **Peter Gelb** –Met Opera General Manager
* **Angel Blue** – Operatic soprano
* **Darryl Pinckney** – Author and playwright
* **Evelyn Simpson-Curenton** – Arranger and composer
* **Queen Esther Marrow** – Founder of Harlem Gospel Singers
* **Paul T. Kwami** –Fisk Jubilee Singers Musical Director
* **Jocelyn B. Smith** – Jazz and opera singer

**Noteworthy Facts:**

* Peter Gelb originally envisioned the idea for the concert to spotlight both singers and pay homage to their African American roots.
* Norman and Battle’s Spirituals concert at Carnegie Hall inspired opera singer Angel Blue to continue on her path to becoming a professional singer.

**Short Listing:**

Glimpse behind the curtain at opera stars Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman’s famed 1990 concert.

**Long Listing:**

Glimpse behind the curtain at opera legends Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman’s famed concert at Carnegie Hall on March 18, 1990, featuring performance clips and new interviews with opera star Angel Blue, Met Opera General Manager Peter Gelb and more.

**Series Overview:**

Throughout its 50-year history on PBS, ***Great Performances***has provided an unparalleled showcase of the best in all genres of the performing arts, serving as America’s most prestigious and enduring broadcaster of cultural programming. Showcasing a diverse range of artists from around the world, the series has earned 67 Emmy Awards and six Peabody Awards. The [***Great Performances*** website](https://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/) hosts exclusive videos, interviews, photos, full episodes and more. The series is produced by The WNET Group. ***Great Performances***is available for streaming concurrent with broadcast on [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the [PBS Video App,](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/) available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO.

**Production Credits:**

Directed by Dag Freyer and produced by Claus Wischmann, ***Great Performances: The Magic of Spirituals*** is produced by Sounding Images in cooperation with C Major Entertainment in co-production with ZDF and ARTE. **Great Performances** is produced by The WNET Group. For ***Great Performances***, Stephanie Dawson is producer, Bill O’Donnell is series producer and David Horn is executive producer.

**Funding:**
Funding for ***Great Performances: The Magic of Spirituals*** was provided by Leni and Peter May. Series funding for ***Great Performances*** is provided by The Joseph & Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, Sue and Edgar Wachenheim III, the Abra Prentice Foundation, LLC, Jody and John Arnhold, The Starr Foundation, The Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, the Thea Petschek Iervolino Foundation, Seton J. Melvin, the Estate of Worthington Mayo-Smith, the Jack Lawrence Trust, Ellen and James S. Marcus and Leni and Peter May.

**Websites:** <http://pbs.org/gperf>, [facebook.com/GreatPerformances](http://www.facebook.com/GreatPerformances), [@GPerfPBS](https://twitter.com/GPerfPBS), [giphy.com/great-performances](https://giphy.com/great-performances/), [youtube.com/greatperformancespbs](https://youtube.com/greatperformancespbs/) #GreatPerformancesPBS

 **About The WNET Group**

[The WNET Group](http://wnet.org/) creates inspiring media content and meaningful experiences for diverse audiences nationwide. It is the community-supported home of New York’s [THIRTEEN](http://thirteen.org/)–America’s flagship PBS station–[WLIW21,](http://wliw.org/) THIRTEEN PBSKids, WLIW World and Create; [NJ PBS,](https://www.mynjpbs.org/) New Jersey’s statewide public television network; Long Island’s only NPR station WLIW-FM[; ALL ARTS,](http://allarts.org/) the arts and culture media provider; and newsroom [NJ Spotlight News.](https://www.njspotlightnews.org/) Through these channels and streaming platforms, The WNET Group brings arts, culture, education, news, documentary, entertainment and DIY programming to more than five million viewers each month. The WNET Group’s award-winning productions include signature PBS series ***Nature***, ***Great******Performances***, ***American******Masters*** and ***Amanpour and Company***and trusted local news programs ***MetroFocus*** and ***NJ Spotlight News with Briana Vannozzi***. Inspiring curiosity and nurturing dreams, The WNET Group’s award-winning Kids’ Media and Education team produces the PBS KIDS series ***Cyberchase***, interactive ***Mission US*** history games, and resources for families, teachers and caregivers. A leading nonprofit public media producer for nearly 60 years, The WNET Group presents and distributes content that fosters lifelong learning, including multiplatform initiatives addressing poverty, jobs, economic opportunity, social justice, understanding and the environment. Through Passport, station members can stream new and archival programming anytime, anywhere. The WNET Group represents the best in public media. Join us.

###