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Fall events at Seattle Opera reflect on the legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers

Plus, get a sneak peek of *Jubilee* at Seattle Opera's annual Open House

SEATTLE—With the 2024/25 season underway, Seattle Opera is turning its attention to the October world premiere of [*Jubilee*](#), Tazewell Thompson's new opera about the historic [*Fisk Jubilee Singers*](#). To complement that production, Seattle Opera has lined up a series of events, recitals, and talks that provide audiences with the chance to engage with the history and legacy of the group of Black American musicians who forever changed music history.

"The story of *Jubilee* is such a moving one because it is about real people who led full lives and overcame significant challenges," said **Dennis Robinson Jr., Director of Programs and Partnerships**. "We want to make sure that, in putting this story on our stage, we're also exploring the legacy of Fisk University as a whole. Especially because there are no Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs) in the Pacific Northwest, it's important to learn more about the impacts these institutions have had on the United States and what they've meant to Black communities in particular."

Events for *Jubilee*

Events kick off in mid-September with an online webinar series, hosted in partnership with [*The Rhapsody Project*](#), titled "**Face the Music**." Over the course of eight weekly sessions, participants will explore stories of Black American musical history, fostering discussions about racism and how to confront it in their daily

lives. Sessions will emphasize artists who were nonconformists, women, and people of the African diaspora, exploring diverse narratives about American culture and artists.

Next is a recital series titled “**Black Excellence in Music**,” hosted in partnership with cast members from **The Fifth Avenue Theatre’s** production of ***After Midnight***. Singers **Sarah Joyce Cooper, Darren Drone, Yusef Seevers,** and **Porscha Shaw** will perform a program showcasing Black American musical traditions, including spirituals, musical theater numbers, and jazz standards. Four performances will be held September 11–14 at community venues across King County, and all tickets are either free or pay-what-you-wish with no minimum requirement.

On September 21, audiences are invited to explore the Opera Center at Seattle Opera’s annual [Open House](#). Visitors will be treated to a sneak peek of the upcoming *Jubilee* through a live feed of a working rehearsal, as well as a Q&A with Artistic Ambassador **Kenneth Kellogg** and performances from [Lowbrow Opera Collective](#), [Opera on Tap Seattle](#), Seattle Opera’s [Teen Vocal Studio](#), and the [Jane Lang Davis Creation Lab](#).

On October 6, Seattle Opera will host a celebration for [Jubilee Day](#), the annual commemoration of the day the original Fisk Jubilee Singers set out on their first tour in 1871. Featuring performances from local ensembles such as [The Sound of the Northwest](#) and [Lifted! Youth Gospel Choir](#), this celebration of choral singing and communal music-making will also reflect on the legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the impact they’ve had on singers today.

In the leadup to opening night of *Jubilee*, audiences will have the chance to hear directly from the creators of the opera and the current-day leadership of Fisk University in a pair of **Opera Talks**. The first, “[The Making of Jubilee](#)” (October 11), will feature creator and director **Tazewell Thompson** in conversation with Artistic Ambassador **Kenneth Kellogg** and General Director **Christina Scheppelmann**. The three will discuss Thompson’s personal relationship to the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the spirituals they sang, as well as the inspiration behind this opera. In the second, “[The Legacy of Fisk University](#)” (October 12), audiences will hear from some of the heirs to the Fisk legacy: the current director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, **Dr. G. Preston Wilson Jr.**, and former Jubilee singer **Marlette Buchanan**. The two will share their experiences with the Fisk Jubilee Singers and reflect on how the ensemble’s legacy has shaped Fisk University.

Finally, on October 22, Seattle Opera is offering a [school-day matinee performance](#) of *Jubilee*. Tickets to this special 10:30 AM show are just \$20 for school students and homeschool groups, with discounts available for Title 1 schools.

Other fall events

Beyond the events for *Jubilee*, Seattle Opera is providing other ways for community members to support the work of local artists and organizations.

The youngest opera fans can enjoy an interactive musical story time at [Opera Time](#). In sessions on September 21 and October 26, children ages 2–5 will move with their parents or guardians through a progressive curriculum exploring opera and the arts through songs, stories, and creative play.

On Saturday, September 28, Seattle Opera will support the **Alzheimer's Association's [Walk to End Alzheimer's](#)**. Seattle Opera staff will help with registration, distribute water at Seattle Opera's refueling station, and walk in the event themselves. Soprano **Tess Altiveros** (Papagena, *The Magic Flute* '25) will sing the national anthem at the opening ceremony.

Finally, on Thursday, November 7, Seattle Opera and **Seattle Children's Theatre** will co-host a workshop of librettist **Paige Hernandez** and composer **Victor Simonson's** hip-hop opera [Stomping Grounds](#). This innovative story, which premiered at the Glimmerglass Festival in 2017, follows a diverse group of characters as their paths cross in a coffee shop under threat from gentrification. The workshop performance kickstarts Seattle Children's Theatre's adaptation of the opera into a new youth production.

Performance and event information

- **Online Webinar: Face the Music**
8 sessions: Tuesdays, September 10–October 29, 6:30–8:00 PM
Info and registration at seattleopera.org/face-the-music.
- **Artist Recital: Black Excellence in Music**
Four performances:
 - *The Opera Center: Wednesday, September 11, at 7:30 PM*
 - *Black & Tan Hall: Thursday, September 12, at 7:30 PM*
 - *Midtown Square Public Plaza: Friday, September 13, at 6:00 PM*
 - *Federal Way Library: Saturday, September 14, at 1:00 PM*Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/black-excellence.
- **Opera Center Open House**
Saturday, September 21, 1:00–4:00 PM, The Opera Center
Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/openhouse.
- **Opera Time**

Two Saturdays:

- *September 21 at 12:00 PM (before the Open House), The Opera Center*
- *October 26 at 10:00 AM, The Opera Center*

Pay-what-you-wish tickets and info at seattleopera.org/operatime.

- **Walk to End Alzheimer's**

Saturday, September 28, at 10:00 AM, Seattle Center International Fountain

More info at https://act.alz.org/site/TR/Walk2024/WA-WashingtonState?fr_id=18005&pg=entry. Email programs@seattleopera.org to volunteer.

- **Jubilee Day**

Sunday, October 6, at 6:00 PM, Pacific Lutheran University

Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/jubileeday.

- **Opera Talk: The Making of Jubilee**

Friday, October 11, at 7:00 PM, The Opera Center

Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/making-jubilee.

- **Opera Talk: The Legacy of Fisk University**

Saturday, October 12, at 4:00 PM, The Opera Center

Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/fisk-legacy.

- **School-Day Matinee Performance of Jubilee**

Tuesday, October 22, at 10:30 AM, McCaw Hall

More info at seattleopera.org/jubileeschools. Email groups@seattleopera.org to purchase tickets.

- **Workshop of Stomping Grounds**

Thursday, November 7, at 7:30 PM, The Opera Center

Info and RSVP at seattleopera.org/stomping-grounds.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest through music, storytelling, and programs for people of all ages. Each year, more than 50,000 people attend the company's performances, and more than 100,000 people are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. The organization brings opera to life in a number of different ways, offering artistic excellence through national and international collaborations. Seattle Opera strives to create an environment where artists, staff, behind-the-scenes workers, and members of the community feel a strong connection to the company, and to the art of opera. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING.

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