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## **THIRTEEN's *Great Performances* Presents Nas Performing "Illmatic" With the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center on February 2 on PBS**

Two decades after the album's critically acclaimed release, hip-hop artist Nas teamed up with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, to stage a symphonic rendition of "Illmatic," one of the most revered albums in hip-hop history. The new concert film *Great Performances — Nas Live From the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop* captures the energy and nostalgia of this collaborative performance and premieres nationwide Friday, February 2 at 9 p.m. on PBS (check local listings). The program will be available to stream the following day at [pbs.org/gperf](http://pbs.org/gperf) and PBS apps.

Released in 1994, "Illmatic" is the seminal debut album from Nas, and has long been considered one of the greatest hip-hop records of all time. The album is a densely textured, deeply lyrical portrait of life in the largest public housing project in North America, the Queensbridge Houses, located in the Long Island City area of New York City, home to nearly 7,000 people.

"It's crazy, you know, I wrote this in the projects in New York City. Here we are in the capital of America, Washington, DC, and, you know, a bunch of white people with strings and all that, playing this album, and they [sic] feeling it," says Nas in exclusive behind-the-scenes footage captured during on-stage rehearsal before the concert.

Alternating between candid reflections from Nas, photos from his youth, backstage footage and a symphonic performance of "Illmatic," the program gives an inside look at the inspiration behind Nas' music and his early life growing up in New York City. The combination

of Nas and the orchestra reinvents the sound of some of his most popular songs, like “N.Y. State of Mind,” “The World Is Yours,” “Memory Lane (Sittin’ in Da Park)” and “It Ain’t Hard to Tell” to create a classical hip-hop journey.

“This was the first time, as a classical orchestra conductor, I was going to branch out into the realm of doing hip-hop music and rap music. And the idea of finally tackling this genre was something I was really looking forward to do,” says National Symphony Orchestra Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke about this innovative collaboration.

This performance was recorded live in March 2014 as the centerpiece of the *One Mic: Hip Hop Culture Worldwide* festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., home of the National Symphony Orchestra.

**Great Performances** is produced by THIRTEEN PRODUCTIONS LLC for WNET, one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers. Throughout its more than 40-year history on public television, **Great Performances** has provided viewers across the country with 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.

A Mass Appeal production, **Nas Live From the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop** is directed by Jason Goldwatch and executive produced by Nas, Anthony Saleh, Peter Bittenbender and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. For **Great Performances**, Bill O’Donnell is series producer; David Horn is executive producer.

This **Great Performances** presentation is funded by the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Arts Fund, The Joseph & Robert Cornell Memorial Foundation, the Irene Diamond Fund, Rosalind P. Walter, The LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, The Agnes Varis Trust, The Starr Foundation, the Kate W. Cassidy Foundation, the Philip and Janice Levin Foundation, Ellen and James S. Marcus, The Abra Prentice Foundation and PBS.

## ABOUT THE NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The 2017–2018 season marks the National Symphony Orchestra’s 87th season, and Gianandrea Noseda’s first as its music director. The Italian conductor serves as the Orchestra’s seventh music director, joining the NSO’s legacy of such distinguished leaders as Christoph Eschenbach, Leonard Slatkin, Mstislav Rostropovich, Antal Dorati, Howard Mitchell, and Hans Kindler. Its artistic leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Steven Reineke and Artistic Advisor Ben Folds. Founded in 1931, the Orchestra has always been committed to artistic excellence and music education. In 1986, the National Symphony became an artistic affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, where it has performed a full season of subscription concerts since the Center opened in 1971. The 96-member NSO regularly participates in events of national and international importance, including official holiday celebrations through its regularly televised appearances for Capitol Concerts, and local radio broadcasts on Classical WETA 90.9FM, making the NSO one of the most-heard orchestras in the country. The Orchestra performs approximately 150 concerts each year, including classical and popular concerts at the Kennedy Center, at Wolf Trap in the summer, and on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol; chamber music performances in the Terrace Theater, on the Millennium Stage, and at theaters around D.C. It has a distinguished history of touring, and an extensive education program, with a range of offerings for families and children ages three and up. Additionally, the NSO’s community engagement projects are nationally recognized, including NSO In Your Neighborhood, which comprises a week of approximately 50 performances in schools, churches, community centers, and other neighborhood venues, and Sound Health, a collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and its affiliated organizations. Career development opportunities

for young musicians include the NSO Youth Fellowship Program and its acclaimed Summer Music Institute. For more information, visit [nationalsymphony.org](http://nationalsymphony.org).

### **About WNET**

WNET is America's flagship PBS station and parent company of [THIRTEEN](#) and [WLIW21](#). WNET also operates [NJTV](#), the statewide public media network in New Jersey. Through its broadcast channels, three cable services (THIRTEEN PBSKids, Create and World) and online streaming sites, WNET brings quality arts, education and public affairs programming to more than five million viewers each week. WNET produces and presents such acclaimed PBS series as [Nature](#), [Great Performances](#), [American Masters](#), [PBS NewsHour Weekend](#) and a range of documentaries, children's programs, and local news and cultural offerings. WNET's groundbreaking series for children and young adults include [Get the Math](#), [Oh Noah!](#) and [Cyberchase](#) as well as [Mission US](#), the award-winning interactive history game. WNET highlights the tri-state's unique culture and diverse communities through [NYC-ARTS](#), [Theater Close-Up](#), [NJTV News with Mary Alice Williams](#) and [MetroFocus](#), the daily multi-platform news magazine focusing on the New York region. In addition, WNET produces online-only programming including the award-winning series about gender identity, [First Person](#), and an intergenerational look at tech and pop culture, [The Chatterbox with Kevin and Grandma Lill](#). In 2015, THIRTEEN launched Passport, an online streaming service which allows members to see new and archival THIRTEEN and PBS programming anytime, anywhere: [www.thirteen.org/passport](http://www.thirteen.org/passport).

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