

Friday  
**APR 17**  
7:30 pm

# Renée Fleming's *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*



This event is made possible through the generous support of the Maurice and Betsy Joy Programming Fund, Kimbell Performing Arts Programming Fund, Constance Roeder Chamber Music Fund, and the Eugene A. and C. Florence Stephenson Chamber Music Fund.

Sponsored by

**Jeff & Mary  
WEINBERG**  
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Jeff and Mary Weinberg are pleased to support performing arts experiences in our community and help bring world-class artists, like Renée Fleming, to the Lied Center stage.

**PROGRAM***Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*

Renée Fleming, soprano

Howard Watkins, piano

*The following is accompanied by a film provided by National Geographic.**The audience is asked kindly to hold applause until the end of the film.*

- "Pretty Bird" ..... Hazel Dickens (1925–2011)
- "Care selve" from *Atalanta*, HWV 35 ..... George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
- "Endless Space" ..... Nico Muhly (b. 1981), Robinson Meyer (b. 1991),  
Thomas Traherne (1636–1674)
- "Bailèro" from *Chants d'Auvergne* ..... Joseph Canteloube (1879–1957)
- "All is Full of Love" ..... Björk (b. 1965)
- "Epilogo" from *Floresta do Amazonas* ..... Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887–1959)
- "Twilight and Shadow" ..... Howard Shore (b. 1946), Philippa Jane Boyens (b. 1962)  
from *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King*
- "Evening" ..... Kevin Puts (b. 1972), Dorianne Laux (b. 1952)
- "Red Mountains Sometimes Cry" ..... Curtis Green (b. 1995), Pearce Green (b. 1998)
- "What the World Needs Now is Love" ..... Burt Bacharach (1928–2023),  
Hal David (1921–2012)

**20-Minute Intermission**

Entr'acte: "Before the Deluge" (recording), Jackson Browne

Arranged by Caroline Shaw with Rhiannon Giddens, Alison Krauss, Renée Fleming  
and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, piano

- "Lascia ch'io pianga" from *Rinaldo* ..... George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)
- "Bel piacere" from *Agrippina*
- "O mio babbino caro" from *Gianni Schicchi* ..... Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924)
- "We Hold These Truths" ..... J. Todd Frazier (b. 1969)
- "A Letter from Sullivan Ballou" ..... John Kander (b. 1927)
- Traditional American songs, to be announced from the stage
- "Down in the Depths (on the 90<sup>th</sup> Floor)" ..... Cole Porter (1891–1964)
- "You'll Never Walk Alone" ..... Richard Rodgers (1902–1979), Oscar Hammerstein II  
from *Carousel* (1895–1960)
- "I Could Have Danced All Night" ..... Alan Jay Lerner (1918–1986), Frederick Loewe  
from *My Fair Lady* (1901–1988)

Program is subject to change.

Renée Fleming appears by arrangement with IMG Artists, [www.imgartists.com](http://www.imgartists.com).

### A note from Renée Fleming

When I was 14, the film *Soylent Green* was released, a sci-fi thriller about a dystopian future of worldwide pollution, dying oceans, depleted resources and rampant starvation. The story was set in the year 2022.

The movie has faded from memory, but one scene left a profound impression. An aged researcher, unable to go on, has chosen assisted suicide at a government clinic. To ease his last moments of life, he is shown videos of a world that no longer exists: flowers and savannahs, flocks and herds, unpolluted skies and waters, all set to a soundtrack of classical music by Tchaikovsky, Beethoven and Grieg.

This scene captured my imagination in a terrifying way. The impact increased when I later learned that the actor playing the researcher, Edward G. Robinson, was terminally ill at the time it was filmed.

Fast forward to the pandemic. After more than two decades of constant touring, usually to urban cultural centers, performances abruptly ceased, and I suddenly found myself at home. I sought comfort in long walks outside near my house. I needed this time outdoors to maintain my emotional equilibrium, and I was reminded that nature would always be my touchstone. At the same time, the news about climate change grew more alarming: the extinction of animals we took for granted when we were children, the knowledge that white rhinos had disappeared from the wild, and daily reports of heat, fires and flooding. I realized that the crisis we had been warned of for so long had arrived.

I thought of the great legacy of song literature that I love, when Romantic-era poets and composers reveled in imagery of nature, finding reflections of human experience in the environment. I decided to record some of this music, and to juxtapose these classics with the voices of living composers, addressing our current, troubled relationship with the natural world.

The result, in collaboration with my friend Yannick Nézet-Séguin, was the album *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*. When it received the 2023 Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album, I was thrilled and I had the idea to tour music addressing this theme of nature as both our inspiration and our victim.

I was incredibly fortunate to connect with the imaginative, dedicated leadership at the National Geographic Society, the global non-profit committed to exploring, illuminating and protecting the wonder of our world. It has been so exciting to work with this universally respected landmark institution. I am deeply grateful for the help of President and Chief Operating Officer Michael Ulica, Chief Executive Officer Jill Tiefenthaler and Producer/Editor Sam Deleon, whose expertise and vision have been instrumental in creating the video you will see in the first half of tonight's program.

Thankfully, the stunning natural world depicted in this film still exists, unlike that movie scene so upsetting to my younger self. In blending these beautiful images with music, my hope is, in some small way, to rekindle your appreciation of nature, and encourage any efforts you can make to protect the planet we share.

Sincerely,  
Renée Fleming

### **Renée Fleming, soprano**

Renée Fleming is internationally celebrated for her vocal and dramatic artistry, as well as her dedicated advocacy for the powerful impacts of the creative arts in health. A 2023 Kennedy Center Honoree and winner of five Grammy Awards and the U.S. National Medal of Arts, she has sung for momentous occasions from the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony to the Super Bowl. In 2023, the World Health Organization appointed her as Goodwill Ambassador for Arts and Health.

Renée's latest recital and concert program, *Voice of Nature: the Anthropocene*, inspired by her 2023 Grammy-winning album, includes an original film created by the National Geographic Society to reflect the musical selections. In 2024 at the Metropolitan Opera, she reprised her role in *The Hours*, an opera based on the award-winning novel and film. In 2026, she returns to the Opéra National de Paris with her acclaimed portrayal of Pat Nixon in *Nixon in China*.

Renée's anthology *Music and Mind: Harnessing the Arts for Health and Wellness* was published in 2024. A prominent advocate for research at the intersection of arts, health and neuroscience, she created a live program called *Music and Mind*, which she has presented in more than 70 cities around the world. The Renée Fleming NeuroArts Investigator Awards, her initiative with the Aspen Institute and the NeuroArts Blueprint at Johns Hopkins University, funds interdisciplinary research projects by early career scientists in collaboration with creative artists.

Known for bringing new audiences to classical music and opera, Renée has sung not only with Luciano Pavarotti and Andrea Bocelli, but also with Elton John, Paul Simon, Sting, Josh Groban, Dead and Company, and Joan Baez. Renée's voice is featured on the soundtracks of Best Picture Oscar winners *The Shape of Water* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Co-artistic director of the Aspen Opera Center and VocalArts at the Aspen Music Festival, Renée is also artist development advisor at Wolf Trap Opera. Renée's other awards include the 2023 Crystal Award from the World Economic Forum in Davos, the Fulbright Lifetime Achievement Medal and honorary doctorates from 10 major universities.

[www.reneefleming.com](http://www.reneefleming.com)



### **Howard Watkins, pianist**

American pianist Howard Watkins is a frequent associate of some of the world's leading musicians on the concert stage and as an assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera. His appearances throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia, Russia and Israel have included collaborations with Renée Fleming, Joyce DiDonato, Diana Damrau, Thomas Hampson, Kathleen Battle, Grace Bumbry, Mariusz Kwiecien, Anna Netrebko and Matthew Polenzani at such venues as the Metropolitan

Museum of Art, Spivey Hall, Kennedy Center, U.S. Supreme Court, Alice Tully Hall, the three stages of Carnegie Hall, the Elbphilharmonie and the Bolshoi Theater. His faculty affiliations include Juilliard, the Bard College Conservatory of Music, the Yale School of Music as a Visiting Presidential Fellow, the Merola program of San Francisco Opera, the Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Program, the Tanglewood Music Center, the Aspen Music Festival, the Mannes School of Music, the North Carolina School of the Arts, the International Vocal Arts Institute (Israel, Japan and China), IIVA in Italy, the Brancaleoni Music Festival in Italy, the Tokyo International Vocal Arts Academy (TIVAA), and VOICEexperience in Orlando and Tampa, FL, and Savannah, GA. A guest master coach for the Cafritz Young Artists of Washington Opera and the Opera Theater of St. Louis, Watkins has worked on the music staffs of Palm Beach Opera, the Washington National Opera, and LA Opera. A native of Dayton, OH, Watkins earned his doctorate in accompanying and chamber music at the University of Michigan. Honored as the 2004 recipient of the Paul C. Boylan Award from the University of Michigan for his outstanding contributions to the field of music, he is also the 2019 recipient of the Lift Every Voice Legacy Award from the National Opera Association. Watkins was recognized as one of the 2022 top professionals of the year by Musical America in part for his work to celebrate the music of Black composers and singers.