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Exclusive Photos: Great Performances Features Nas Live from Kennedy Center

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Nas Live from the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop (PBS)

Great Performances has come a long way. When most think about the PBS standard, they think of Broadway musicals and opera tenors singing from *Carmen*, not of rappers and hip hop artists. On Friday, Feb. 2 (check local listings), *Great Performances* will feature Grammy-nominated hip hop artist Nas as he performs at the Kennedy Center.

Nas Live From the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop sees the 13-time Grammy nominee perform a symphonic rendition of his critically-acclaimed debut album, “Illmatic,” with the National Symphony Orchestra.



Nas Live from the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop

This new *Great Performances* concert film captures the energy and nostalgia of Nas' groundbreaking album. 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, D.C., and 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 me [sic], as a classical orchestra conductor, 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.

Nas Live From the Kennedy Center: Classical Hip-Hop premieres Friday, Feb. 2 (check local listings) on PBS and will be available to stream on Saturday, Feb. 3 at pbs.org/gperf and through PBS apps.



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