



Arts for All Gala headliner
Jon Batiste in 2025

FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY AT 20: A LEGACY OF ARTISTRY, INNOVATION, AND PLACE

BY OLIVIA DECKER

THIS JULY, FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY CELEBRATES ITS 20TH Anniversary Summer Season, marking two decades of artistic excellence in one of the world’s most celebrated cultural destinations. Founded in 2006, the Festival has grown into a signature summer gathering that brings together music, dance, visual arts, wellness, and culinary experiences, set against Napa Valley’s iconic vineyards, wineries, and private estates.

“For many of our guests, Festival Napa Valley has become an annual summertime tradition,” said Rick Walker, President and CEO. “There is something deeply meaningful about seeing familiar faces return year after year, while welcoming new audiences to discover the Festival for the first time.”

Looking back over two decades reveals a constellation of moments that have come to define the Festival’s singular spirit. Among them: the Russian National Orchestra continuing to play from memory in complete darkness during a power failure at the Lincoln Theater in one of the Festival’s first seasons; conductor Stéphane Denève celebrating his wedding at Bouchaine Vineyards in 2007; Opening Night in 2013, which



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Young People’s Chorus of NYC

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Time for Three

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHERVIN LAINEZ



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Lionel Richie performed at the 2024 Arts For All Gala

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Timothy Blackburn, Robert Redford, and Athena Blackburn

PHOTO COURTESY OF FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY

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Whoopi Goldberg, Sophia Loren, and Robert Redford in 2014

brought Broadway superstar Audra McDonald to the Festival stage; Renée Fleming delivering a luminous performance at Castello di Amorosa; and the 2014 tribute honoring Sophia Loren at Far Niente Winery in celebration of her 80th birthday. These are among the countless performances that remain etched in audience memory.

The 2009 performance by 14-year-old violinist Chad Hoopes, a Bouchaine Young Artist, was a powerful testament to the Festival's commitment to discovering and nurturing extraordinary young talent. Hoopes performed Vivaldi's Four Seasons, with narration by Robert Redford. Over the years, Festival audiences have formed enduring connections with artists such as Joshua Bell and Jean-Yves Thibaudet, both of whom have returned more than ten times, highlighting the deep bond between Festival artists and audiences.



Wynton Marsalis will headline
the Arts for All Gala 2026

The annual Arts for All Gala has also become a cornerstone of the Summer Season, seamlessly blending artistry and philanthropy. With a live auction offering once-in-a-lifetime experiences ranging from intimate private concerts to exclusive travel adventures, the Gala is instrumental in advancing the Festival's mission. To date, it has raised more than \$33 million to support education and the arts, with stars such as Jon Batiste, Diana Ross, Kristin Chenoweth, Lionel Richie, Carrie Underwood, and Jennifer Hudson contributing their talents in support of this important cause.

The 20th Anniversary Summer Season, running from July 4 through July 19, 2026, honors a remarkable legacy while embracing bold new artistic visions. Featuring more than 60 music and dance performances, alongside visual arts, wellness programs, and gourmet food and wine experiences, the season



Kristin Chenoweth

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Danielle de Niese

PHOTOS COURTESY OF TK (LEFT), TK (RIGHT)



Renee Fleming

PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARVIN JOSEPH (LEFT), CHRIS GONZ (RIGHT)



Quinn Kelsey by Chris Gonz...
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Joshua Bell and Larisa Martinez

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Renee Fleming, Jan Shrem,
and Maria Manetti

PHOTO COURTESY OF DREW ALITZER

Rick Walker, Diana Ross
and Karen Walker



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID ORTEGA

Arts for All Gala headliner
Jennifer Hudson in 2018

PHOTO COURTESY OF DREW ALITZER



offers an immersive cultural journey across vineyards, luxury resorts, and private estates. Patron Pass holders enjoy exclusive access to elegant Vintner's Luncheons and Patron Dinners, supporting the Festival's mission to enrich lives through the arts.

At the heart of the anniversary season is the world premiere of *The Judgment of Paris*, a new opera by composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer, commissioned by Festival Napa Valley. Inspired by the legendary 1976 blind tasting that elevated Napa Valley wines to global prominence, the opera reimagines this pivotal moment as a mythic, operatic tale in which tradition and innovation collide on equal ground. The production stars opera luminaries Danielle de Niese, Quinn Kelsey, Nicholas Phan, Simone McIntosh, and Brenda Rae, alongside Fellows of the Manetti Shrem Opera Program.

Maria Manetti, Sophia Loren, and Carlo Ponti at tribute to Margaret Mondavi



PHOTO COURTESY OF TK

2018 Founders Dinner at Darioush



PHOTO COURTESY OF BOB MCLENAHAN

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2022 Puccini Opera Gala at Charles Krug

“This opera captures the essence of Napa Valley—curiosity, courage, and the joy of discovery,” said Charles Letourneau, Vice President and Director of Artistic Planning. “It brings together history, artistry, and innovation in a way that feels both timely and timeless.”

Additional highlights of the anniversary season include Renée Fleming’s return as both keynote speaker for the Music and Wellness Summit and performer in her orchestral program Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene; Opening Night with Time for Three and the Young People’s Chorus of New York City; A Night at the Ballet: From Swan Lake to The Stones; Opera Scenes with the Manetti Shrem Opera Fellows; and a special screening of The Wizard of Oz with live orchestra.

Taste of Napa at The Meritage Resort and Spa is another cornerstone of the Summer Season, featuring tastings from more

than 100 wineries, restaurants, and culinary artisans, along with craft beverages and a Reserve Tasting Salon for an elevated experience.

The summer’s apogee remains the Arts for All Gala, held at the Oakville estate of Nickel & Nickel, part of Far Niente Wine Estates. Jazz legend Wynton Marsalis headlines the anniversary celebration, complemented by a multi-course dinner by chef Dustin Valette, exceptional wines from Far Niente Wine Estates, and a live auction led by celebrity auctioneer Lydia Fenet.

At 20 years, Festival Napa Valley stands as a singular fusion of culture, hospitality, and philanthropy—delivering exceptional artistic experiences while making a lasting impact on education and the arts, and nurturing a vibrant, connected community. For full details, please visit the 2026 Summer Season Schedule. [\[1\]](#)