# Pride concert 'bullied out' of New York's Kennedy Center



New York's Kennedy Center has removed a highly anticipated concert by the National Symphony Orchestra (NSO) that was intended to celebrate Pride. Titled A Peacock Among Pigeons: Celebrating 50 Years of Pride, the concert was scheduled for May 21–22 as part of the centre's observance of WorldPride 2025, taking place in Washington, D.C. The event was central to the Kennedy Center’s Conflux initiative, which aims to promote social impact partnerships.

The planned concert was set to feature singer-songwriter John Bucchino with special guests, including the orchestral premiere of Bucchino’s choral work, which celebrates the embracing of individuality. The NSO was also expected to perform compositions by both LGBTQ+ composers and their allies. However, the event has now vanished from the Kennedy Center’s website and ticketing platforms, as well as from the official WorldPride 2025 schedule.

Ryan Bos, the executive director of Capital Pride Alliance, confirmed to gay magazine The Advocate that the concert is no longer part of the official WorldPride programming, and as such, is absent from related promotional materials. The Kennedy Center has not provided any explanation for this unexpected removal. Observers note that the timing of the decision aligns closely with recent changes in leadership at the Kennedy Center under the influence of President Donald Trump, who has taken significant control over the institution. Just days prior to the concert's removal, Trump positioned one of his close allies, Richard Grenell, in a newly created role as interim executive director. Grenell, who identifies as gay, has garnered a reputation for supporting Trump's political agenda, raising concerns about the implications for LGBTQ+ representation within the arts.

The Kennedy Center had previously stressed its commitment to WorldPride 2025, declaring a series of events intended to honour the 50th anniversary of Pride and ensure diverse representation across its programming. However, this commitment now appears to be under scrutiny following the recent shifts in governance. As of Thursday afternoon, updated announcements regarding the season continue to remain on the Kennedy Center's website.

In the wake of these developments, several artists have expressed their discontent, with entertainers such as Issa Rae and the band Low Cut Connie cancelling planned performances at the renowned venue. The NSO has not responded to inquiries regarding the removal of A Peacock Among Pigeons, nor has the Kennedy Center addressed these concerns.

GLAAD, an advocacy group for LGBTQ+ rights, commented on the situation, asserting that attempts to erase LGBTQ+ visibility from public events are counterproductive. A spokesperson said, "LGBTQ people have always been and always will be part of every community... Despite the efforts of this administration, we will keep telling our stories louder and prouder than ever."

Tyler Curry-McGrath, author of the children's book that inspired the now-cancelled musical work, expressed personal disappointment over the concert's cancellation, particularly as he had intended to bring his daughter to see it. He described the book as an anti-bullying narrative and pointed out the irony of a story about embracing identity being "bullied out" of the Kennedy Center. While he characterised the cancellation as a "badge of honour," he emphasised the more significant impact on youth and families that the removal of such programming represents.

Reflecting on the broader implications, Curry-McGrath warned that the context of Pride celebrations has drastically altered in the current political climate, where what was once a festival may now resemble a space for protest and advocacy.

The erasure of A Peacock Among Pigeons contributes to growing concerns around WorldPride 2025, as corporate sponsors such as Booz Allen Hamilton have pulled support amidst apprehensions regarding recent executive orders issued by Trump that dismantle federal standards on diversity, equity, and inclusion. This withdrawal also aligns with Booz Allen's decision to discontinue its own DEI initiatives.

Additionally, following similar administrative changes, the Capital Pride Alliance found it necessary to distance itself from former board member Vince Micone due to his new role in overseeing the dismantling of DEI programs in the Department of Labor. Micone has since resigned from the board of Capital Pride amid this controversy.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.advocate.com/politics/kennedy-center-trump-worldpride-concert> - This article corroborates the removal of the National Symphony Orchestra's WorldPride concert from the Kennedy Center's website and ticketing system, highlighting the event's disappearance following changes in leadership influenced by President Donald Trump.
* <https://www.kennedy-center.org/> - The Kennedy Center's official website would typically list upcoming events, but the concert in question is no longer listed, supporting the claim of its removal.
* <https://www.worldpride.org/> - WorldPride's official website would typically include all scheduled events, but the absence of the NSO concert supports the assertion that it has been removed from the official programming.
* <https://www.glaad.org/> - GLAAD's website often addresses issues related to LGBTQ+ visibility and representation, aligning with their statement on the cancellation of the concert.