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For immediate release  
Thomas Hampson hosts 13-week “Song of America” radio series

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## **Thomas Hampson Hosts 13-Week “Song of America” Radio Series, Syndicated by WFMT Radio Network to Radio Stations Across U.S. From October 2011**

*“These songs – our songs – say everything, through the eyes of our poets and the ears  
of our composers, about the culture we call American.” — Thomas Hampson*

**Thomas Hampson** continues his impassioned advocacy for American song with the introduction this October of “**Song of America**”, a 13-week radio series that reveals American classic song – poetry set to music by American composers – as a vibrant diary of the American experience. Hampson conceived and developed the series, which is co-produced by the **Hampsong Foundation** and the **WFMT Radio Network of Chicago** and will be syndicated by the network to public radio stations across the country. The network will also offer the series to members of the European Broadcasting Union and to stations in other countries around the world. Each hour-long program focuses on a particular topic that sheds light on a larger theme in American history, and includes approximately 40 minutes of songs drawn from archival and modern recordings, plus stories and insights from Hampson about the people and events that inspired those songs. Several programs also feature interviews with experts from related fields. Programs include ***Stephen Foster***, dedicated exclusively to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century songwriter who is considered the father of American music; ***Song of Walt Whitman***, examining the great poet and his deep influence on American composers; ***“There Is No Gender in Music”***, exploring the contributions of American women composers; and ***Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance***, which traces the roots and influences of the great 20<sup>th</sup>-century poet who gave jubilant voice to the lives of African Americans. A full list of programs follows below.

**Steve Robinson**, Executive Producer and General Manager of the **WFMT Radio Network**, invited Hampson to create the series as an expansion of the baritone’s ongoing critically acclaimed “Song of America” project, which began in 2005 as a collaboration between Hampson and the Library of Congress. Robinson observes: “Tom is one of the preeminent performers of American art song and we’re thrilled to be working with him on this series. He brings immense scholarship to the project and, more than that, a passion not only for song but for American history and culture that shines through in each program. Nothing quite like this series has ever been heard on American radio, and to bring it to so many stations over the WFMT Radio Network is very exciting.”

Many stations have already expressed interest in the series. A list of participating stations is posted at [www.songofamerica.net/radio](http://www.songofamerica.net/radio), which also houses various online resources to complement the 13 programs.

Thomas Hampson comments: “It has been a great thrill to work so closely with the WFMT Radio Network on this very special project. The network represents the best of what public radio has to offer today. I am extremely grateful for their support and very excited about this series.”

The radio series, funded by the **Hampson Foundation** with generous support from the **Peter Jay Sharp Foundation** and the **Elinor Remick Warren Foundation**, is produced by WFMT’s **Carolyn Paulin**. The Coordinating Producer is **Miriam Lewin** (Lavine Production Group), who has led a team of accomplished writers in taking Hampson’s vision and vast knowledge of the topic and shaping it into 13 distinct programs. The writers, many of them well known in the radio field, include **Julie Burstein** (creator and founding executive producer of *Studio 360* from PRI and WNYC); **Naomi Lewin** (afternoon host on WQXR in New York and producer/host of *Classics for Kids* and Metropolitan Opera intermission features); **Jeff Lunden** (arts reporter for NPR news shows and producer of award-winning radio documentaries on Broadway and Tin Pan Alley); **Terrance McKnight** (WQXR evening host and producer/host of *All Ears*); **Pierre Ruhe** (former chief music critic of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and executive director and editor of *ArtsCriticATL.com*); **James Sinclair** (Executive Editor of the *Charles Ives Society*); and others.

The recordings that will be heard in the “Song of America” series feature some of the most prominent American singers of the past 100 years, including **David Bispham**, **Alma Gluck**, **Marian Anderson**, **Nelson Eddy**, **Paul Robeson**, **William Warfield**, **Leontyne Price**, **Jan DeGaetani**, **Donald Gramm**, **Marilyn Horne**, **Susan Graham**, and **Renée Fleming** – as well as material drawn from **Thomas Hampson**’s own far-ranging catalog.

The recording selections include settings by American composers from **Francis Hopkinson** (who wrote the first home-grown American song in 1759), **Stephen Foster**, **Henry T. Burleigh** and **Arthur Farwell**, who all had a profound influence on shaping American music, to today’s prolific song composers including **Michael Tilson Thomas**, **George Crumb**, **Ned Rorem**, **Lori Laitman** and **Jake Heggie**; from lesser-known composers like **Charles Griffes**, **Amy Marcy Beach**, **Walter Damrosch**, **Ruth Crawford Seeger**, **Margaret Bonds**, **Elinor Remick Warren** and **John Duke** to 20<sup>th</sup>-century masters such as **Charles Ives**, **Aaron Copland**, **Samuel Barber** and **Leonard Bernstein**.

The programs also showcase poets whose work these composers found irresistible, including American icons like **Walt Whitman**, **Emily Dickinson** and **Langston Hughes**, and other masters such as **Edwin Arlington Robinson**, **Vachel Lindsay**, **Stephen Crane**, **Carl Sandburg**, **Sara Teasdale** and **Paul Goodman**.

The “**Song of America**” radio series is part of Thomas Hampson’s multi-platform “Song of America” project. Initially developed by Hampson in collaboration with the **Library of Congress** in 2005, and now a program of the **Hampson Foundation**, it examines connections between poetry, music, history and culture from the perspective of classic song. Drawing on resources from the Library’s unparalleled collection, the project has so far presented two national tours; independent recitals in 22 states and 13 countries; numerous master classes, exhibitions and broadcasts; the web site **www.songofamerica.net** – an interactive web site of American

composers, poets and songs complementing the radio series; and two commercial recordings: *Song of America – Music from the Library of Congress* and *Wondrous Free – Song of America II*. “The ‘Song of America’ project has been a dream come true for me,” says Hampson, “giving me unforgettable opportunities to tour our country while singing the songs born of our life experiences as Americans in the language of our hearts and minds. These songs – our songs – say everything, through the eyes of our poets and the ears of our composers, about the culture we call American. We need these songs in our cultural landscape and the WFMT Radio Network is the finest platform they could have.”

### **“Song of America” radio series: production details and programs**

The production team for the *Song of America* radio series includes:

Executive Producer: **Steve Robinson**  
Artistic Director and Host: **Thomas Hampson**  
Producer: **Carolyn Paulin**  
Coordinating Producer: **Miriam Lewin**  
Project Manager: **Christopher Dingstad**  
Researcher: **Christie Finn**

The programs and writers, in broadcast order, are:

*American Characters* (**Miriam Lewin**)  
*Stephen Foster* (**Naomi Lewin**)  
*Song of Walt Whitman* (**Pierre Ruhe**)  
*Many Are the Voices* (**Miriam Lewin**)  
*War Cries* (**Sheila Gaffney**)  
*Ives the Chronicler* (**James Sinclair**)  
*Champions of American Song* (**Sheila Gaffney**)  
*Arthur Farwell, American Pioneer* (**Jeff Lunden**)  
*“There Is No Gender in Music”* (**Christie Finn**)  
*Emily Dickinson: Letter to the World* (**Christie Finn**)  
*Songs We’ve Always Sung* (**Julie Burstein**)  
*Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance* (**Terrance McKnight**)  
*Places That Sing To Us* (**Miriam Lewin**)

“Song of America” will be available to radio stations from **October 1, 2011**. To get the series on your station, contact **Carol Martinez** at 773-279-2112 or [cmartinez@wfmt.com](mailto:cmartinez@wfmt.com).

### **Thomas Hampson, host**

Thomas Hampson enjoys a singular international career as a recitalist, opera singer and recording artist, and maintains an active interest in teaching, music research and technology. He has performed in all of the world’s most important concert halls and opera houses with many of today’s most renowned singers, pianists, conductors and orchestras; he is one of the most respected, innovative and sought-after soloists performing today.

Hampson is one of the world’s leading singers of German Lieder (including Schubert, Schumann and Mahler), and with his celebrated “Song of America” project, a collaboration with the Library of Congress, he has become the “ambassador” of American song. Moreover, he is one of the world’s leading opera singers, having sung more than 70 opera roles in major opera houses all over the world, including more than 200 performances at the Metropolitan Opera alone. With roughly 170 recordings on labels such as EMI and Deutsche Grammophon – several of which have won prestigious prizes including Grammy and Gramophone Awards, he is also one of the most prolific recording artists of our time.

Hampson begins his 2011-12 season at the San Francisco Opera, where he will create the main role in the world-premiere production of *Heart of a Soldier* by Christopher Theofanidis, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. Other operatic engagements include Iago in Verdi’s *Otello* and the title role in Hindemith’s *Mathis der Maler*, both at the Zurich Opera, and his house debut as Verdi’s *Macbeth* at New York’s Metropolitan Opera. Among Hampson’s other season highlights are the opening night gala concert of the National Symphony Orchestra with Christoph Eschenbach; Mahler’s *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Munich Philharmonic and Zubin Mehta; *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel; Brahms’s *Requiem* and Dvorak’s *Biblical Songs* with the Pittsburgh Symphony and Manfred Honeck; and “Song of America” recitals in New York and Cologne.

### **The Hampsong Foundation**

The Hampsong Foundation is dedicated to the support and proliferation of the art of song in America and around the world as a means to foster communication and understanding among cultures. It was founded by Thomas Hampson, America’s foremost baritone and a passionate advocate of American music and Lieder. Through a series of dedicated song projects and in collaboration with key academic and cultural partners, Hampsong commissions composers and funds research to expand the song repertory and our knowledge of it, shares findings with the public through workshops, seminars, master classes, recordings and new media, and provides, through its websites, [www.hampsongfoundation.org](http://www.hampsongfoundation.org) and [www.songofamerica.net](http://www.songofamerica.net), rich interactive resources and meeting places for lovers of song.

### **The WFMT Radio Network**

The WFMT Radio Network is the national and international production and distribution arm of WFMT 98.7FM, Chicago’s Classical Fine Arts Station. The network was established in 1976 to produce and distribute weekly concerts of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and opening nights from Lyric Opera of Chicago. Today, the network serves more than 900 radio outlets with full-length concerts by major orchestras from North America and Europe, and a wide range of operatic and other fine arts programming from around the world.

### **Critical acclaim for Thomas Hampson’s “Song of America” project**

“If American song needs an evangelist, no one is better equipped to do the job right than Thomas Hampson.... Hampson makes something deeply personal of the song medium, choosing music that’s

ideally suited to his virile persona and delivering it with such eloquence and probing intelligence that the listener shares fully in the experience. ... With a voice like oiled oak, capable of infinite tonal shadings, and a gift for storytelling possessed by few of his colleagues, Hampson made each song as dramatically potent as any character in his operatic arsenal." – *Chicago Tribune*

"The 'Song of America Project' reaffirms Hampson's talent for fusing a searing intellect with artistry of the highest order." – *Financial Times*

"Hampson made the assertion that narrative is a common thread through American song. ... Mr. Hampson conveys the idea of an oral tradition that it is his mission to pass on, with the closed-eyed intensity of a blind poet when he is singing and the zeal of an evangelist when he is addressing the audience about its cultural heritage." – *The New York Times*

"Thomas Hampson, America's baritone, brought his latest tribute to American song – of the classical variety – to Ozawa Hall on Wednesday and triumphed. ... Hampson is a prince among musicians, a commanding presence, with a remarkable, flexible instrument, and lots of virile tone. He keeps on discovering new and worthy music. He deserves all the applause he got, and there was a lot of it." – *Boston Globe*

"This country doesn't just undervalue its artists. In the case of the vast American concert-song literature, hardly any attention is paid at all. ... Hampson delivered one gem after another by composers such as Charles Griffes, William McDowell, Virgil Thomson (the famous 'Tiger! Tiger!'), Samuel Barber, Charles Ives ... and Henry T. Burleigh." – *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

"Hampson's narrative powers were perhaps the chief glory of the evening. ... There are very few areas of the opera and concert repertory that this industrious singer isn't willing to investigate, but singing songs seems to be the one thing he loves to do most of all. Besides, how many other singers today could fill Carnegie Hall with a program exclusively devoted to a celebration of American song?" – *Musical America*

"Tall, charismatic and as square-jawed as the Marlboro man, Thomas Hampson is in many ways an ideal representative of American song. [Hampson] is a recitalist and opera star of international renown, and his recital Saturday of more than two dozen American songs showed off the full range of his vocal and histrionic skills." – *Kansas City Star*

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Thomas Hampson's "Song of America" radio series takes off

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## Thomas Hampson's "Song of America" Radio Series Takes Off

**Thomas Hampson's "Song of America" project reached a new high this fall with the introduction of a 13-week "Song of America" radio series.**

The project – which began as a collaboration with the **Library of Congress**, presenting recitals and outreach activities – has taken Hampson to cities across America, presenting his explorations of both beloved and unjustly neglected music that, in his words, “says everything about the culture we call American.” Conceived and developed by Hampson, the new radio series is syndicated by the **WFMT Radio Network of Chicago** to public radio stations across the country. Each hour-long program – narrated by Hampson – focuses on a particular topic that sheds light on a larger theme in American history, and includes approximately 40 minutes of songs drawn from archival and modern recordings, plus stories and insights about the people and events that inspired those songs.

While many stations began airing the series in the fall, it will also be heard on many additional stations starting in 2012, including **WQXR 105.9 FM in New York**, which will broadcast the programs on Sundays at 9 pm, starting on January 8. The series, which was made possible by the **Hampsong Foundation** and the **Peter Jay Sharp Foundation**, will also be offered to members of the European Broadcasting Union and to stations in other countries around the world. A list of the 208 stations and translators participating thus far is available at [www.songofamerica.net/radio](http://www.songofamerica.net/radio), which also houses various online resources to complement the 13 programs.

Stations already airing the series have been enormously pleased with the responses they have received from listeners (some of whose comments appear under a separate heading below), and programmers have offered their own words of praise. Caitriona Bolster, Music Director for **KWAX-FM in Eugene, OR**, comments: “This is a series that should be required listening for anyone interested in American social and cultural history, literature, and music. Thomas Hampson does a superb job of bringing the past to life with a directness and passion that are irresistible.”

Carl Blare of **KDXRADIO.COM** adds, “In our 50th year of concert-music broadcasting we could recite for you the usual American composers, but not until Thomas Hampson's ‘Song of America’ series did we realize the other universe of songs that have been overlooked by most modern media. The series brings to life an inheritance of not only the songs but also the anecdotes that name the people, place and time involved with each song's creation. ‘Song of America’ is an audio encyclopedia worthy of permanent residence on the reference shelf.”

**98.7 WFMT's** music director, Andi Lamoreaux, comments: "Thomas Hampson articulates both knowledge and enthusiasm in his introductions to a wide range of music in 'Song of America'. The shows are extremely well written, and the varied music choices showcase a number of fine American singers past and present."

"Song of America" is available to all radio stations free of charge. To get the series on your station, please contact **Carol Martinez** at 773-279-2112 or [cmartinez@wfmt.com](mailto:cmartinez@wfmt.com).

**Listener responses to the "Song of America" radio series:**

"The program on Arthur Farwell was brilliant! Long ago, Thomas Hampson introduced me to Farwell's music, and his music on Native American themes, as presented on this program, just brought me to tears it was so wonderful. The whole program was truly memorable." — **a listener via email**

"I'm enjoying the radio shows in Salem, Oregon!" — **a listener via Facebook**

"This is a GREAT program! Heard Stephen Foster and Walt Whitman and just yesterday, songs of downtrodden groups in this country. Now I MUST be home in time to hear 'Song' every Sunday. Thanks, Thomas Hampson!" — **a listener via Facebook**

"I think it is a very wonderful and important series. Quite riveting! I know that radio always does lots of surveys to assess the audiences for its programming. I hope they will do it for Thomas Hampson's series because I'm sure the results will be gratifying." — **a listener via email**

"The 'Song of America with Thomas Hampson' program snuck up on me. I recall a number of recent times when the subject and presentation were both unexpected and illuminating. Specifically, this afternoon, 'Black Is the Color.' Thanks!" — **a listener via WFMT's website**

"It was a fantastic program through and through – from the selections and performances to the highly informative historical context that Hampson provided between songs, along with scholars." — **a listener via email**

"Thomas Hampson does such a good job gathering interesting historical stuff! He's a real factotum (like that famous Spanish hairdresser!). He uses every inch of his talent. And, indeed, it would be nice if the message of American song would be more and more spread in Europe, just like German song is known all over the world. By modern technology this should be possible." — **a listener via email**

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