

**Press Release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 12, 2017

**The Kennedy Center and Washington National Opera  
announce**

**John Holiday  
is the 2017 winner of  
The Marian Anderson Vocal Award**

**Gifted countertenor to perform a recital at the Kennedy Center  
on February 15, 2018 and will mentor young students  
during a residency at D.C.'s Duke Ellington School of the Arts**

(WASHINGTON)—The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Washington National Opera (WNO) today announced that countertenor John Holiday is the 2017 winner of the Marian Anderson Vocal Award. The Award, which honors trailblazing contralto Marian Anderson's personal and humanitarian achievements, celebrates excellence in performance by recognizing a young American singer who has achieved initial professional success in the vocal arts and who exhibits promise for a significant career. In addition to receiving a \$10,000 cash prize, Holiday will perform a recital on Thursday, February 15, 2018 in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater and will establish an educational residency at the opera workshop program of Washington's Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

"Having known about this award for many years, it is both an honor and very humbling to join the ranks of past winners, some of whom I am lucky enough to call friends and others whom I have long admired. Joining this extraordinary roster of winners is one of the most amazing achievements of my life," said Holiday. "As an African American in the world of opera, I cannot begin to express how much receiving this award means to

me. Marian Anderson stepped through the door so that so many of us could follow her, and I am forever grateful.”

John Holiday is one of opera’s brightest rising stars. His many recent high-profile debuts include the Sorceress in Barrie Kosky’s acclaimed production of Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* at LA Opera, Caesar in Tazewell Thompson’s new production of Vivaldi’s *Cato in Utica* at The Glimmerglass Festival, and the title role in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare* for Wolf Trap Opera. He made his Carnegie Hall debut as soloist in Bernstein’s *Chichester Psalms* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under Robert Spano. He joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera to cover Nireno in *Giulio Cesare* under Harry Bicket in David McVicar’s new production and reprised his roles in Philip Glass’s *Galileo Galilei* at Cincinnati Opera, having first performed the work at Portland Opera for his debut. Future engagements include a return to The Glimmerglass Festival to make his debut in the title role in *Xerxes* and his debut with Opera Philadelphia in the world-premiere of Daniel Roumain’s *We Shall Not Be Moved*. A full biography is below.

To celebrate the Award, Holiday will perform a recital co-presented by WNO and the Kennedy Center’s Fortas Chamber Music Concerts on Thursday, February 15, 2018 in the Terrace Theater. Ticket information for the recital will be announced in the coming weeks.

In keeping with its mission to develop programs and initiatives that connect exemplary artists with the community, the Kennedy Center will work with Holiday to create a learning program for an educational residency at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts, the District of Columbia’s public arts magnet high school. The residency will include master classes and workshops with vocal music students, as well as other events developed by Holiday. The school offers a dual curriculum encompassing professional arts training along with academic enrichment, helping to prepare its students for both college and future careers in the arts.

“I’m so proud that John Holiday is our Marian Anderson Vocal Award winner this year,” said WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello. “The countertenor voice is so unique, and John is such a vibrant performer and personality. His range from Hip Hop to Handel

separates him from all other artists. I look forward to our audience discovering his artistry at his recital, and for the vocal students at the Duke Ellington School to learn valuable lessons from John about harnessing one's talent and leading by example. John is the perfect embodiment of the spirit of Marian Anderson's legacy."

John Holiday was selected from a pool of singers who were nominated by opera companies, orchestral and choral organizations, agents, professional music critics, and other organizations and individuals across the country. The selection committee included distinguished members of the opera and classical music communities: Harolyn Blackwell, soprano; Jeremy Geffen, Director of Artistic Planning at Carnegie Hall; Charles MacKay, General Director of the Santa Fe Opera; Francesca Zambello, Artistic Director of Washington National Opera and Artistic and General Director of The Glimmerglass Festival; and Brian Zeger, Artistic Director of the Vocal Department at The Juilliard School.

Prior Award recipients include Sylvia McNair, Denyce Graves, Philip Zawisza, Nancy Maulsby, Patricia Racette, Michelle DeYoung, Nathan Gunn, Marguerite Krull, Eric Owens, Lawrence Brownlee, Indira Mahajan, Sasha Cooke, J'nai Bridges, Jamie Barton, and, most recently, soprano Janai Brugger.

### **ABOUT JOHN HOLIDAY**

In repertoire encompassing George Frideric Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* to Jonathan Dove's *Flight* and beyond, countertenor **John Holiday**'s expressive and richly beautiful voice has made him an increasingly sought after artist. Recently, he received third prize at Plácido Domingo's Operalia Competition held in Los Angeles, California.

In the 2016–2017 season, he reprises Huang Ruo's *Paradise Interrupted* at the Lincoln Center Music Festival and Singapore Arts Festival. On the concert stage, he sings Handel's *Messiah* with the Nashville Symphony, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Phoenix Symphony, and Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare* with Boston Baroque. In the summer of 2017, he returns to The Glimmerglass Festival to make his debut in the title role in *Xerxes*. As an advocate of new works, he will make his debut with Opera Philadelphia singing the role of John Blue in a world-premiere of Daniel Roumain's *We Shall Not Be Moved*, a production directed by the award-winning Bill T. Jones.

Recently, he debuted at LA Opera in Barrie Kosky's acclaimed production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* as the Sorceress and returned to the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in a program of Baroque arias under Jonathan Cohen and Handel's *Messiah* with Paul Agnew, as well as baroque programs with Ars Lyrica and Mercury Baroque. He also debuted at The Glimmerglass Festival in Vivaldi's *Cato in Utica* and sang in the world premiere of *Paradise Interrupted* at the Spoleto Festival USA. In concert, he also sang *Messiah* with Mercury Baroque and the Nashville Symphony.

He made his Carnegie Hall debut as soloist in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra under Robert Spano, as well as in performances for audiences in Atlanta. He also joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera to cover Nireno in *Giulio Cesare* under Harry Bicket in David McVicar's new production and reprised his roles in Philip Glass's *Galileo Galilei* at Cincinnati Opera, having first performed the work at Portland Opera for his debut. He was also seen as the title role in *Radamisto* at The Juilliard School, with the Juilliard Orchestra in Giya Kancheli's *And Farewell Goes Out Sighing...* under Anne Manson, and in Scarlatti's *La sposa dei cantici* with Ars Lyrica in Houston. He debuted at Wolf Trap Opera as the title role in Handel's *Giulio Cesare*.

Holiday was an apprentice artist at Santa Fe Opera where he covered the role of Corrado in Peter Sellars's production of Vivaldi's *Griselda* and was seen as the Refugee in Flight for the Apprentice Scenes Program. He was soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra and performed with the Chorus of Westerly (Rhode Island) in their concert of Purcell's "Come, Ye Sons of Art". He was also seen in a benefit concert at The Dallas Opera having recently been the first place winner of the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition. Additionally, he was seen as Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* at the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, soloist with Bourbon Baroque in Louisville, and soloist in Handel's *Messiah*. A career highlight includes an invitation by Pope John Paul II to sing as soloist for High Mass at St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel in 2002.

In addition to the Dallas Opera Guild Vocal Competition, he received a first prize from the Sullivan Foundation in 2012 and was also awarded fifth place in the Palm Beach Opera Competition in 2011. In 2007, he was the first place winner in his district of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. From 2004 to 2006, he was a first place winner of the TEXOMA region of the National Association of Teachers of Singing.

In addition to the classical repertoire, he excels in jazz, having opened for Grammy Award® winner Jason Mraz in concert. He received a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas; a Master of Music in vocal performance from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music; and the Artist Diploma in Opera Studies from The Juilliard School in New York City.

### **ABOUT MARIAN ANDERSON**

American contralto Marian Anderson was one of the most celebrated singers of the 20th century. She became an important figure in the struggle for African American artists to overcome racial prejudice in the United States, when in 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution refused permission for her to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall. The incident thrust Anderson into the spotlight of the international community on a level unusual for a classical musician. With the aid of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her husband President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Anderson performed a critically acclaimed open-air concert on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. before a crowd of more than 75,000 people and a radio audience of millions.

She continued to break barriers, becoming the first African American artist to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on January 7, 1955. Her performance as Ulrica in Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* was the only time she sang an opera role on stage. She later worked for several years as a delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Committee and for the U.S. Department of State, giving concerts all over the world. She participated in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, singing at the March on Washington in 1963. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the Kennedy Center Honors in 1978, the National Medal of Arts in 1986, and a Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award in 1991.

The impetus for The Marian Anderson Vocal Award was provided by June Goodman of Danbury, Connecticut, a friend of Anderson's who wished to recognize the outstanding qualities of the groundbreaking African American singer. The Marian Anderson Award Foundation then established the Award at Fairfield County's Community Foundation. In September 2002, the Kennedy Center and Fairfield County's Community Foundation collaborated to create a permanent tribute to Anderson's historic artistic achievements by presenting a cash prize of \$10,000 and a recital at the Kennedy Center for one outstanding singer.

**More information on The Marian Anderson Vocal Award can be found at [www.kennedy-center.org/pages/specialevents/AndersonAward](http://www.kennedy-center.org/pages/specialevents/AndersonAward)**

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### **FUNDING CREDITS**

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### **TICKETS & INFORMATION**

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