

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 31, 2017

**Washington National Opera
announces the 2017–2018
Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists**

Roster includes 11 singers and 2 pianists/coaches

**Program includes mentorship by
Artists-in-Residence Eric Owens and Peter Kazaras
as well as Neil Shicoff, Patricia Racette, James Morris, and others**

**Season highlights include
Young Artist Performances of *Alcina* and *The Barber of Seville*
plus**

**World premiere productions of the American Opera Initiative
Highly anticipated performances of Bernstein's *Songfest*
Recitals and concerts at venues around Washington, D.C.
Free concerts at the Kennedy Center, master classes, and more**

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO) announces the roster of emerging artists engaged for the 16th season of its Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, which begins in September. Under the leadership of program director Robert Ainsley, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program continues to increase its number of performances throughout the season and expand its training regimen, including mentorship by new Artists-in-Residence Eric Owens, the acclaimed bass-baritone who will star in WNO's *Don Carlo* this season, and Peter Kazaras, the noted stage director who returns to WNO to direct *The Barber of Seville*. The new class of young artists will star in special performances of Handel's *Alcina* and Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* in the Kennedy Center Opera House, participate in several world premiere productions as part of WNO's American Opera Initiative Festival in January 2018—including *Proving*

Up, the new opera by composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek—and appear in recitals and concerts across the Washington, D.C. region.

The 2017–2018 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists are:

Michael Adams, Fort Worth, Texas (baritone, second season)
Frederick Ballentine, Norfolk, Virginia (tenor, second season)
Eliza Bonet, Atlanta, Georgia (mezzo-soprano, first season)
Timothy J. Bruno, Toledo, Ohio (bass, third season)
Allegra De Vita, Trumbull, Connecticut (mezzo-soprano, second season)
Arnold Livingston Geis, Chehalis, Washington (tenor, first season)
Leah Hawkins, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (soprano, third season)
Paul Jarski, Los Angeles, California (pianist/coach, second season)
Christopher Kenney, Hawley, Minnesota (baritone, first season)
Christopher Koelzer, Sunnysvale, California (pianist/coach, first season)
Madison Leonard, Hayden Lake, Idaho (soprano, first season)
Alexander McKissick, Madison, Connecticut (tenor, first season)
Alexandria Shiner, Waterford, Michigan (soprano, first season)

“The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program continues to be an essential part of the mission and vision of Washington National Opera,” said WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello. “As this new class begins the program, I think of the many alumni who regularly perform in opera houses around the world—their success is a testament to the hard work of our many devoted faculty members. This season, we are incredibly fortunate to have Artists-in-Residence of the caliber of Eric Owens and Peter Kazaras, as well as an esteemed roster of other coaches who will guide our young performers.”

Complete biographies of the 2017–2018 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists appear on page 7 of this press release.

A world-class coaching roster led by Eric Owens and Peter Kazaras

Leading the coaching roster for the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program’s 2017–2018 season are new Artists-in-Residence Eric Owens, the celebrated American bass-

baritone who will be seen in next season's new production of *Don Carlo*; and Peter Kazaras, the director of WNO's acclaimed productions of *La bohème* (2014) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (2016), who returns this season to direct *The Barber of Seville*. They will work with the young artists, leading individual coaching sessions, presenting group classes on a variety of repertory, and hosting career roundtable discussions.

"I am looking forward to returning to Washington National Opera to work with this impressive group of young artists, some of whom will appear alongside me in *Don Carlo*," said Owens. "Young artist programs like this one gave me the tools I needed to build my career, and it is gratifying to be able to pass on my knowledge to the next generation of artists."

The young artists will work with other gifted voice teachers, vocal coaches, drama and movement experts, and career development mentors throughout the season. The faculty roster for the 2017–2018 season includes:

Eric Owens, Peter Kazaras: Artists-in-Residence

Laura Brooks Rice: Voice teacher

Ken Weiss: Principal coach

Louis Salemno: Resident vocal coach

Nicholas Olcott: Resident stage director

Neil Shicoff: Voice teacher, master coach

Erie Mills: English diction coach, visiting master teacher

Patricia Racette, James Morris: Visiting master teachers

Joan Dornemann, Dennis Giauque, Bénédicte Jourdois: Visiting coaches

Matthew Epstein, Lenore Rosenberg: Career counselors

Maddalena Borea: Italian instruction

Ole Hass: German instruction

Karma Camp: Movement Instructor

Performance opportunities at the Kennedy Center and beyond

An essential component of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is the opportunity to perform at the Kennedy Center as well as at various community concerts, recitals, and events throughout the Washington, D.C. area and beyond.

Young artists gain significant performance experience on the stages of the Kennedy Center. A highlight of the program is the annual Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance, featuring young artists performing leading roles in the Kennedy Center Opera House as part of the WNO season. In the 2017–2018 season, WNO will present two special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performances: *Alcina* on Saturday, November 18, 2017 and *The Barber of Seville* on Thursday, May 17, 2017. Complete casting will be announced soon.

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists also study and perform supporting roles in WNO productions. As members of the cast, young artists participate in all scheduled rehearsals and receive direction and guidance from the opera's key artists. In the 2017–2018 season, young artists will perform and cover supporting roles in all WNO productions: *Aida*, *Alcina*, *Don Carlo*, *The Barber of Seville*, and *Candide*. The young artists will also appear in leading roles in WNO's holiday production of *The Little Prince*, which will be performed in the newly renovated Terrace Theater December 14–17, 2017.

The 2017–2018 season will also provide the young artists with extraordinary opportunities to work with living composers and librettists on several world premiere productions under the auspices of WNO's American Opera Initiative Festival. The festival begins with *Proving Up* by composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek, the acclaimed team behind the rapturously received *Breaking the Waves*. *Proving Up*, conducted by Christopher Rountree, will be presented on January 19 and 21, 2018 in the Terrace Theater. The popular *Three 20-Minute Operas*, featuring the work of three new composer-librettist teams, will be presented at two performances on January 20, 2018, with the WNO Orchestra conducted by George Manahan. Manahan serves as one of three mentors to the American Opera Initiative, alongside the Pulitzer Prize-winning team behind the opera *Silent Night*—composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark

Campbell. Complete casting and creative teams for these new works will be announced soon.

As part of the Kennedy Center's *Leonard Bernstein at 100* celebration, the young artists will perform in Bernstein's *Songfest* with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin, November 2 and 4, 2017 in the Concert Hall. *Songfest* was commissioned, premiered, and recorded by the NSO 40 years ago under Bernstein's baton; among the 13 poems he set to music are works by Gertrude Stein, e.e. cummings, Langston Hughes, Walt Whitman, and Julia de Burgos.

New this season, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists will perform in a series of three public master classes at the Kennedy Center. The classes will allow opera fans to see how young artists develop their technique and hone their performance skills. The young artists will work with Artist-in-Residence Peter Kazaras on Thursday, September 14, 2017; with WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello on Thursday, November 2, 2017; and with Artist-in-Residence Eric Owens on Thursday, March 15, 2018.

The young artists will continue to perform in free performances on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage to highlight upcoming WNO productions, preview the productions of the coming season, and for other special performances. Appearances are scheduled for Tuesday, September 5, 2017; Tuesday, January 30, 2018; Thursday, February 8, 2018; Thursday, March 22, 2018; and Monday, May 21, 2018. These appearances are streamed live on the Kennedy Center's [website](#) and archived for future viewing.

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists will also have a vibrant presence around Washington in the coming season, including a recital at the Kreeger Museum on Saturday, October 21, 2017; a Bernstein-themed concert with The Georgetown Concert Series at St. John's Episcopal Church on Sunday, October 22, 2017; concerts with the Apollo Orchestra on Sunday, January 28, 2018 and Sunday, March 25, 2018; a special scenes concert in the Bettie Rubenstein Grand Salon of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum on Sunday February 4, 2018; and a recital at The Phillips Collection on Thursday, April 12, 2018. More information on these and other events will be announced in the coming months.

Exchange with Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre continues

Next season will mark the eighth year of a professional exchange between members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and participants in the Bolshoi Theatre Young Artists Opera Program of Moscow. In May 2017, WNO sent baritone Hunter Enoch, mezzo-soprano Daryl Freedman, soprano Leah Hawkins, and pianist/coach Paul Jarski to Moscow, where they studied alongside their Russian peers and performed in two all-Beethoven concerts. In March 2018, WNO will host four students from Moscow for a two-week residency, culminating in a joint recital. This ongoing partnership with the Bolshoi program presents an extraordinary opportunity for the young artists to share their ideas, culture, and technical expertise with their peers from overseas and to connect with foreign artistic agents for future career opportunities.

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Biographies of the 2017–2018 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists

A native of Fort Worth, Texas, baritone **Michael Adams** is in his second season as a Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist at Washington National Opera, where he sings Melisso in *Alcina* and the Pilot in *The Little Prince* during the 2017–2018 season. He returned to Des Moines Metro Opera in the summer of 2017 to sing Ping in *Turandot* and Donald in *Billy Budd* after debuting as Lescaut in *Manon* in 2016. In the 2017–2017 season with WNO, he performed the title role in a special performance of *Don Giovanni*, Prince Yamadori in *Madame Butterfly*, and First Prison Guard and Motorcycle Cop in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. He also returned in his role debut as Marcello in *La bohème* to the Grand Théâtre de Genève, where he debuted as Melisso in *Alcina* in the 2015–2016 season. Previous seasons include performances with the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Ping in *Turandot*, the Marquis in *La traviata*, and Harašta in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, in addition to covering Neluso in *L'Africaine*. At the Academy of Vocal Arts, he sang Valentin in *Faust*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Lescaut in *Manon*, Tomsy in *Pique Dame*, Schaunard in *La bohème*, Taddeo in *L'italiana in Algeri*, and the Marquis in *La traviata*. He is a previous Apprentice at Santa Fe Opera and a Studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera and Fort Worth Opera. He has also sung Eugene Onegin and Don Giovanni at the Seagle Music Colony. He has received top prizes from the competitions of the Gerda Lissner, Licia Albanese-Puccini, Mario Lanza, and Nelson Eddy foundations.

A native of Norfolk, Virginia, tenor **Frederick Ballentine** is in his second season of Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. In the summer of 2017, he sings Sportin' Life in *Porgy and Bess* at The Glimmerglass Festival. In WNO's 2016–2017 season, he sings the Messenger in Verdi's *Aida*, the Herald in Verdi's *Don Carlo*, and Cacambo in Bernstein's *Candide*. He will also perform in Bernstein's *Songfest* with the National Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Leonard Slatkin. His 2016–2017 season included the roles of Luis in Terence Blanchard's *Champion* with WNO, the High Priest of Amon in LA Opera's *Akhnaten*, and the First Armored Man in Seattle Opera's *The Magic Flute*. In 2015, he made his WNO debut as T. Morris Chester and John Lewis in the world premiere of the revised version of Philip Glass's *Appomattox*. Previously a member of LA Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program (2014–2016), he appeared in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, John Corigliano's *The Ghost of Versailles*, and Patrick Morganelli's highly anticipated cinematic opera *Hercules vs. Vampires*. He was a Filene Young Artist at Wolf Trap Opera in the summer of 2015 and sang the role of Count Almaviva in *The Ghosts of Versailles*. He previously trained at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis's Gerdine Young Artist Program and Aspen Music Opera Center. In concert, he has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic in Beethoven's Choral Fantasy and with the Naples Philharmonic in Beethoven's. He holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (Bachelor of Music) and Rice University (Master of Music).

A native of Atlanta, Cuban-American mezzo-soprano **Eliza Bonet** joins Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the 2017–2018 season, presenting her role debut as Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* and another role debut as Paquette in Bernstein's *Candide*. She made her New York debut in June 2017 in Robert Paterson and David Cote's *Three Way* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, followed by a recording of the work through Nashville Opera where she originally premiered the role in January 2017. Additional recent appearances include Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*

with Opera Williamsburg, Annina in *La traviata* with Opera Maine, Mercédès in *Carmen* and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with Pensacola Opera, Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with Shreveport Opera, Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* and Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with PORTOpera, Dorothée in *Cendrillon* with Kentucky Opera, and Nettie Fowler for Opera on the Avalon's *Carousel*. As a member of the Merola Program at San Francisco Opera, she performed the role of Eunice in the company's production of Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in addition to covering the role of Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. Previously a Young Artist with Florida Grand Opera, she performed the roles of Krystyna in Weinberg's *The Passenger* and Berta in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. She was a Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2012, where she covered the roles of the White Rabbit and the March Hare in the U.S. premiere of Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland*. On the concert stage, she has appeared as a soloist for Mozart's *Requiem* with Music at the Gate, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, and Handel's *Messiah* with St. Mary's Catholic Church. Her awards include an Encouragement Award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2013, as well as being named a finalist for the Opera Birmingham Competition the same year. She received the Joe Festervan Memorial Award In 2012 from the Mary Jacobs Smith Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Competition and completed her graduate degree from Florida State University in 2011.

Originally from Toledo, Ohio, bass **Timothy J. Bruno** is in his third season of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. In the summer of 2017, he sang Bosun as well as covered John Claggart in *Billy Budd* and the Mandarin in *Turandot* with Des Moines Metro Opera. In WNO's 2017–2018 season, he performs Melisso in *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), the King in *The Little Prince*, the Sodbuster in the world premiere of *Proving Up*, Friar in *Don Carlo*, and Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance). In WNO's 2016–2017 season, he performed Don Bartolo (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance) and Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Hortensius in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, Death Row Dad in the world premiere of *The Dictator's Wife*, George Benton in *Dead Man Walking*, and The Bonze in *Madame Butterfly*. In WNO's 2015–2016 season, he appeared as General Howell Cobb and James Fowler in the world premiere of the revised version of *Appomattox* and as Judge Albert Judd in *Better Gods*. In the summer of 2015, he was a Filene Young Artist at Wolf Trap Opera, where he sang the role of Louis XVI in Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. He returned to Wolf Trap Opera in the summer of 2016 as Colline in *La bohème*. He has performed with the Atlanta Symphony as Abimélech in *Samson et Dalila* and appeared as Kromov in *The Merry Widow* at Michigan Opera Theatre, Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Der Wanderer in *Siegfried* at Queen City Chamber Opera, and Elder Ott in *Susannah* at Toledo Opera. His previous seasons included Méphistophélès in *Faust* and Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Winter Opera Saint Louis, Colline in *La bohème* with El Paso Opera, and Dr. Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro* and The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera Columbus. An alumnus of the University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music (Master of Music) and Bowling Green State University (Bachelor of Music), he also completed training programs at Central City Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, and Opera Saratoga. He was a Washington, D.C. District winner in the 2016 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and won second place in the Middle Atlantic Region.

Originally from Trumbull, Connecticut, mezzo-soprano **Allegra De Vita** returns for her second season of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. In the summer of

2017, she is singing Arsamenes in *Xerxes* at The Glimmerglass Festival. In the 2017–2018 season with WNO, she sings Ruggiero in *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), The Fox in *The Little Prince*, the Taller Zegner Sister in the world premiere of *Proving Up*, Tebaldo in *Don Carlo*, and Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance). She will also be covering the title role in *Elizabeth Cree* with Opera Philadelphia. As a Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia in the 2015–2016 season, she appeared as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and Charlotte in *Werther*. In the summer of 2015, she sang the role of Fulvio in the American premiere of Vivaldi's *Cato in Utica* at The Glimmerglass Festival, where she returned in 2016 to sing the role of Pippo in *The Thieving Magpie*. She was a 2014 Santa Fe Opera Apprentice and was seen as Siegrune in the *Die Walküre* scene and Melibea in the *Il viaggio a Reims* finale. A 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Grand Finalist, she was also a prize winner at the 2014 Young Texas Artists Competition and the Amici Vocal Competition. Her previous roles include the title role of Handel's *Ariodante*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, Flora in *La traviata*, Romeo in *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*, Ruggiero in *Alcina*, and the Monitress in *Suor Angelica*. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Sacred Heart University, where she majored in biology with a minor in music performance. She earned her master's degree in vocal performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music.

A native of Chehalis, Washington, tenor **Arnold Livingston Geis** joins WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the 2017–2018 season. In the summer of 2017, he made his Chautauqua Opera debut performing the roles of Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and Apollo in *L'Orfeo*. In the 2017–2018 season with WNO, he will sing Oronte in *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), Snake and Vain Man in *The Little Prince*, Miles in the world premiere of *Proving Up*, and Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance). In the 2016–2017 season, he made his mainstage debut with LA Opera under the baton of Plácido Domingo and closed its season singing Parpignol in *La bohème* with conductor Gustavo Dudamel. In 2016, he made his company debut at New York City Opera as Corpsman Harris in the East Coast premiere of *Fallujah*. He also debuted as a guest soloist for Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the LA Master Chorale in January and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Pasadena Symphony in April. Other performances include *Candide* and *Fallujah* with Long Beach Opera and recent debuts include numerous solo performances at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center. He made his national television debut on *America's Got Talent* in 2015 and has since sung for television and blockbuster film soundtracks including *American Crime*, *Minions*, *Sing*, and *Star Wars: Rogue One*. Winner of the 2016 LA District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, he graduated with a Master of Music in Vocal arts from the University of Southern California in May 2014.

A native of Philadelphia, soprano **Leah Hawkins** is in her third season of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera, performing Ma Zegner in the world premiere of *Proving Up* and Celestial Voice in *Don Carlo*. She will also be a soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra in Bernstein's *Songfest* with the National Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Leonard Slatkin. In the 2016–2017 season with WNO, she sang the role of I-Will-Sell-My-Children Mom in *The Dictator's Wife* and Cousin Blanche and Sadie Griffith in *Champion*. In WNO's 2015–2016 season, she appeared as Mrs. Dorsey and Amelia Boynton in the world premiere of the revised

version of Philip Glass's *Appomattox* and The Answerer and Ensemble in Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*. Her other roles include Julia Child in Lee Hoiby's one-woman opera *Bon Appétit*, La Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi*, La Badessa in *Suor Angelica*, and Giulietta in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. On the concert stage, she has appeared with the Mid-Atlantic Symphony, Yale Philharmonia, New Haven Symphony, and the Baltimore Symphony. She is a recipient of a Sullivan Career Development Award, and has been a Young Artist with The Martina Arroyo Foundation's Prelude to Performance Program, Houston Grand Opera's Young Artist Vocal Academy (YAVA), Central City Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and The Glimmerglass Festival. She received her M.M. in Voice from Yale University and her B.A. in Music from Morgan State University.

A native of Los Angeles, pianist/coach **Paul Jarski** is in his second season of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, acting as Assistant Conductor for Handel's *Alcina*. Last season with WNO, he was Assistant Conductor for Terence Blanchard's *Champion*. Previously a Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist at LA Opera, he returned to the Aspen Opera Theater Center for his third season in the summer of 2016. In past seasons he has worked for Syracuse Opera, Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, and Opera on the Avalon. He has played under the batons of James Conlon, Plácido Domingo, Grant Gershon, George Manahan, Josep Caballé Domenech, and Stephen Stubbs. His performance credits include the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Broad Stage, Weill Recital Hall, Ozawa Hall, and the Orange County Performing Arts Center. After completing his Bachelor of Music degree at the San Francisco Conservatory in only two and a half years, he worked at California State University, Long Beach as a French diction coach for *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. He holds a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music, where he is now pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree and studying with Warren Jones.

A native of Hawley, Minnesota, baritone **Christopher Kenney** joins WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for his first season in the fall of 2017. In the summer of 2017, he is an Apprentice at Santa Fe Opera, and in the 2017–2018 season at WNO he sings the roles of Businessman in *The Little Prince*, Pa Zegner in the world premiere of *Proving Up*, and Officer and Figaro (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance) in *The Barber of Seville*. He will also perform as a soloist in Bernstein's *Songfest* with the National Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Leonard Slatkin. He has also performed Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, the title role in *The Demon*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. He is a three time District winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions as well as the winner of the Alltech Vocal Scholarship Competition in 2014. He received a B.M. in Vocal Performance from Concordia College, an M.M. from the University of Kentucky, and spent a year of study at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

A native of Sunnyvale, California, pianist/coach **Christopher Koelzer** begins his first season in WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall of 2017. In WNO's 2017–2018 season, he is Assistant Conductor for *The Barber of Seville*. He attended Aspen Music Festival and School from 2011 to 2012, returning as Vocal Fellow in 2014. He was awarded Outstanding Collaborative Pianist Award and Grand Prize Art Song in the Metropolitan International Music Festival Competition in New York in 2016. He has performed staged readings of new musicals in New York City (*Shards*, *Boston/Nebraska*), as well as world premieres of several new operas in Washington D.C. and South Carolina. He began working professionally as an opera pianist at age

13 with Mission City Opera and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of San Jose. He studied Piano Performance with Dr. Irene Peery-Fox at Brigham Young University, and was involved as a pianist, harpsichordist, and coach for six fully staged operas. He holds a master's degree in Collaborative Piano from the University of Maryland, College Park, and has coached and performed with UMD's Maryland Opera Studio since 2013. He is currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Maryland, studying with Professor Rita Sloan.

A native of Idaho, soprano **Madison Leonard** joins WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall for WNO's 2017–2018 season. In the summer of 2017, she made her debut with Wolf Trap Opera as a Filene Young Artist, singing Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with the National Symphony Orchestra as well as Madeline in Philip Glass's *The Fall of the House of Usher* and the Daughter in Glass's *The Juniper Tree*. In WNO 2017–2018 season, she sings the High Priestess in *Aida*, Morgana in *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), The Rose in *The Little Prince*, and Littler Zegner Sister in the world premiere of *Proving Up*. In the 2016–2017 season, she sang Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Amarillo Opera, Adele in *Die Fledermaus* with Opera Idaho, and Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Coeur d'Alene. In concert, she performed opera favorites with the Florida Orchestra and Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Houston Masterworks Chorus. With San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, she sang Monica in Menotti's *The Medium* and Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel* while covering Norina in *Don Pasquale*. She is also a former Young Artist of Des Moines Metro Opera, where she covered Nannetta in *Falstaff* and sang Musetta in scenes of *La bohème*. She is a 2017 second place winner of the Northwest region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and first place winner of the Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition. A recipient of the Women's Voice Fellowship from the Luminarts Cultural Foundation and scholarships from the Lynn Harvey Foundation and the Musicians Club of Women, she holds a Master of Music degree from Northwestern University and a Bachelor of Music from Pepperdine University.

A native of Madison, Connecticut, tenor **Alexander McKissick** joins WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for his first season in the fall 2017. In the summer of 2017, he performed the roles of Val in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Alfredo Germont in *La traviata* at the Aspen Music Festival. In WNO's 2017–2018 season, he sings Lamplighter and Drunkard in *The Little Prince* and in the 2018 American Opera Initiative Festival. While studying at The Juilliard School, he performed as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, Le Journaliste in *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, Ein Soldat in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, and Brack Weaver in Kurt Weill's *Down in the Valley*, among others. He recently sang the roles of Ramon in *La Navarraise* at the Bard SummerScape festival and Fourth Jew in a concert version of Strauss's *Salome* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. In the summer of 2016, he attended the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto in Castiglione della Pescaia, Italy, where he worked in master classes with Maestro Richard Bonyngue, Angela Gheorghiu, and Carmen Giannattasio. He is a 2017 Sara Tucker Study Grant Winner and has won additional awards from the Opera Index Competition and the Licia Albanese-Puccini Vocal Competition. He is also a Toulmin Scholar and attended The Juilliard School, where he received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees.

A native of Michigan, soprano **Alexandria Shiner** begins her first season as a Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist with Washington National Opera in the fall of 2017. Her performances in WNO's 2017–2018 season include the title role in the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance of *Alcina* and Berta in the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance of *The Barber of Seville*. She has performed the roles of Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Magda Sorel in *The Consul*, Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*, Madame Kirsten in *The Beautiful Bridegroom*, and the title role in *Amelia Goes to the Ball*. Additionally, she has performed with Knoxville Opera, Marble City Opera, and Opera Naples. In 2014, by invitation of Manhattan Concert Productions, she performed on the Fourth Annual Collegiate Honors Recital in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Recently, she received an Encouragement Award in the 2017 Middle East Tennessee District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and she placed second in the Young Artist category of the 2016 Orpheus National Music Competition for Vocalists. In July 2016, she competed as the Mid-South Regional Winner in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Artist Awards in Chicago. She was honorably mentioned as one of Knoxville's Most Memorable Operatic Performances of 2015 for her portrayal of Magda Sorel and Queen of the Night with the University of Tennessee Opera Theatre. She received her Master of Music from University of Tennessee, Knoxville and her Bachelor of Music from Western Michigan University, and she also attended the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria in 2013.

ABOUT THE DOMINGO-CAFTRITZ YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM

Founded by Plácido Domingo and soon to begin its 16th season, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program guides young singers and pianists/coaches on the verge of international careers. The program provides intensive study with renowned vocal and drama coaches and offers voice lessons, language classes, career guidance, and master classes with Washington National Opera staff and guest artists. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists also have the opportunity to perform and cover roles in WNO productions.

In addition to many performances on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists have performed at the White House, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia, the United States Senate, the Supreme Court, the Music Center at Strathmore, the Smithsonian Institution, the Mexican Cultural Institute, with the Baltimore and Charleston Symphony Orchestras, and at numerous embassies. They have also appeared in concert with Maestro Domingo at the Reigwood Theatre in Beijing.

Each season, the Young Artists sing a fully staged performance with orchestra in the Kennedy Center Opera House as part of the WNO season. Past productions have included *La traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Madama Butterfly* conducted by Maestro Domingo; *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, *La bohème*, and *Madame Butterfly* conducted by WNO Music Director Philippe Auguin; *Carmen* conducted by Evan Rogister; and *The Marriage of Figaro* conducted by James Gaffigan. In the 2017–2018 season, the Domingo Cafritz Young Artists will sing in special performances of *Alcina*, conducted by Jane Glover, on Saturday, November 18, 2017; and *The Barber of Seville*, conducted by Maurizio Benini, on Thursday, May 17, 2018.

Graduates of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program have gone on to successful careers including performances at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, New York City Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Santa Fe Opera, National Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Bayreuth Festival, Glyndebourne Festival, Berlin State Opera, Teatro Real in Madrid, and Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

Auditions for places in the program's 2018–2019 season will be held in a series of national auditions throughout the fall of 2017 in Washington, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia. More details will be announced in the coming months.

ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the company presents a diverse season of grand opera—including both classics from the repertory and more contemporary pieces—plus several newly commissioned American works and a variety of special concerts and events. The WNO Orchestra is led by Music Director Philippe Auguin. Founded in 1956 and an affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 2011, WNO has a storied legacy of world premieres, new productions, international tours, live recordings and radio broadcasts, and innovative education and community-engagement programs. Throughout its history, WNO has been led by titans in the opera field, including the legendary Plácido Domingo, who headed the company from 1996 to 2011.

WNO contributes to the future of opera through two signature artist-development programs. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, soon to begin its 16th season, has become one of the nation's most competitive and comprehensive professional training programs for young singers and collaborative pianists. Alumni of the program have won major competitions and gone on to successful careers at major opera houses in the U.S. and abroad. The WNO Opera Institute nurtures the ambitions of high-school-age singers from across the nation during an intensive three-week summer program held at American University in Washington.

Among the company's most successful recent programs is the 2012 launch of the American Opera Initiative, a comprehensive commissioning program that works to expand the American operatic repertory, to give WNO's young artists the chance to collaborate with living composers and librettists on new works, and to make American opera more relevant to 21st-century audiences. The most popular of WNO's community-engagement programs is M&M'S® *Opera in the Outfield*, during which an opera is broadcast live from the Kennedy Center Opera House stage to the high-definition scoreboard at Nationals Park. The company's other education programs include the *Kids Create Opera* program at local elementary schools, Look-In performances for students in grades 4–8, and the Student Dress Rehearsal Program for middle and high school students. The company also offers free Opera Insights programs before every performance in the Opera House.

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