

Press Release

February 14, 2018

**PATTI LUPONE, TITUSS BURGESS,
NATHAN GUNN, ISABEL LEONARD,
KATHRYN LEWEK, AND JAMIE BERNSTEIN
HEADLINE CAST FOR
WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA GALA**

Celebrating Leonard Bernstein at 100

**Sunday, May 20 at 6 p.m.
in the Kennedy Center Opera House**

**Tickets on sale February 15 to Kennedy Center members
and to the general public on Thursday, February 22**

**Gala packages also available, including a VIP cocktail reception and
formal embassy dinners by ambassadorial invitation**

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO) today announced the date and partial casting for its 2018 WNO Gala, which takes place on Sunday, May 20 in the Kennedy Center Opera House. The annual Gala concert features a world-class cast starring Tony® and GRAMMY® Award-winning actor Patti LuPone; Emmy®-nominated singer and actor Tituss Burgess (*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, *30 Rock*); and stars from WNO's current season—mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard (Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*) and soprano Kathryn Lewek (Cunegonde in *Candide*)—as well as members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists Program and other special guests to be announced at a later date. Renowned baritone Nathan Gunn will host and perform, alongside his wife, pianist Julie Gunn.

Conductor John DeMain leads the WNO Orchestra in this event honoring the centennial of iconic composer, conductor, educator, and humanitarian Leonard Bernstein's birth. The WNO Gala is the culminating event in this season's Center-wide celebration of the musical genius, and Jamie Bernstein, the composer's eldest daughter, will also participate in the festivities.

Gala packages for the full evening include a cocktail reception on the Kennedy Center's River Terrace at 4:30 p.m., followed by the 6 p.m. performance. The event concludes with elegant dinners hosted by Ambassadors and foreign dignitaries at embassies and residences throughout Washington.

The Chairs of the WNO Gala are Eric and Susanne Larsen.

The Gala is WNO's largest fundraiser and one of Washington's most anticipated events of the year. Proceeds from the Gala play a crucial role in advancing the WNO's award-winning artistic, educational, and engagement programs.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for the Gala concert, starting at \$49, are on sale starting February 15 at 10 a.m. to Kennedy Center members. Tickets go on sale to the general public on February 22 at 10 a.m.

Tickets will be available [online](#), in person at the Kennedy Center Box Office, and by calling (202) 467-4600 or (800) 444-1324. For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

Gala ticket packages start at \$1,000, and include the VIP cocktail party, priority seating for the Gala concert, and seating at private embassy dinners following the performance. Information is available online or by contacting the Special Events office at (202) 416-8496 or operagala@kennedy-center.org.

ABOUT LEONARD BERNSTEIN AT 100

Born on August 25, 1918, in Lawrence, Massachusetts, Leonard Bernstein became a towering figure of 20th-century music and culture. Bernstein was world-renowned as the composer of *West Side Story*, *Candide*, and *On the Town*, among numerous stage and orchestral works; as the celebrated music director of the New York Philharmonic and other leading orchestras, with whom he created a trove of acclaimed recordings; as an educator whose televised Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic created more than one generation of music lovers; and as a lifelong humanitarian who spoke out whenever he witnessed injustice.

"Leonard Bernstein at 100" is a year of local, national, and worldwide events that pay tribute to this iconic artist whose influence and impact on arts and culture in the U.S. and around the world have transcended both genres and generations. Throughout the centennial celebration, which begins at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.,

performances of theater, classical, jazz, choral works, dance, and education events will explore and celebrate the many facets of Leonard Bernstein as musician, composer, educator, and humanitarian.

While truly a citizen artist to the world, Washington, D.C. was one of Leonard Bernstein's creative homes. Bernstein frequented the Kennedy White House, regularly composed for and conducted Washington ensembles and at area venues, served as emcee for the fundraiser for the National Performing Arts Center (later named the Kennedy Center) and premiered lasting and notable works such as *MASS*—at the opening of the Center—and *West Side Story* here in the nation's capital.

[ABOUT PATTI LUPONE](#)

[ABOUT TITUSS BURGESS](#)

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[ABOUT ISABEL LEONARD](#)

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[ABOUT JULIE GUNN](#)

[ABOUT JOHN DEMAIN](#)

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 since 2012, 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, now in its 15th 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 Mars, Incorporated® *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.

In July 2018, WNO welcomes Timothy O’Leary as its General Director. O’Leary joins WNO from Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL) where he has served as its General Director since 2008. He currently serves as Chairman of the Board of Opera America, the national service organization for opera. Prior to his appointment as OTSL General Director, O’Leary was part of the management team at New York City Opera under General and Artistic Director Paul Kellogg; he was also the first Managing Director of New York’s Gotham Chamber Opera, where collaborations included the Lincoln Center Festival and the Spoleto Festival USA. As an assistant stage director, he worked for the New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and others.

FUNDING CREDITS

Major support for WNO is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

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WNO’s Presenting Sponsor
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#WNOGala

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TICKETS & INFORMATION

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www.kennedy-center.org/wno