

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 21, 2017

**Washington National Opera
announces**

**Philippe Auguin
to become
Music Director Emeritus
of the WNO Orchestra**

Music Directorship will conclude with WNO's 2017–2018 season

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO) and its Executive Director Michael L. Mael today announce that Music Director Philippe Auguin will become Music Director Emeritus of the WNO Orchestra at the beginning of the 2018–2019 season. Auguin's position as Music Director will not be extended after the conclusion of the company's 2017–2018 season. He will then have completed eight seasons as WNO's Music Director, having conducted 17 productions—including WNO's first-ever complete cycles of Wagner's epic *The Ring of the Nibelung*—and having filled 10 positions in the orchestra, including three principals, an assistant concertmaster, and an assistant principal.

"We are grateful to Maestro Auguin for raising the level of our orchestra's music making and for giving our audiences so many exciting evenings at the opera," said Mael.

"Whether in Mozart, Puccini, and especially in his beloved Wagner, Philippe has consistently brought the WNO Orchestra to new levels of excellence. We are all artistically richer for his musical leadership."

"The artists of the WNO Orchestra and I can look back at the eight most extraordinary years. My close connection to them, as well as to the Chorus members and the

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members of the Music Staff, from the very first day, never ended,” added Auguin. “I thank them all for this and for all the triumphs we celebrated together—bringing the magic of our art to the music lovers.”

“The partnership I shared with Philippe during our 2016 *Ring* was a powerful and rewarding experience,” said WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello. “I look forward to hearing the singers and orchestra under his baton in *Don Carlo* next season and in the future when he returns as Music Director Emeritus.”

Philippe Auguin first performed with the WNO Orchestra in 2009, leading acclaimed performances of *Götterdämmerung* in concert after then-Music Director Heinz Fricke withdrew on short notice. Auguin was named Music Director in October 2010. Since then he has conducted performances of *Salome* (2010), *Madama Butterfly* (2011), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2011), *Così fan tutte* (2012), *Nabucco* (2012), *Don Giovanni* (2012), *Manon Lescaut* (2013), *Tristan and Isolde* (2013), *The Magic Flute* (2014), *La bohème* (2014), *The Flying Dutchman* (2015), *The Rhinegold* (2016), *The Valkyrie* (2016), *Siegfried* (2016), *Twilight of the Gods* (2016), and *Madame Butterfly* (2017). He will conduct performances of *Don Carlo* in WNO’s 2017–2018 season.

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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