Washington National Opera presents

American Opera Initiative Festival
January 19–21, 2018
Kennedy Center Terrace Theater

World Premiere of
Proving Up
by Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek

plus

Three new one-act operas:
Bridge for Three by Nathan Fletcher and Megan Cohen
Fault Lines by Gity Razaz and Sara Cooper
Precita Park by John Glover and Erin Bregman

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO) presents the sixth season of its acclaimed American Opera Initiative, a comprehensive commissioning program that brings contemporary American stories to the stage while fostering the talents of rising American composers and librettists. All of the program’s world premiere operas are presented during the American Opera Initiative Festival weekend, January 19–21, 2018, all in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. The festival begins with the world premiere of a new hour-long work by composer Missy Mazzoli and librettist Royce Vavrek, Proving Up, on January 19 and 21, 2018, directed by Alison Moritz and conducted by Christopher Rountree, both in their WNO debuts. Three new pairings of opera
composers and librettists—Nathan Fletcher and Megan Cohen, Gity Razaz and Sara Cooper, John Glover and Erin Bregman—offer new, one-act operas during the festival. Two semi-staged concert performances of each 20-minute opera are presented on January 20, 2018.

**Acclaimed writing team tells the tale of the American dream in Proving Up**

**Proving Up** is a co-commission with WNO, Opera Omaha, and Miller Theatre at Columbia University. It is performed in English and conducted by Christopher Rountree, the founder of the groundbreaking chamber orchestra wild Up, and is directed by Alison Moritz. Both Rountree and Moritz make their WNO debuts with this production. Casting features members of WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program.

**Proving Up**  
Music by Missy Mazzoli  
Libretto by Royce Vavrek

**Creative team**  
Conductor: Christopher Rountree *  
Director: Alison Moritz *  
Costume Designer: Lynly Saunders  
Lighting Designer: Andrew Guban

**Cast**  
Mrs. Johannes “Ma” Zegner: Leah Hawkins †  
Zegner Sister 1: Madison Leonard †  
Zegner Sister 2: Allegra De Vita †
Miles Zegner: Arnold Livingston Geis ‡
Mr. Johannes “Pa” Zegner: Christopher Kenney ‡
The Sodbuster: Timothy J. Bruno ‡

Synopsis
In Proving Up, based on a coming-of-age short story by Karen Russell, a group of Nebraska families struggles to claim their land under the Homestead Act. In order to satisfy the grant, or “prove up,” their homes must each have at least one glass window. Unable to afford such a luxury, the families recruit young Miles to ferry a single window from one home to the next, each time the inspector arrives. How will Miles handle this enormous responsibility, knowing so many depend on his help to achieve the American Dream?

New one-act operas expand the American repertory
The three original one-act operas presented on January 20, 2018, at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., highlight different aspects of American life and culture. These new works are accompanied by a chamber orchestra conducted by George Manahan and are performed in English. Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist alumna Andrea Dorf McGary directs these two semi-staged concert performances. A Q&A session with the creative teams follows the second performance.

Bridge for Three
Music by Nathan Fletcher
Libretto by Megan Cohen

Synopsis
Three figures in three different centuries are about to hurl themselves from the Brooklyn Bridge— inventor and daredevil Jimmy James in 1897, Wall Street tycoon Roland Archister in 1929, and teenage runaway Molly in 2017. All have their different reasons for this leap into the unknown, and all discover that life is more than it sometimes appears.

Cast
Jimmy James: Alexander McKissick ‡
Roland Archister: Michael Hewitt ‡
Molly: Eliza Bonet ‡

Fault Lines
Music by Gity Razaz
Libretto by Sara Cooper

Synopsis
In an upper-middle class suburb of New York during the Second World War, racism, classism, and abuse lurk beneath the surface of this family’s daily life, spiraling out of control as dark secrets come to light and threaten all their existences.
Cast
Kyoko: Laura Choi Stuart *
Richard: Michael Hewitt ‡
Grace: Eliza Bonet ‡
Harry: Alexander McKissick ‡

Precita Park
Music by John Glover
Libretto by Erin Bregman

Synopsis
In the aftermath of the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906, Lilah and her four siblings move into their new home—a tiny shack in Precita Park. Her brothers and sisters bicker over every little thing. Searching for stillness in the midst of chaos, Lilah reaches for a copy of Thoreau’s Walden...

Cast
Lilah: Alexandra Shiner ‡
Sonia: Laura Choi Stuart *
Sarah: Eliza Bonet ‡
Daniel: Frederick Ballentine ‡
David: Michael Hewitt ‡ *

* Washington National Opera Debut
‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The three composer-librettist teams of the one-act operas have been collaborating on their works with distinguished mentors who have each enjoyed professional success with new American operas: composer Kevin Puts (Silent Night, Elizabeth Cree, Manchurian Candidate), librettist Mark Campbell ((R)evolution of Steve Jobs, Silent Night, Manchurian Candidate), and conductor George Manahan (former Music Director of New York City Opera).

TICKET INFORMATION

Proving Up is presented on Friday, January 19, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, January 21, 2018 at 2 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. Tickets are $39.
Three 20-Minute Operas is presented on Saturday, January 20, 2018, at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Terrace Theater. Tickets are $20. Tickets for all are available by visiting the Kennedy Center box office, by calling Instant Charge at (202) 467-4600, or through the Kennedy Center website. Groups of 10 or more may contact the Group Sales office at (202) 416-8400.
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, now in 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 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.

To celebrate the company’s 60th anniversary in 2015–2016, Washington National Opera presented three complete cycles of Wagner’s Ring in spring 2016. These performances, featuring an acclaimed production by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Music Director Philippe Auguin, marked the first time the company presented The Ring in complete cycles in its history.

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**FUNDING CREDITS**

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WNO’s Presenting Sponsor
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**TICKETS & INFORMATION**

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