Press Release
March 30, 2018

Washington National Opera presents
Leonard Bernstein’s piercing satire
Candide

WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello’s zanily riotous production is the centerpiece of the Kennedy Center’s Leonard Bernstein at 100 celebration

All-star cast features Alek Shrader in his WNO debut, the return of stratospheric soprano Kathryn Lewek, and the legendary Denyce Graves

May 5–26, 2018
in the Kennedy Center Opera House

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera concludes its 2017–2018 season with the company premiere of Leonard Bernstein’s biting satire Candide, May 5–26, 2018, in the Kennedy Center Opera House. Candide is one of Bernstein’s most popular and enduring works, blurring the lines between opera and musical theater.

Heading the all-American cast are three powerhouses from the world of opera: tenor Alek Shrader in his WNO debut in the title role, soprano Kathryn Lewek as his forlorn love interest Cunegonde, and WNO audience favorite and local legend Denyce Graves as the Old Lady. This new-to-Washington production, the centerpiece of the Kennedy

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Center’s season-long *Leonard Bernstein at 100* celebration, is directed by WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Nicole Paiement.

When young Candide’s marriage proposal to a baron’s daughter doesn’t quite go as planned, this naïve student of optimism is thrust into an eye-opening odyssey across lands near and far, discovering the horrors of existence at every turn, from war and earthquakes to slavery and disease. Very bad things happen to very good people (and plenty of bad ones, too) as the ensemble cast quick-changes its way through dozens of colorful characters, performing Bernstein’s witty and effervescent score. Featuring such classic tunes as “Glitter and Be Gay,” “The Best of All Possible Worlds,” and “Make Our Garden Grow,” Bernstein’s funny, philosophical, and fast-paced take on Voltaire’s novella finds a way to move and inspire with life-affirming lessons that still ring true today.

The ensemble cast is led by a trio of stars. Tenor Alek Shrader, the breakout star of the 2009 opera documentary *The Audition* and a grand finals winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, sings the title role in his WNO debut. Kathryn Lewek, whose impeccable high notes mesmerized WNO audiences as the Queen of the Night in 2014’s *The Magic Flute*, returns to sing the role of Cunegonde, whose high-flying aria “Glitter and Be Gay” is one of the most thrilling and difficult challenges in all of vocal music. Singing the role of the Old Lady is renowned mezzo-soprano and WNO favorite Denyce Graves, who was seen as Emelda Griffith in last season’s production of *Champion*. An alumna of D.C.’s Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Graves has a long and celebrated history with WNO, including memorable appearances in her signature roles of Carmen and Dalila.

The cast also features Wynn Harmon (*Lost in the Stars* and *Show Boat*) in the dual role of Voltaire and Candide’s tutor Dr. Pangloss. Two dynamic rising artists make their WNO debuts: baritone Edward Nelson is Maximilian and bass-baritone Matthew Scollin sings the roles of James and Martin. WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is well represented in the cast of *Candide*. Tenor Frederick Ballentine is Cacambo, mezzo-soprano Eliza Bonet is Paquette, and tenor Alexander McKissick is the Grand

Marshalling all of these talents is WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, who directed this production’s premiere at The Glimmerglass Festival in upstate New York, where she serves as General and Artistic Director. Earlier this season, Zambello directed WNO productions of Aida and The Little Prince; next season she will direct a new production of La traviata and a revival of her world-premiere production of The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me.

Leading the WNO Orchestra in interpreting Bernstein’s rollicking score is Nicole Paiement, who has previously appeared at WNO conducting the world premiere of Mohammed Fairouz’s The Dictator’s Wife in 2017 and The Little Prince in 2014. Paiement, who also serves as Artistic Director of Opera Parallèle in San Francisco and as Principal Guest Conductor of The Dallas Opera, will return next season to conduct WNO’s company premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell’s Silent Night.

The creative team also includes associate director and choreographer Eric Sean Fogel, associate director E. Loren Meeker, scenic designer James Noone, costume designer Jennifer Moeller, lighting designer Mark McCullough, hair and makeup designer David C. Zimmerman, and sound designer G. Thomas Clark for GTC Sound Design.

Candide opens on Saturday, May 5, 2018 at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Opera House and runs for nine performances, including May 9, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 26. The opera’s running time is two hours and 50 minutes, including one 25-minute intermission. Candide is performed in English with projected English titles. Visit WNO’s website for complete production details and casting information.
Washington National Opera’s 2017–2018 season also includes Rossini’s charming romantic comedy *The Barber of Seville*. The 2018–2019 season includes a new WNO production of Verdi’s classic romantic drama *La traviata*, the company premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell’s Pulitzer Prize–winning *Silent Night*, Tchaikovsky’s legendary epic *Eugene Onegin*, Gounod’s devilishly entertaining *Faust*, and Puccini’s towering masterpiece *Tosca*. The season also features the return of Mars, Incorporated Opera in the Outfield and the American Opera Initiative Festival; a revival of WNO’s hit world-premiere holiday family opera *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*; a special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performance of *La traviata*, and other exciting vocal events. Tickets are available now.

**Candide Performance and Ticket Information**

Saturday, May 5 at 7 p.m. • Wednesday, May 9 at 7:30 p.m. • Saturday, May 12 at 7 p.m. • Monday, May 14 at 7 p.m. • Friday, May 18 at 7:30 p.m. • Sunday, May 20 at 12 noon • Tuesday, May 22 at 7:30 p.m. • Thursday, May 24 at 7:30 p.m. • Saturday, May 26 at 7 p.m.

Tickets start at $45 and are 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.
**Candide Production Information**

Music by Leonard Bernstein

Book Adapted from Voltaire by Hugh Wheeler in a New Version by John Caird

Lyrics by Richard Wilbur
with Additional Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, John Latouche, Lillian Hellman, Dorothy Parker, and Leonard Bernstein

A co-production of The Glimmerglass Festival, Opéra National de Bordeaux, and Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse

Performed in English with Projected English Titles

May 5, 9, 12, 14, 18, 20m, 22, 24, and 26, 2018

**Cast and Creative Team**

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Candide</td>
<td>Alek Shrader *</td>
<td>Conductor</td>
<td>Nicole Päiemnt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cunegonde</td>
<td>Kathryn Lewek</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Francesca Zambello</td>
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<td>Old Lady</td>
<td>Denyce Graves</td>
<td>Associate Director/Choreographer</td>
<td>Eric Sean Fogel</td>
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<td>Pangloss/Voltaire</td>
<td>Wynn Harmon</td>
<td>Associate Director</td>
<td>E. Loren Meeker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maximilian</td>
<td>Edward Nelson *</td>
<td>Set Designer</td>
<td>James Noone</td>
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<td>James/Martin</td>
<td>Matthew Scollin *</td>
<td>Costume Designer</td>
<td>Jennifer Moeller</td>
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<td>Cacambo</td>
<td>Frederick Ballentine ‡</td>
<td>Lighting Designer</td>
<td>Mark McCullough</td>
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<td>Grand Inquisitor/Governor</td>
<td>Alexander McKissick ‡</td>
<td>Hair and Makeup Designer</td>
<td>David C. Zimmerman</td>
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<td>Baroness/Vanderdendur</td>
<td>Kerriann Otaño ±</td>
<td>Sound Designer</td>
<td>G. Thomas Clark for GTC Sound Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paquette</td>
<td>Eliza Bonet ‡</td>
<td>Assistant Director</td>
<td>Corinne M. Hayes</td>
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* Washington National Opera Debut
± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program
‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program
Candide Related Programs and Events

Fortas Chamber Music Concerts and Renée Fleming VOICES present Isabel Leonard in Recital—A Tribute to Leonard Bernstein
Sunday, April 15, 2018 at 2 p.m., Kennedy Center Terrace Theater
In a special program, the star of WNO’s The Barber of Seville pays homage to the centennial of Candide composer Leonard Bernstein. The recital, featuring John Arida on piano, includes classics from Bernstein’s most popular works as well as rarities from the Bernstein canon. Part of Leonard Bernstein at 100. Tickets are $59.

WNO Gala: Celebrating Leonard Bernstein
Sunday, May 20, 2018 at 6 p.m., Kennedy Center Opera House
WNO’s annual Gala Concert features a world-class cast starring soprano Kathryn Lewek (Cunegonde in Candide) and Isabel Leonard (Rosina in WNO’s forthcoming production of The Barber of Seville), as well as members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists Program. They are joined by Tony® and Grammy®-winning actor Patti LuPone, and Emmy®-nominated singer and actor Tituss Burgess (Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, 30 Rock). 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. Jamie Bernstein, the composer’s eldest daughter, will also participate in the festivities. The WNO Gala Concert is the culminating event in the Kennedy Center’s season-long celebration Leonard Bernstein at 100. Tickets start at $49, and Gala packages are also available.

Opera Insights before every performance, Kennedy Center Opera House
WNO presents a free lecture prior to every performance of Candide. These events begin one hour prior to curtain in the Opera House and last approximately 20–25 minutes. The O-Zone lecture with musicologist Saul Lilienstein on Thursday, May 24 begins at 6:15 p.m. and lasts approximately 45 minutes. Additionally, the lecture on Sunday, May 20 begins at 11 a.m. in the South Opera Tier Lounge.

Artist Q&As: Candide
Immediately following the performance on Monday, May 14
Kennedy Center Opera House
Join WNO artistic staff for a wide-ranging discussion with the artists of the production. This event is free to patrons presenting a ticket from any performance of Candide.

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 premiers, 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.

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.

Discover Washington National Opera on social media:

![Social Media Icons]

#CandideDC

**FUNDING CREDITS**

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WNO’s Presenting Sponsor
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PRESS CONTACT
Rachelle Roe
(202) 416-8443
rbroe@kennedy-center.org

FOR PHOTOS
Maria Rodriguez
(202) 416-8442
mtrodriguez@kennedy-center.org

TICKETS & INFORMATION
(202) 467-4600; (800) 444-1324
www.kennedy-center.org/wno