Press Release
March 23, 2018

Washington National Opera
presents

Rossini’s triumphant romantic comedy

The Barber of Seville

A favorite production returns to WNO with a glamorous cast, including Isabel Leonard, Taylor Stayton, and Andrey Zhilikhovsky

Conductor Emily Senturia Makes Her WNO Debut

April 28–May 19, 2018
in the Kennedy Center Opera House

Special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance on May 17

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera presents one of the most popular comic operas of all time, Rossini’s The Barber of Seville, April 28–May 19, 2018, in the Kennedy Center Opera House. Shaving, swooning, and scheming abound in this rapid-fire romp known to audiences for its instantly recognizable overture, which was made even more famous by its use in the iconic Bugs Bunny cartoon Rabbit of Seville.

An all-star cast is led by returning favorite Isabel Leonard (2015’s Cinderella), dashing American tenor Taylor Stayton in his WNO debut, and thrilling Moldovan baritone Andrey Zhilikhovsky in his U.S. operatic debut. Conductor Emily Senturia makes her WNO debut in this production, stepping in for previously announced Maurizio Benini, who has withdrawn due to a family emergency.

~ more ~
“We are so grateful to Emily for stepping in mid-season on short notice to conduct this production of *The Barber of Seville*,” said WNO artistic Director Francesca Zambello. “She had great success at the Houston Grand Opera recently leading the same opera in similar circumstances, and we are eager to welcome her to WNO. Emily is a talent to watch in the opera world, and one whom we are delighted to introduce to our audiences here in D.C.”

This WNO production, last seen in 2009, is directed by Peter Kazaras (2014’s *La bohème* and 2016’s *The Marriage of Figaro*). A special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance is presented in the Opera House on Thursday, May 17, 2018, and features current singers and alumni of WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program.

Demand is at an all-time high for the sharp-scissored and equally sharp-witted barber of Seville. Chief among the clamoring masses is Count Almaviva, who begs his friend to help him woo the beautiful young Rosina. The catch? A bumbling, older doctor has claimed her first. Pulling from a bottomless bag of tricks and disguises, this scheming duo stops at nothing—breaking and entering, shaving distractions, even good old-fashioned bribery—to turn the tables in the name of true love. A prequel of sorts to Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro* (both are based on a series of plays by the French writer Beaumarchais), *The Barber of Seville* boasts uproarious laughs and sensational music in equal measure with its sparkling melodies, high-flying vocal fireworks, and tour-de-force show stoppers—including the iconic and notoriously challenging baritone aria “Largo al factotum” (of “Figaro! Figaro!” fame) as well as Rosina’s classic “Una voce poco fa.”

The cast is led by a trio of rising young stars. Rosina, the object of everyone’s affection, is sung by Isabel Leonard, the acclaimed star of WNO’s *Cinderella* in 2015. A versatile vocal virtuoso, Leonard has a major international career at the world’s leading opera houses; she has sung the role of Rosina in Vienna, New York, Chicago, Dallas, and on other major stages. Next season, she has the rare honor of singing three leading roles in a single season at the Metropolitan Opera: her role debut in the American premiere of Nico Muhly’s *Marnie*, her role debut as Mélisande in Debussy’s
ethereal Pelléas et Mélišande, and Blanche de la Force in Poulenc’s gripping Dialogues des Carmélites.

Tenor Taylor Stayton makes his WNO debut as Count Almaviva, a signature role he has sung to great acclaim at the Metropolitan Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, the BBC Proms, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opera Philadelphia, and others. His many awards include first prize in the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation International Vocal Competition and in the Gerda Lissner Foundation International Voice Competition.

Making his American debut as the titular barber Figaro is Moldovan baritone Andrey Zhilikhovsky, a core performer at Moscow’s legendary Bolshoi Theatre who has been acclaimed the world over. After a recent debut at Opéra National de Paris, other future debuts include the Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, Berlin State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

Also featured in the cast is Italian baritone Paolo Bordogna, who co-starred alongside Isabel Leonard in WNO’s 2015 Cinderella, as Doctor Bartolo. A veteran of the prestigious Rossini Festival in Pesaro, Italy, Bordogna recently released his debut solo recording Tutto Buffo for Decca, which included Bartolo’s riotous aria “A un dottor della mia sorte.” Chinese bass Wei Wu, a recent participant in WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program who won raves in 2017 for his role in the world premiere of Mason Bates’s The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs at Santa Fe Opera, sings the role of Don Basilio. Rounding out the cast are current Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist soprano Alexandria Shiner as Berta and former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist baritone Christian Bowers as Fiorello.

A special cast takes the stage for The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance on Thursday, May 17. Second-year young artist Allegra De Vita sings the role of Rosina, first-year young artist Arnold Livingston Geis is Count Almaviva, first-year young artist Christopher Kenney is Figaro, and third-year young artist Timothy J. Bruno is Don Basilio.
Peter Kazaras, whose lush productions of *La bohème* (2014) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (2016) were enthusiastically received by Washington audiences, returns to WNO to direct this celebrated WNO production. Kazaras also serves as one of the Artists-in-Residence this season for WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. The creative team also includes scenic designer Allen Moyer, costume designer James Scott, lighting designer Mark McCullough, hair and makeup designer David C. Zimmerman, and choreographer Rosa Mercedes in her WNO debut.

*The Barber of Seville* opens on Saturday, April 28, 2018, at 7 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Opera House and runs for eight performances, including May 2, 4, 7, 11, 13, and 19. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance is Thursday, May 17. The opera’s running time is approximately three hours, including one 25-minute intermission. *The Barber of Seville* is performed in Italian with projected English titles. Visit WNO’s [website](https://www.washingtonnationalopera.org/) for complete production details and casting information.

Washington National Opera’s 2017–2018 season concludes with Bernstein’s biting satire *Candide*. The 2018–2019 season features 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](https://www.washingtonnationalopera.org/tickets) are available now.

**The Barber of Seville Performance and Ticket Information**

Saturday, April 28 at 7 p.m. • Wednesday, May 2 at 7:30 p.m. • Friday, May 4 at 7:30 p.m. • Monday, May 7 at 7 p.m. • Friday, May 11 at 7:30 p.m. • Sunday, May 13 at 2 p.m. • Thursday, May 17† at 7:30 p.m. • Saturday, May 19 at 7 p.m.

Tickets start at $45 and are available [online](https://www.washingtonnationalopera.org/tickets), 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.

†Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance
The Barber of Seville Production Information

Music by Gioachino Rossini

Libretto by Cesare Sterbini

Revival of WNO Production

Performed in Italian withProjected English Titles

April 28 and May 2, 4, 7, 11, 13m, and 19, 2018

Cast and Creative Team

Rosina Isabel Leonard

Count Almaviva Taylor Stayton *

Figaro Andrey Zhilikhovsky *

Doctor Bartolo Paolo Bordogna

Don Basilio Wei Wu ±

Berta Alexandria Shiner ‡

Fiorello Christian Bowers ±

Conductor Emily Senturia *

Director Peter Kazaras

Set Designer Allen Moyer

Costume Designer James Scott

Lighting Designer Mark McCullough

Hair and Makeup Designer David C. Zimmerman

Choreographer Rosa Mercedes *

Assistant Director David Carl Toulson

Stage Manager Laura R. Krause

* Washington National Opera Debut
± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program
‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program
The Barber of Seville: The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance

Friday, May 17, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Opera House

Cast

Rosina               Allegra De Vita ‡
Count Almaviva      Arnold Livingston Geis ‡
Figaro               Christopher Kenney ‡
Doctor Bartolo      Paolo Bordogna
Don Basilio          Timothy J. Bruno ‡
Berta                Alexandria Shiner ‡
Fiorello             Christian Bowers ±

‡ Current member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program
± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

The Barber of Seville Related Programs and Events

Opera Master Class with Peter Kazaras
Wednesday, April 4, 2018, at 7 p.m., Kennedy Center Terrace Gallery
Witness how great performers are made, hear opera’s voices of tomorrow, and observe the making of opera. At this special event, emerging artists hone their craft under the guidance of Peter Kazaras, one of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program’s Artists-in-Residence for the 2017–2018 season and the director of WNO’s The Barber of Seville. This master class for pre-professional singers offers an intriguing peak behind the curtain of the creative process. Tickets are $12.

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 entitled IsabelLEONARDBernstein, the star of The Barber of Seville pays homage to 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
Sunday, May 20, 2018, at 6 p.m. in the Kennedy Center Opera House
WNO’s annual Gala features a world-class cast starring Isabel Leonard (Rosina in The Barber of Seville) and soprano Kathryn Lewek (Cunegonde in WNO’s forthcoming production of Candide). They are joined by Tony® and Grammy®-winning actor Patti LuPone, Emmy®-nominated singer and actor Tituss Burgess (Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, 30 Rock), 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. 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 pre-performance education event prior to every performance of The Barber of Seville. 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 Wednesday, May 2 begins at 6:15 p.m. and lasts approximately 45 minutes.)

Artist Q&As: The Barber of Seville
Immediately following the performances on Monday, May 7 and Sunday, May 13, Kennedy Center Opera House
Join WNO artistic staff for a wide-ranging discussion with the artists of the production. These events are free to patrons presenting a ticket from any performance of The Barber of Seville.

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 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:

#BarberDC

**FUNDING CREDITS**

Major support for WNO is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

David M. Rubenstein is the Presenting Underwriter of WNO.

WNO acknowledges the longstanding generosity of Life Chairman Mrs. Eugene B. Casey.

WNO’s Presenting Sponsor
General Dynamics

Generous support for WNO Italian Opera is provided by Daniel and Gayle D’Aniello.
The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is made possible through the generous support of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, with additional funding provided by Susan Carmel, Judy and Billy Cox, Robert and Lynn Downing, Carl M. Freeman Foundation, Virginia McGehee Friend, Michael F. and Noémi K. Neidorff and The Centene Charitable Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey P. Pohanka, Dr. Arthur and Mrs. Robin Sagoskin, Mr. Alan J. Savada and Mr. Will Stevenson, Mr. and Mrs. William E. Schuilling, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Guillermo Schultz, Mr. and Mrs. Michael R. Sonnenreich, Washington National Opera Council, and The Women’s Committee of Washington National Opera.

# # #

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