

Press Release

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Washington National Opera Announces Artists Selected for the 2018–2019 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

**Eleven Singers and Two Pianists/Coaches
Selected for Immersive Training Program**

**Artist-in-Residence Alan Held
Leads Cadre of Faculty and Specialists Including
Laura Brooks Rice, Neil Shicoff, Erie Mills,
Joseph Colaneri, and John Churchwell**

**Young Artist Season Highlights:
Featured Artists in World Premiere Productions of the
American Opera Initiative, Young Artist Performance of
La traviata, and *A Concert of Comic Masterpieces***

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO) announces the roster of emerging talent selected for the 17th season of its Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist (DCYA) Program, which begins in August 2018. Program Director Robert Ainsley leads the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, which offers intensive training and mentorship in technique, repertoire, language, movement, finance management, and career development as well as extraordinary performance opportunities on the WNO mainstage and around Washington, D.C., for these rising stars.

The DCYA Program hosts a faculty of leading master teachers and coaches, which will be led in 2018-2019 by returning Artist-in-Residence Alan Held, the acclaimed bass-baritone known to D.C. audiences as Wotan during the highly-acclaimed 2015–16 WNO Ring Cycle, who will also star in WNO's *Tosca* next season.

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Through the year-long training and preparation program, the Young Artists will star in a special performance of Verdi's *La traviata*, and perform in *A Concert of Comic Masterpieces* in the Kennedy Center Opera House; participate in several world premiere productions as part of WNO's annual American Opera Initiative Festival in January 2019, including *Taking Up Serpents*, the new opera by the acclaimed team of composer Kamala Sankaram and librettist Jerre Dye; and appear in a masterclass series, recitals, and concerts in prestigious venues and communities across the region.

"Washington National Opera is tremendously proud of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, one of the core components of our mission," said WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello. "By fostering artistic growth through opportunity, study, and performance, we strive to help our ensemble grow into consummate performers and artists. Our long-term commitment is to have them return to their home company in significant roles later in their careers, as part of our WNO family. In that spirit, we are delighted to welcome back the great bass-baritone Alan Held as our Artist-in-Residence this season, who guided the young artists so generously during the Ring Cycle."

The 2018–2019 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists* are:

- Joshua Blue**, Aurora, Illinois (tenor, first season)
- Eliza Bonet**, Atlanta, Georgia (mezzo-soprano, second season)
- Joshua Conyers**, The Bronx, New York (baritone, first season)
- Arnold Livingston Geis**, Chehalis, Washington (tenor, second season)
- Hannah Meredith Hagerty**, Washington, D.C. (mezzo-soprano, first season)
- Christopher Koelzer**, Sunnyvale, California (pianist/coach, second season)
- Samson McCrady**, Tucson, Arizona (baritone, first season)
- Alexander McKissick**, Madison, Connecticut (tenor, second season)
- Thomas Morris**, Atlanta, Georgia (pianist/coach, first season)
- Marlen Nahhas**, Houston, Texas (soprano, first season)
- Alexandra Nowakowski**, Chicago, Illinois (soprano, first season)
- Alexandria Shiner**, Waterford, Michigan (soprano, second season)
- Samuel Weiser**, Princeton Junction, New Jersey (bass, first season)

*Complete biographies of the 2018–2019 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists begin on page 6

American Bass-Baritone Alan Held leads world-class coaching roster

Steering the coaching roster for the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program's 2018–2019 season is returning Artist-in-Residence Alan Held, whose insight and expertise will aid the young talent as they prepare for future leading roles. He will work with the Young Artists by leading individual coaching sessions, presenting a masterclass for an invited audience of students and supporters, and observing and advising the Young Artists in their roles and covers on the mainstage.

"I am so looking forward to coming back to Washington National Opera and to being the Artist-in-Residence again for the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program," said Held.

"This company gave me my start in my operatic career over 30 years ago. I enjoy working and staying in touch with the Young Artists and passing on what I have learned...and, in return, I learn from them."

The Young Artists will train with other gifted voice teachers, vocal coaches, drama and movement experts, and career development mentors throughout the season. The full faculty roster for the 2018–2019 season features:

Alan Held: Artist-in-Residence

Ken Weiss: Principal coach

Laura Brooks Rice: Principal voice teacher

Neil Shicoff and **Deborah Birnbaum:** Visiting voice teachers

Rita Sloan: Piano teacher

Joseph Colaneri: *A Concert of Comic Masterpieces* conductor, master coach

John Churchwell, Dennis Giauque, Joan Dornemann, and Kathleen Kelly:

Visiting master coaches

Erie Mills: English diction coach, visiting master teacher

Vera Danchenko-Stern: Russian coach

Maddalena Borea: Italian instruction

Ole Hass: German instruction

Karma Camp: Movement instructor, stage director

Joe Dowling and **David Paul:** Dramatic instruction

Jonathan Friend: Career counselor

Laura Lee Everett and **Tiffany Soricelli:** Business/finance counselors

Performance opportunities at the Kennedy Center and beyond

A fundamental hallmark of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program is the opportunity to perform extensively at the Kennedy Center as well as for various community concerts, recitals, and events. These performances, including traditional and modern works, provide the Young Artists with valuable experiences in a broad range of repertoire for small and large public audiences.

Gaining significant performance experience is central to the Young Artists' development. Highlights of the program are the annual DCYA performances of WNO productions, featuring Young Artists in leading roles on the main stage as part of the WNO season in the Kennedy Center Opera House. In 2018–2019, WNO presents two special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performances: Verdi's *La traviata* on Friday, October 19, 2018, and *A Concert of Comic Masterpieces*, conducted by Maestro Joseph Colaneri, featuring the complete first act of Verdi's *Falstaff* and other great comic ensemble pieces on Friday, May 24, 2019. Complete casting will be announced soon.

The DCYA Program also engages Young Artists to study and perform supporting roles in WNO productions. As members of the cast, Young Artists participate in all scheduled rehearsals and receive direction and guidance from some of the opera's leading artists. In WNO's 2018–2019 season, Young Artists will perform and cover roles in *La traviata*, *Silent Night*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Faust*, and *Tosca*. The Young Artists will also appear in leading roles in WNO's holiday production of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, which takes place in the newly renovated Terrace Theater on December 14–16, 2018.

The 2018–2019 season will provide the Young Artists with exclusive opportunities to collaborate with living composers and librettists on several world premiere productions under the auspices of WNO's annual American Opera Initiative Festival. The festival kicks off with *Taking Up Serpents* by composer Kamala Sankaram and librettist Jerre Dye. Following on the success of Sankaram's *Thumbprint* and Dye's *The Falling and the Rising*, *Taking Up Serpents*, conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya and directed by Alison Moritz, will premiere on January 11 and 13, 2019 in the Terrace Theater. The popular *Three 20-Minute Operas*, featuring the work of three new composer-librettist

teams (Laura Barati and Matt Boehler; James Kennedy and Molly Joyce; Marella Koch and Nick Benavides), will be presented during two performances on January 12, 2019, with the WNO Orchestra conducted by Maestro Steven Osgood. Osgood serves as one of three mentors to the American Opera Initiative, alongside the acclaimed team behind the operas *Moby Dick*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Three Decembers*—composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer. Complete casting and creative teams for these new works will be announced soon.

Following the success of last season's recital series, each member of the 2018–2019 program will be featured on one of three intimate recitals throughout the year. These recitals feature song and concert repertoire, which explore and respond to the current exhibitions and collections on show at three important Washington, D.C., galleries and museums: The Kreeger Museum on November 17, 2018, Dumbarton Oaks on January 27, 2019, and The Phillips Collection on April 11, 2019.

The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists will also perform in a series of three invited masterclasses at the Kennedy Center and the WNO rehearsal studios in Takoma Park. The classes give local students the opportunity to see how young artists develop their technique and hone their performance skills with some of the world's leading performers. The Young Artists will work with WNO Artistic Director Francesca Zambello on Monday, November 19, 2018; Artist-in-Residence Alan Held on Thursday, January 17, 2019; and Maestro Joseph Colaneri, Music Director of The Glimmerglass Festival, on Thursday, May 16, 2019.

Among the Young Artists' other performance opportunities in 2018–2019 are free performances on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage that highlight and preview upcoming WNO productions and other special performances on Thursday, October 4, 2018; Thursday, November 8, 2018; Wednesday, March 6, 2019; and Tuesday, May 7, 2019. These appearances are streamed live on the Kennedy Center's [website](#) and archived for future viewing.

The Young Artists will have a vibrant presence around Washington in the coming season, including an appearance with The Grace Church Concert Series at Grace

Episcopal Church in The Plains, Virginia, on Sunday, November 11, 2018; a special scenes concert in the Bettie Rubenstein Grand Salon of the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum on Sunday, February 10, 2019; a performance at the Metropolitan Club on Thursday, April 4, 2019; performances of Liszt's unfinished opera *Sardanapalo* at the Library of Congress on Friday and Saturday, April 26-27, 2019; and continued collaborations with the Apollo Orchestra. More information on these and other events will be announced during the season.

Exchange with Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre continues

Next season will mark the ninth year of a professional and diplomatic exchange between members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and participants in the Bolshoi Theatre Young Artists Opera Program of Moscow. In March 2018, WNO hosted three students from Moscow for a two-week residency, culminating in a joint concert at the Russian Embassy. In the summer of 2019, WNO will send a number of Young Artists to Moscow, where they will study alongside their Russian peers and perform in two joint concerts. This ongoing partnership with the Bolshoi program, generously supported by Susan Carmel, presents a mutually beneficial opportunity for the young artists to share their ideas, culture, and technical expertise with their peers from overseas and to connect with foreign artistic agents for future career opportunities.

Biographies of the 2018–2019 Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists

British-American tenor **Joshua Blue** from Aurora, Illinois, joins WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall 2018 and will be singing Alfredo Germont in Verdi's *La traviata* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), Hippo/Holy Man/Dog/Water Seller in Tesori's *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and Monsieur Triquet in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. He will also perform as a soloist in WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." This summer, Blue will be an Apprentice Singer during Santa Fe Opera's summer festival. In 2017–2018, Blue debuted at Carnegie Hall in Handel's *Messiah*, with Oratorio Society of New York singing in Moravec's *Sanctuary Road*, at Merkin Concert Hall with New York Festival of Song, and with Austin Opera as Scaramuccio in Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In the summer of 2017, he was a Gaddes Festival Artist with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis where he sang in the American premiere of Philip Glass's *The Trial* and portrayed Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* as a vocal fellow with the Music Academy of the West. Recently, Blue received the Ellen Lopin Blair award for first place at the 2017 Oratorio Society of New York solo competition and received the Emerging Artist Award from the 2017 Opera Index Competition in New York City. He was a semi-finalist in the 2018 Metropolitan National Opera Council Auditions and sang on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in April. Blue earned his bachelor's degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in 2016, and

recently graduated from Juilliard with a master's degree, studying with Robert C. White, Jr.

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Cuban-American mezzo-soprano **Eliza Bonet** returns to Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the 2018–2019 season, performing Madeleine Audebert in *Silent Night*, Cat/Brother 1/Silk Merchant 2 in *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and Reba/Passenger/Holiness Congregation Member in *Taking Up Serpents*. She also will perform as a soloist in "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." In the 2017–2018 season with WNO, Bonet gave her role debuts as Bradamante in Handel's *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance) and as Paquette in Bernstein's *Candide*. She made her New York debut in June 2017 in Robert Paterson and David Cote's *Three Way* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, followed by a recording of the work through Nashville Opera where she originally premiered the role in January 2017. Additional recent appearances include Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Williamsburg, Annina in *La traviata* with Opera Maine, Mercédès in *Carmen* and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with Pensacola Opera, Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with Shreveport Opera, Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* and Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with PORTOpera, Dorothée in *Cendrillon* with Kentucky Opera, and Nettie Fowler for Opera on the Avalon's *Carousel*. Bonet was previously a member of the Merola Program at San Francisco Opera, a Young Artist with Florida Grand Opera, and a Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. On the concert stage, she has appeared as a soloist for Mozart's *Requiem* with Music at the Gate, Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, and Handel's *Messiah* with St. Mary's Catholic Church. Her awards include an Encouragement Award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2013 as well as being named a finalist for the Opera Birmingham Competition the same year. Bonet received the Joe Festervan Memorial Award in 2012 from the Mary Jacobs Smith Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Competition and completed her graduate degree from Florida State University in 2011.

Originally from The Bronx, New York, baritone **Joshua Conyers** joins Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the 2018–2019 season and will sing Giorgio Germont in *La traviata* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), British Major in *Silent Night*, Donkey in *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*. He will also perform as a soloist in WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." Conyers made his Carnegie Hall debut as the baritone soloist in Mozart's *Regina Coeli*, K. 276, Mark Hayes' *Te Deum*, Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music*, and Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the New England Symphonic Ensemble. In the summer of 2018, he joins Wolf Trap Opera to perform Monterone and cover the title role in *Rigoletto* and perform Le comte de Pâris in *Roméo et Juliette*. Additionally, he will sing as the baritone soloist in a recorded performance of Bernstein's *Songfest* with the National Orchestral Institute. In 2017 and 2018, Conyers spent two seasons of residence in the Benenson Young Artist Program at Palm Beach. His roles have included Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* (covering Sharpless), Marullo in *Rigoletto* (covering the title role), Sciarrone in *Tosca* (covering Scarpia), and covering the Conte in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Conyers joined The Glimmerglass Festival in the summer of 2017 to cover the roles of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* and Eustachio in Donizetti's rarely performed *L'assedio di Calais*. With companies such as Santa Fe Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Piedmont Opera, Vashon Opera, and Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theater, Conyers's roles have included Giorgio Germont in

La traviata, the title role of *Falstaff*, Marcello in *La bohème*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, Moralès in *Carmen*, and the Mandarin in *Turandot*.

A native of Chehalis, Washington, tenor **Arnold Livingston Geis** returns to WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the 2018–2019 season, presenting Gastone in *La traviata*, Jonathan Dale in *Silent Night*, and Bus Driver/Holiness Congregation Member in *Taking Up Serpents*. He will also sing as a soloist in “A Concert of Comic Masterpieces.” This 2017–2018 season with WNO, Geis sang Oronte in *Alcina* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), Snake and Vain Man in *The Little Prince*, Miles in the world premiere of *Proving Up*, and Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance). In the summer of 2017, he made his Chautauqua Opera debut performing the roles of Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* and Apollo in *L'Orfeo*. In the 2016–2017 season, he made his mainstage debut with LA Opera under the baton of Plácido Domingo and closed its season singing Parpignol in *La bohème* with conductor Gustavo Dudamel. In 2016, he made his company debut at New York City Opera as Corpsman Harris in the East Coast premiere of *Fallujah*. He also debuted as a guest soloist for Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the LA Master Chorale in January and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with Pasadena Symphony in April. Other performances include *Candide* and *Fallujah* with Long Beach Opera and recent debuts include numerous solo performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, and Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center. He made his national television debut on *America's Got Talent* in 2015 and has since sung for television and blockbuster film soundtracks including *American Crime*, *Minions*, *Sing*, and *Star Wars: Rogue One*. Winner of the 2016 LA District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Geis graduated with a Master of Music in Vocal Arts from the University of Southern California in May, 2014.

Mezzo-soprano **Hannah Meredith Hagerty** is a native of Washington, D.C., and joins Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the 2018–2019 season, singing Mary/Carmen in *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* and Nelda in *Taking Up Serpents*. She will also be a soloist in WNO's “A Concert of Comic Masterpieces.” This summer she returns to The Santa Fe Opera to sing the role of Kate Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*. At Rice University, she sang the roles of Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Sesto in *Giulio Cesare*, and at Oberlin Conservatory she performed the roles of Nancy in *Albert Herring* and Gertrud in *Hänsel und Gretel*. Additionally, her repertoire includes roles such as Suzy in *La rondine* and Sesto in *Giulio Cesare*. Hagerty has spent her summers as a Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, a Young Artist with The Glimmerglass Festival, and as an Apprentice Singer with The Santa Fe Opera. She completed her undergraduate degree at Oberlin Conservatory, where she studied with Daune Mahy. She also performed in a Marilyn Horne masterclass as a part of The Artist Recital Series at Oberlin Conservatory. She received her Master of Music from Rice University, where she studied with Julie Simson. Hagerty was a winner of the Capitol District in The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in November 2017.

A native of Sunnyvale, California, pianist/coach **Christopher Koelzer** returns for his second season in WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall of 2018, where he will be Assistant Conductor for *La traviata*. In WNO's 2017–2018 season, he was Assistant Conductor for *The Barber of Seville*. He attended Aspen Music Festival and School from 2011 to 2012, returning as a Vocal Fellow in 2014. He was awarded

the Outstanding Collaborative Pianist Award and Grand Prize Art Song in the Metropolitan International Music Festival Competition in New York in 2016. He has performed staged readings of new musicals in New York City (*Shards, Boston/Nebraska*), as well as world premieres of several new operas in Washington, D.C., and South Carolina. He began working professionally as an opera pianist at age 13 with Mission City Opera and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society of San Jose. He studied Piano Performance with Dr. Irene Peery-Fox at Brigham Young University and was involved as a pianist, harpsichordist, and coach with six fully-staged operas. He holds a master's degree in Collaborative Piano from the University of Maryland, College Park, and has coached and performed with UMD's Maryland Opera Studio since 2013. Koelzer is currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Maryland, studying with Professor Rita Sloan.

A native of Tucson, Arizona, baritone **Samson McCrady** joins the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the 2018–2019 season. His roles include Elk/Camel/Butcher in Tesori's *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, Wagner in Gounod's *Faust*, and Sciarrone in Puccini's *Tosca*. McCrady will also sing in WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." While at University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music, he performed the title role in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, the King of Scotland in Handel's *Ariodante*, and Jesus in a staged version of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*. He has also performed The Mandarin in a semi-staged version of Puccini's *Turandot* (Kentucky Symphony Orchestra), Alidoro in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (Queen City Opera), Edward G. Robinson in Robert Xavier-Rodriguez's *Frida* (Cincinnati Opera), and Geronimo in Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* (Cincinnati Chamber Opera). McCrady received a Bachelor of Music from Roberts Wesleyan College and is currently completing his Master of Music at University of Cincinnati's College-Conservatory of Music.

Originally from Madison, Connecticut, tenor **Alexander McKissick** returns to WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the 2018–2019 season, presenting Nikolaus Sprink in *Silent Night*, Joseph/Stagehand in *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and covering the title role in *Faust*. He will also sing as a soloist in "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." In WNO's 2017–2018 season, he sang Lamplighter and Drunkard in *The Little Prince* and Grand Inquisitor/Governor in *Candide*. He also sang in the 2018 American Opera Initiative Festival. In the summer of 2017, he performed the roles of Val in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Alfredo Germont in *La traviata* at the Aspen Music Festival. While studying at The Juilliard School, he performed as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, Le Journaliste in *Les mamelles de Tirésias*, Ein Soldat in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, and Brack Weaver in Kurt Weill's *Down in the Valley*, among others. He recently sang the roles of Ramon in *La Navarraise* at the Bard SummerScape festival and Fourth Jew in a concert version of Strauss's *Salome* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. In the summer of 2016, he attended the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto in Castiglione della Pescaia, Italy, where he worked in master classes with Maestro Richard Bonyngé, Angela Gheorghiu, and Carmen Giannattasio. He is currently a finalist for the 2018 Operalia Competition and will travel to Lisbon in August for the final round. He is a 2017 Sara Tucker Study Grant Winner and has won additional awards from the Opera Index Competition and the Licia Albanese-Puccini Vocal Competition. McKissick is also a Toulmin Scholar and attended The Juilliard School, where he received his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees.

Atlanta-native pianist and vocal coach **Thomas Morris** begins his first season in WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall of 2018. In WNO's 2018–2019 season he will be Assistant Conductor for *Tosca*. He will spend the summer of 2018 as an apprentice coach at the Merola Opera Program. He has worked as a staff pianist and coach at the Manhattan School of Music, Indiana University, the Harrower Summer Opera Workshop, and the Castleton Festival, and he spent three summers at the Aspen Music Festival and School in the collaborative piano and opera coaching programs. Morris received his undergraduate degree from Indiana University, where he studied piano and composition. As part of this degree, he spent a semester in Vienna, Austria, where he studied German language, opera, and Lieder. Morris recently graduated from the Manhattan School of Music with a master's degree, studying under Warren Jones.

A native of Houston, Texas, Lebanese-Mexican soprano **Marlen Nahhas** will join the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the 2018-2019 season and will perform Violetta in *La traviata* (Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance), The Flamingo/Brother 2/Horse/Silk Merchant 1 in *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, and Queer Kid/Holiness Congregation Member in *Taking Up Serpents*. She will also sing as a soloist in WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." Rounding out the 2017–2018 season, Nahhas performed Berta in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as a member of the Resident Artist Program. This summer, Nahhas will sing with the San Francisco Opera's prestigious Merola Opera Program in the Schwabacher Concert Series in which she will sing Georgietta in *Il tabarro* as well as a scene from *Don Giovanni* as Donna Elvira. Previous credits include covering the title role in *Tosca* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with Central City Opera, the title role in *Madama Butterfly* with the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, and Antonia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. She has also performed with Utah Festival Opera, where she won first place in the Michael Ballam International Opera Competition. Nahhas is also a three-time District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was a semi-finalist for the 2018 Council Auditions. Nahhas has a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from Indiana University.

A native of Chicago, Illinois, Polish-American soprano **Alexandra Nowakowski** joins Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for WNO's 2018–2019 season. She will perform the roles of The Unicorn and Weaver (*The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*), and she will also be a soloist in WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." This summer, she will sing Gilda (*Rigoletto*) at the Verbier Festival, and later in 2019 she will be the Soprano soloist in the Mozart *Requiem* with the Columbus Symphony. Nowakowski is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts where her roles included Zerbinetta/Najade (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Sophie (*Werther*), Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*), and Musetta (*La bohème*). She has been a soloist with The Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Stéphane Denève and the Bach Society Houston for the Bach B Minor Mass. She was the recipient of First Prize from the Gerda Lissner Foundation Competition, First Prize in the 2018 Vocal Arts D.C. Art Song Discovery Competition, First Prize from the Violetta DuPont Competition, First Prize from the American Council for Polish Culture's Marcella Sembrich Voice Competition, and Second Prize from the Gerda Lissner Lieder/Song Competition. Nowakowski holds a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

A native of Waterford, Michigan, soprano **Alexandria Shiner** returns to WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the 2018–2019 season, presenting Annina in *La traviata* and Kayla in *Taking Up Serpents*. She will sing as a soloist in "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." Her performances in WNO's 2017–2018 season included the title role in the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance of *Alcina*, Celestial Voice in *Don Carlo*, and Berta in *The Barber of Seville*. She has performed the roles of Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Magda Sorel in *The Consul*, and Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*. Additionally, she has performed with Knoxville Opera, Marble City Opera, and Opera Naples. In 2014, by invitation of Manhattan Concert Productions, she performed on the Fourth Annual Collegiate Honors Recital in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall. Recently, she received an Encouragement Award in the 2017 Middle East Tennessee District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and she placed second in the Young Artist category of the 2016 Orpheus National Music Competition for Vocalists. In July 2016, she competed as the Mid-South Regional Winner in the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Artist Awards in Chicago. Shiner received her Master of Music from University of Tennessee, Knoxville and her Bachelor of Music from Western Michigan University, and she also attended the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria in 2013.

Originally from Princeton Junction, New Jersey, bass **Samuel Weiser** joins the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in the fall of 2018 and performs Marquis d'Obigny in Verdi's *La traviata*, Innkeeper/Ox/Shepherd in Jeanine Tesori's *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me*, Captain in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, and Jailer in Puccini's *Tosca*. He will also be a soloist for WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces." This summer, he will be an Apprentice Artist with Central City Opera, covering Ferrando in Verdi's *Il Trovatore* and Der Sprecher in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. During the 2017–2018 season with Chicago Opera Theater (COT), Weiser appeared as George Gissing and Solomon Weil in the critically acclaimed world premiere of Mark Campbell and Kevin Puts's *Elizabeth Cree*. From 2016 to 2017, Weiser was a Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (OTSL) and was a recipient of a Richard Gaddes Career Grant during his second season with OTSL. This past February, Weiser was chosen as a winner of the Saint Louis District in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. A graduate of Roosevelt University with a Master of Music in Voice Performance, Weiser won First Place in Monastero's Bel Canto Contest in 2016 and is a current student of baritone Bruce Hall.

ABOUT THE DOMINGO-CAFTRITZ YOUNG ARTIST PROGRAM

Founded by Plácido Domingo and soon to begin its 17th season, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program guides young singers and pianists/coaches on the verge of international careers. The program provides intensive study with renowned vocal and dramatic coaches and offers voice lessons, language classes, career guidance, and master classes with Washington National Opera staff and guest artists. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists also have the opportunity to perform and cover roles in WNO productions and to create new roles in WNO's new works program, the American Opera Initiative.

In addition to many performances on the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists have performed at the White House, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Opéra de Monte-Carlo, the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia, the United States Senate, the Supreme Court, the Music Center at Strathmore, the Smithsonian

Institution, the Mexican Cultural Institute, with the Baltimore and Charleston Symphony Orchestras, and at numerous embassies. They have also appeared in concert with Maestro Domingo at the Reignwood Theatre in Beijing.

Each season, the Young Artists sing a fully staged performance with orchestra in the Kennedy Center Opera House as part of the WNO season. Past productions have included *La traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Madama Butterfly* conducted by Maestro Domingo; *Così fan tutte*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, and *La bohème* conducted by Philippe Auguin; and *Carmen*, conducted by Evan Rogister. In the 2018-2019 season, the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists will perform in a Young Artist Performance of *La traviata* on Friday, October 19, 2018, and will also take the stage on Thursday, May 16, 2019, for WNO's "A Concert of Comic Masterpieces."

Graduates of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program have gone on to successful careers including performances at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, New York City Opera, The Glimmerglass Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, National Symphony Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, Bayreuth Festival, the Glyndebourne Festival, Vienna State Opera, Berlin State Opera, English National Opera, Dutch National Opera, Teatro Real in Madrid, and Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

Auditions for places in the program's 2019–2020 season will be held in a series of national auditions throughout the fall of 2018 in Washington, Houston, New York, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia. More details will be announced in the coming months.

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. 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 enter its 17th 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.

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