



Washington National Opera
The Kennedy Center

Timothy O'Leary
General Director

Francesca Zambello
Artistic Director

Press Release

February 4, 2019

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WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA ANNOUNCES EXPANDED MAIN STAGE OFFERINGS FOR 2019–2020 SEASON:

***Otello*: In first WNO staging in nearly 20 years, tenor Russell Thomas and baritone George Gagnidze battle it out in psychological thriller**

***The Magic Flute*: Fantastical set designs by beloved children's author Maurice Sendak, plus the return of a Family Look-In Performance**

***Don Giovanni*: E. Loren Meeker directs Mozart's masterwork on power, deviance, and sexual politics for a new era**

***Samson and Delilah*: Mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges makes her WNO and role debuts as the temptress Delilah**

***Blue*: A family struggles when a teenager is shot by police in this D.C. Premiere by Tony Award®-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist Tazewell Thompson**

***Porgy and Bess*: Fan-favorite revival production returns with new cast**

**WNO's new Principal Conductor Evan Rogister leads two productions:
Don Giovanni and *Porgy and Bess***

Soloman Howard to receive the 2019 Marian Anderson Vocal Award

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO), led by General Director Timothy O'Leary and Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, announces an expanded line-up with six main stage titles in 2019–2020 that feature two new WNO productions, three productions new to Washington, and the D.C. premiere of a Zambello-commissioned work by Tony Award®-winning composer Jeanine Tesori and librettist Tazewell Thompson. Internationally acclaimed artists,

~ more ~

including many Americans who have had important starts at WNO, headline a season that balances Italian and French grand operas, two works by Mozart—his most beloved singspiel and his most complex work—and the greatness of American artistry from Gershwin to today’s new composers.

Highlights during 2019–2020 include an audience favorite production directed by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the first productions conducted by new Principal Conductor Evan Rogister, and WNO debuts from artists including Roberto Aronica, J’Nai Bridges, John Fiore, George Gagnidze, Eun Sun Kim, Kristin Lewis, Sydney Mancasola, and Vanessa Vasquez. Returning artists include David Alden, Daniele Callegari, E. Loren Meeker, and Tazewell Thompson, as well as Janai Brugger, Alyson Cambridge, Leah Crocetto, Denyce Graves, Kathryn Lewek, Ryan McKinny, Musa Ngqungwana, David Portillo, and Wei Wu.

Verdi’s Shakespearean masterpiece **Otello** (October 26–November 16, 2019) begins the season, starring African American tenor Russell Thomas in the title role as the Moorish General. The fall repertory continues with Mozart’s whimsical fairy tale **The Magic Flute** (November 2–23, 2019) featuring vivid sets designed by famed children’s author Maurice Sendak. The mainstage offerings resume with a spring festival of three productions: Evil determines its own karmic fate as bass-baritone Ryan McKinny portrays Mozart’s **Don Giovanni** (February 29–March 22, 2020); mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges seduces strength in Saint-Saëns’s romantic **Samson and Delilah** (March 1–21, 2020); and every parent’s worst fear comes center stage in Tesori and librettist/director Tazewell Thompson’s new work **Blue** (March 15–28, 2020). The season concludes with Gershwin’s popular American classic **Porgy and Bess** (May 9–23, 2020) featuring a massive cast of both WNO debuts and returning favorites, including hometown legend Denyce Graves.

The season also features the return of the American Opera Initiative, a Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performance of *The Magic Flute* and a Family Look-in presentation of this opera, plus a Holiday concert starring the WNO’s Children Chorus. Other exciting events, including the annual *Opera in the Outfield*® at Nationals Park and future WNO programming hosted at the REACH, the first major expansion in Kennedy Center history, will be announced at a later date.

“WNO is pleased to expand its season to six productions, and we are grateful to our family of supporters for making it possible,” states O’Leary. “Francesca and I have enjoyed a series of

strategic discussions with the WNO board and staff, including options for the design of our season. This year, we'll align our resources toward co-producing a seminal new work as part of the main stage offerings. The place of *Blue* in our season represents this shift, supporting bold artistic offerings through a full-length production, in lieu of a one-hour chamber opera, as we have in years past. Our commitment to nurturing emerging talent and contributing to the canon of contemporary American opera remains through the American Opera Initiative 20-minute operas during 2019–2020. Building on WNO's civic engagement, we also look forward to announcing a series of events and collaborations, particularly for *Blue*, linking themes in the operas to today's conversations about identity and connection."

"From Mozart to Verdi to Tesori, our season is diverse with productions across centuries and languages—whether you prefer the more traditional or the adventurous—all our offerings have something to say about ourselves and society. Many themes in opera were hot topics in their day just as they remain now," adds Zambello. "Discussions of race in *Otello*, *Blue*, and *Porgy and Bess*, discrimination in *Samson and Delilah*, and #MeToo in *Don Giovanni* are relevant conversations that can begin in the safe space that art presents through thought-provoking productions and interpretation to provide a better understanding of consequences."

Washington National Opera 2019–2020 Season Schedule

Performance Dates	Theater	Production
October 26–Nov. 16, 2019	Opera House	<i>Otello</i>
November 2–23, 2019	Opera House	<i>The Magic Flute</i>
November 25, 2019	Opera House	Marian Anderson Vocal Award Winner Soloman Howard, bass, in concert
January 10, 2020	Terrace Theater	American Opera Initiative Festival: Three 20-Minute Operas
February 29–Mar. 22, 2020	Opera House	<i>Don Giovanni</i>
March 1–21, 2020	Opera House	<i>Samson and Delilah</i>
March 15–28, 2020	Eisenhower Theater	<i>Blue</i>
May 9–23, 2020	Opera House	<i>Porgy and Bess</i>

Otello

WNO's 2019–2020 season opens with Verdi's tragic masterpiece ***Otello***—an opera last staged by WNO nearly 20 years ago—on October 26–November 16, 2019 in the Opera House. Coaxed out of semi-retirement following the success of his *Aida*, Verdi's compositional style changed with this penultimate work based on Shakespeare's suspicious warrior. As a raging storm breaks on Cyprus, the governor Otello returns victorious from battle, but there's another storm brewing.

Iago, Otello's ensign, launches a malicious scheme to lead his chief to believe that his wife Desdemona is unfaithful. As Iago's manipulations decay Otello's trust in those he loves, the great hero will confront his most fatal enemy: his own jealousy.

Power, drama, and artistry define the trio of leads in *Otello*. **Russell Thomas**, whose voice has led him to the world's top opera houses, battles foes and personal demons in the title role for WNO. After a successful concert performance with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Thomas "gave notice that he has the making of a compelling Otello" (*Los Angeles Times*) and is slated to also perform the role at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Canadian Opera Company in spring 2019. Recognized as a rising star of her generation, **Leah Crocetto** stars as the tragic heroine Desdemona after last captivating WNO audiences as Elisabeth of Valois in 2018's *Don Carlo* (with Thomas) and the title role in 2017's *Aida*. Making his WNO debut as the calculating Iago is Georgian-born **George Gagnidze**, an in-demand Verdi baritone who has sung title roles at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Opéra National de Paris, and Vienna State Opera, among others.

The cast also includes American tenor and 2013 Operalia Competition prizewinner **Zach Borichevsky** as Cassio, Iago's innocent foil, along with two graduates of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program (DCYAP): mezzo-soprano **Deborah Nansteel** as Emilia and bass **Wei Wu** as Lodovico.

Internationally acclaimed theater and film director **David Alden** returns to the WNO and helms this psychological thriller in a lavish and bold production originally staged at the English National Opera. Set in Piazza San Marco with 19th-century period costumes, *The Times* (London) described this production as "a show bristling with fervor."

An experienced Verdian, **Daniele Callegari** has become a prominent conductor of his generation with featured appearances at San Francisco Opera and The Bavarian State Opera. Callegari made his WNO debut in 2010 conducting Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and has conducted *Otello* for Teatro Regio di Parma, The Semperoper, and more.

The Magic Flute

A mythical adventure for the whole family continues in the Opera House with ***The Magic Flute***, November 2–23, 2019. Featuring vivid, colorful, and whimsical sets designed by legendary

children’s author Maurice Sendak, Mozart’s beloved fairy tale starts with an unexpected pair: Tamino, a handsome young prince, and Papageno, his silly bird-catcher sidekick. When the mysterious Queen of the Night enlists the duo to rescue her kidnapped daughter Pamina, a fantastic journey follows. With a magic flute and bells, they’re armed for whatever trials they may face. However, not all is as it seems—and not everyone can be trusted. Rich with colorful characters, unforgettable vocal acrobatics, and evocative symbols and allegory, Tamino and Pamina’s quest for love and truth is welcoming entertainment for all ages.

American tenor **David Portillo** returns to the WNO stage as Tamino, a role he’s performed at Frankfurt Opera House and Houston Grand Opera. Portillo continues to enjoy an exciting international career in roles ranging from Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* at the Metropolitan Opera to Lurcanio in *Ariodante* at Théâtre des Champs Elysées. In her WNO debut, **Sydney Mancasola**, a “radiant and glittering” soprano (*Opera News*), stars as Pamina, a role she recently portrayed at the Metropolitan Opera in their 2018–2019 season.

The Magic Flute also features American coloratura soprano **Kathryn Lewek** as the Queen of the Night, a signature role she has sung with the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Wiener Staatsoper, among others. In his fast-growing career, former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist **Wei Wu**’s “rich, low bass” (*The Washington Post*) has taken him to stages across the U.S. He returned in 2018 to sing Don Basilio for *The Barber of Seville* and sings Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* and the role of Lodovico in *Otello* during 2019–2020. Appearing as Papageno, baritone **Michael Adams** is a familiar face at WNO; as a Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist, Adams performed in *Don Giovanni*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Dead Man Walking*, and recently as Lieutenant Audebert in *Silent Night*. Named a “Top Rising Star” by *Opera News*, Adams has performed on opera stages from Seattle to Berlin.

Leading the creative team is **Christopher Mattaliano**, General Director of Portland Opera, who brings nuance and familiarity to a production from his own company. Mattaliano was a longtime friend and collaborator with Sendak, who was an avid opera fan and admirer of Mozart’s music. Among the first of her U.S. appearances, **Eun Sun Kim** makes her eagerly awaited WNO debut. In the last decade, Kim’s career has flourished with appearances at major European opera houses, including Munich, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden, and Zurich.

A special **Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance** of *The Magic Flute* takes place in the Opera House on Friday, November 22, 2019, and features singers from the Young Artist program in principal roles. Complete casting for this performance will be announced in the coming months.

Presented in English with English surtitles, the fairy tale settings and light-hearted comedy of *The Magic Flute* is an opera the whole family will enjoy. A **Family Look-in**—a special introduction to this opera designed for families and children—is scheduled for Saturday, November 23. Audience members will experience excerpts from *The Magic Flute* along with insight into behind-the-scenes aspects such as lighting, scene changes, costuming, and many other elements that create stage magic.

American Opera Initiative

Guided by program director **Robert Ainsley**, WNO hosts the eighth season of its groundbreaking **American Opera Initiative**, a comprehensive commissioning program that celebrates the continuing vitality of new American opera. The popular **Three 20-Minute Operas**, featuring the work of three new composer-librettist teams, are presented at two performances on January 10, 2020 in the Terrace Theater. With its commitment to diversify opera on stage and off, WNO is proud to gather an all-female mentor team in leadership roles for 2020, comprised of celebrated composer **Laura Kaminsky**, gifted librettist **Kelley Rourke**, and international conductor **Anne Manson**.

Since its launch in 2012, the American Opera Initiative 20-minute commissioning program has empowered 42 young composers and librettists to write a short chamber opera. During the process, they are mentored by three major creative figures in the field today to guide the teams throughout the entire process: from finding a subject and fleshing out characters to pacing the drama and writing idiomatically for the voice. Through the American Opera Initiative, emerging composers and librettists gain the rare opportunity to have their works come to fruition by working alongside performers and the music staff of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program as well as musicians from the WNO Orchestra.

More information on the three composer-librettist teams and complete casting for the 20-Minute Operas will be announced at a later date.

Don Giovanni

A trio of operas in the spring begins with Mozart's commentary on social deviance in which the anti-hero gets his due, centuries before the #MeToo movement. American **Ryan McKinny** takes on the title role in ***Don Giovanni***, February 29–March 22, 2020, in a new Washington National Opera production set in 18th-century Seville. From its thrilling overture to its breathtaking final scene, *Don Giovanni* explores issues of power and justice that seem ripped from today's headlines just as they were prevalent in Mozart's time. Charming, but predatory and manipulative, Don Giovanni is a lover so notorious that his reputation precedes him. He's eager to add to the rambling list of women he has already enticed, but when Don Giovanni forces himself on Donna Anna, his devious antics dig him deeper and deeper into trouble. As the discarded women of his past unite to speak out against their offender, Don Giovanni is destined to meet his fate—the fires of Hell.

McKinny returns to the WNO stage since last performing during the 2016–2017 season in the title role in *The Marriage of Figaro* as well as singing Donner and Gunther in 2016's *Ring Cycle*.

Celebrated for his powerful voice that “drips with gold” (*Opera News*), McKinny has portrayed roles to acclaim at the Metropolitan Opera, Wagner's Bayreuth Festival, Carnegie Hall, and more. Colombian American soprano **Vanessa Vasquez** makes her WNO debut after making notable opera debuts during the 2018–2019 season, including at Santa Fe Opera and Opera Philadelphia as Mimì in *La bohème*. Vasquez is a winner of the 2017 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

The powerhouse cast also includes **Kyle Ketelsen** as Leporello; this bass-baritone is in regular demand for his “grainy, darkly handsome voice” (*The Washington Post*). Having charmed WNO audiences in the title role of *Candide* in 2018, **Alek Shrader** returns as the earnest Don Ottavio. **Keri Alkema**, praised for her “incisive musicality” (*The New York Times*), stars as Donna Elvira. Audiences will see this former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist in the title role of *Tosca* during WNO's current 2018–2019 season.

Leading the WNO Orchestra in his first staged production as principal conductor is **Evan Rogister**. He made his WNO debut in Heggie's *Moby-Dick* in 2014, and returned for *Carmen* in 2015 and *Aida* in 2017. In addition to his WNO engagements, Rogister's star continues to rise with recent debuts at the Metropolitan Opera and the Bolshoi Theatre, plus an acclaimed performance

conducting Gothenburg Opera's first-ever *Ring* Cycle in October 2018; for *Das Rheingold*, *Opera News* declared "the score was marshaled with skill, individuality, and tremendous energy."

Helming *Don Giovanni* is up-and-coming female director **E. Loren Meeker**, who last teamed up with Rogister for her WNO directorial debut in 2015's production of *Carmen*, and most recently directed *Rigoletto* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. The creative team also features Scenic Designer Erhard Rom and Projection Designer S. Katy Tucker.

Samson and Delilah

Love and betrayal are all too familiar in one of opera's most popular from the French repertory as WNO stages a new production of Saint-Saëns's *Samson and Delilah*, March 1–21, 2020, in the Opera House. With superhuman strength and unmatched feats, Samson has everything it takes to free the enslaved Hebrews from the oppressive Philistines. But his enemies possess a weapon that can bring the warrior to his knees: the beautiful and irresistible Delilah. When Delilah seduces Samson into revealing the source of his physical power, his faith will be put to a final, catastrophic test.

Matching the epic scale of the Biblical story, WNO mounts a spectacular new production with sumptuous period costumes. Dubbed by WQXR as an artist "set for stardom," Marian Anderson Vocal Award winner **J'Nai Bridges** makes both her WNO and role debuts portraying the bewitching Delilah. The mezzo-soprano is sought-after by leading opera houses and concert halls including Dutch National Opera, Bavarian State Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Falling under Bridges's spell as Samson is Italian tenor **Roberto Aronica** in his WNO debut. Aronica's recent performances include Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, Paolo in Zandonai's *Francesca da Rimini* at La Scala, and Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* with San Francisco Opera. Also featured in the cast is baritone **Noel Bouley**, who makes his WNO and role debut as the High Priest, Delilah's co-conspirator. Having performed more than 35 different roles with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bouley has also made guest appearances at the Glydenbourne Festival and Opera Cologne.

Mounting the new production is returning stage director **Peter Kazaras**, who helmed the critically acclaimed *The Barber of Seville* for WNO last season. A seasoned conductor among international opera houses, **John Fiore** is praised for his musicality and his skillful expression on the podium. He makes his WNO debut after leading performances for the Metropolitan Opera,

Lyric Opera of Chicago, Bayerische Staatsoper, and Deutsche Oper Berlin. The creative team also includes Scenic Designer Erhard Rom and Projection Designer S. Katy Tucker.

Blue

WNO presents the D.C. premiere production of Tony Award®-winning composer **Jeanine Tesori** and librettist **Tazewell Thompson**'s new opera, *Blue*, March 15–28, 2020, in the Eisenhower Theater. Inspired by contemporary events and Black literature, including Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me* and James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, the opera centers on the hopes and fears of a young black couple in Harlem as they raise a son in 21st-century America. In this story of love and loss, we see the father, a police officer, and the mother supported by a loving community of fellow law enforcement, churchgoers, and friends as they navigate a devastating reality. When the unimaginable happens and their son is killed by a white officer, their fears will come devastatingly close to home.

Gospel-influenced music and vivid flashbacks capture the grief of a family and community navigating the turbulent waters of loss at the hands of police. Exploring race, violence, and reconciliation, *Blue* places timely issues at the forefront of modern opera and invites audiences to the emotional epicenter of their impact.

In preparation for this production, WNO is forming a committee of local and national leaders from the African American community, the law enforcement community, and other stakeholders who will collaborate to design events that foster dialogue about the story of the opera. Event details, and ways that the public can participate, will be announced later.

Co-produced with The Glimmerglass Festival, *Blue* is directed by the opera's co-creator Tazewell Thomson. **John DeMain** returns to the WNO to lead the Orchestra in a score fusing Gospel, jazz, pop, and operatic traditions.

Quickly gaining recognition as a sought-after rising star, bass and former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist **Kenneth Kellogg** leads the cast portraying the Father, a role written especially for him that he will debut in the world premiere at The Glimmerglass Festival this summer. A native Washingtonian, Kellogg last performed for the WNO as the solemn Father Palmer in 2018's *Silent Night*. Joining Kellogg in the role of The Reverend is baritone **Lester Lynch**, whose recent credits include performing *Crown* at Teatro alla Scala and Lescaut under the baton of Sir Simon

Rattle with the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden. WNO audiences last saw Lynch in the title role of *Porgy and Bess* in 2010. Additional casting to be announced.

Porgy and Bess

WNO's 2019–2020 season concludes with Gershwin's quintessential American masterpiece, ***Porgy and Bess***, May 9–23, 2020, in the Opera House. It's "summertime, and the livin' is easy" in Catfish Row, a working-class fishing town in South Carolina. When a murder shakes the community and tempts the strong-headed Bess to return to her drug-filled past, Porgy, a crippled beggar, becomes her unlikely refuge. As a hurricane descends and Bess's brutish old flame Crown returns, she'll find herself torn between Porgy's steadfast love and the dark demons that tug her elsewhere.

Francesca Zambello's popular adaptation of Gershwin's beloved "folk opera" returns after playing to critical acclaim across renowned opera stages. Often considered the first great American opera, *Porgy and Bess* soars with admired songs, including the instantly recognizable "Summertime" lullaby and the poignant duet "Bess, You Is My Woman Now." Themes of community resilience, acceptance, and redemption weave through this poignant story, ultimately asking if even the most unwavering of loves can conquer the force of personal addiction.

Produced with two spectacular casts, *Porgy and Bess* features returning favorites, hometown heroes, and WNO debuts. Featured as Porgy is South African bass-baritone **Musa Ngqungwana**. His "rich, glowing voice" (*The New York Times*) has led him worldwide from English National Opera to The Glimmerglass Festival. After triumphant performances as Bess for Teatro alla Scala, **Kristin Lewis** makes her WNO debut. **Alfred Walker** makes his WNO debut in the title role of Porgy, a role he recently sang with Seattle Opera and Los Angeles Opera, while **Alyson Cambridge** portrays his Bess. Noted for her "powerful, clear voice" (*The New York Times*), WNO fans will recognize Cambridge who portrayed Clara in WNO's 2010 production.

Sharing the role of Clara are sopranos **Janai Brugger** and **Jacqueline Echols**. A 2016 Marian Anderson Vocal Award winner, Brugger was named by *Opera News* as one of its top 25 "brilliant young artists." She was last seen in WNO's *Carmen* as Micaëla in 2015. Echols, a graduate of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, returns to D.C. having thrilled WNO audiences in roles including Violetta in *La traviata*, Sister Rose in *Dead Man Walking*, and both Woglinde and Forest Bird in the 2016 *Ring Cycle*.

Recognized as “an operatic superstar of the 21st Century” (*USA Today*), **Denyce Graves** portrays Maria, the strong-willed cookshop owner. The internationally renowned alumna from D.C.’s Duke Ellington School of the Arts returns to WNO after her comedic portrayal of The Old Lady in 2018’s *Candide*. Named a “major force” for opera’s future by *Opera News*, **Latonia Moore** sings *Serena*; she will make her highly anticipated WNO debut in the title role of *Tosca* this season.

WNO Education for adults and children

WNO and the Kennedy Center Education Division support arts learning for every age, every art form, everywhere: from look-ins and open rehearsals for student groups; to support for aspiring singers and artistic professionals through the **WNO Young Associates** and **WNO Opera Institute at American University**; to innovative professional development for teachers and classroom support through **Kids Create Opera**.

Guided Rehearsals offer audience members a glimpse of how a world-class opera production comes together through this unique open rehearsal experience. Using audio headsets, attendees can learn more about the production via expert commentary while watching a portion of a rehearsal with piano and the professional cast. Patrons can purchase special tickets to *The Magic Flute* on October 27, 2019 and to *Samson and Delilah* on February 25, 2020.

Other Special Vocal Events of the 2019–2020 Season

Named for the groundbreaking African American contralto, the **Marian Anderson Vocal Award** recognizes a young American singer in opera, oratorio, or recital repertoire with outstanding promise for a significant career. In addition to a cash prize and an educational residency at Washington’s Duke Ellington School of the Arts, the winner performs in a recital co-presented by WNO and the Kennedy Center’s Fortas Chamber Music Concerts. This year’s recipient is the hometown hero and bass, **Soloman Howard**, who gives an intimate performance on Monday, November 25, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. in the Terrace Theater. Previous recipients include Ryan Speedo Green, John Holliday, Janai Brugger, J’nai Bridges, and Lawrence Brownlee, among others.

“Young, charismatic, and vocally imposing” (*The Washington Post*), Howard was unanimously selected by a distinguished panel comprised of Evans Mirageas (Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera and the Vice President for Artistic Planning for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra), Michael

Heaston (Music Director of the Houston Grand Opera Studio and Director of Opera Studies, Shepherd School at Rice University), Francesca Zambello (WNO Artistic Director), Samuel Gelber (WNO Director of Artistic Planning), and Colin Brush (WNO Artistic Administrator), plus two previous Marian Anderson Vocal Award winners and internationally renowned performers, mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves and bass-baritone Eric Owens.

A free concert featuring yuletide favorites will be scheduled for December 12, 2019 on the Millennium Stage. Special guests and additional details about **Holidays with the WNO Children's Chorus and Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists** to be announced.

The **National Symphony Orchestra** (NSO) and its Music Director, **Gianandrea Noseda**, along with several distinguished guest conductors, present a number of programs highlighting vocal music during the 2019–2020 season. One of the centerpieces of the NSO's season is Act II of Wagner's watershed opera, *Tristan and Isolde*, led by Noseda with soprano Christine Goerke and tenor Stephen Gould in the title roles, along with tenor Neal Cooper, bass Günther Groissböck, and baritone Hunter Enoch, a former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist. Noseda leads the NSO in three performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana* in October, as well as a new co-commissioned work in November by Kevin Puts for Renée Fleming and Rod Gilfry, *Brightness of Light*, which expands his previous *Letters to Georgia*. Sir Andrew Davis returns to lead his own arrangement of the NSO's annual performances of Handel's *Messiah* in December. Rounding out the season is the NSO's salute to Beethoven at 250, featuring all nine of his symphonies over three weeks; the Ninth is featured in three performances in June with The Washington Chorus.

The **Renée Fleming VOICES** series in 2019–2020 features multi-Grammy Award® winner **Joyce DiDonato**, November 8 and 9, 2019, in the Eisenhower Theater. Her performances, accompanied by Il Pomo d'Oro with direction by Maxim Emelyanychev, focuses on her recent project and album, *In War & Peace*, highlighting opera arias by Handel and Purcell, among other masters, whose works convey a peaceful harmony through music.

The **Fortas Chamber Music Concerts** and Renée Fleming VOICES series present a special collaboration between the unparalleled **Emerson String Quartet** and soprano—and Kennedy Center Artistic Advisor at Large—**Renée Fleming** in a new work from André Previn on Thursday, May 14, 2020, in the Terrace Theater. Co-commissioned by the Kennedy Center for these distinguished artists, the 35-minute piece, *Penelope*, is based on the Greek mythological

character of Penelope, wife of Odysseus (Ulysses in Roman mythology), who became a symbol of fidelity.

TICKET INFORMATION

Subscriptions for the WNO's 2019–2020 season are available for renewal or purchase beginning February 4 at the Kennedy Center Subscription Office, online at [kennedy-center.org/subscribe](https://www.kennedy-center.org/subscribe), and via phone at (202) 467-4600; toll-free at (800) 444-1324. For all other ticket-related customer service inquires, call the Advance Sales Box Office at (202) 416-8540.

Artists and performances are subject to change.

The 2019–2020 Season

Otello

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Arrigo Boito, based on Shakespeare's *Othello*

Production from English National Opera

In Italian with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, October 26, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Wednesday, October 30, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Sunday, November 3, 2019 at 2 p.m.
Friday, November 8, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Monday, November 11, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, November 16, 2019 at 7 p.m.

Desdemona	Leah Crocetto
Otello	Russell Thomas
Iago	George Gagnidze *
Emilia	Deborah Nansteel †
Cassio	Zach Borichevsky *
Lodovico	Wei Wu ‡

Conductor	Daniele Callegari
Director	David Alden
Associate Director	Ian Rutherford
Scenic and Costume Designer	Jon Morrell
Lighting Designer	Andrew Cutbush
Original Lighting Designs	Adam Silverman
Choreographer	Maxine Braham *

The Magic Flute

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Emanuel Schikaneder

Production from Portland Opera
Original Designs by Maurice Sendak

In English with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, November 2, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Monday, November 4, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Wednesday, November 6, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, November 9, 2019 at 7 p.m.
Tuesday, November 12, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, November 15, 2019 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, November 17, 2019 at 2 p.m.
Friday, November 22, 2019 at 7:30 p.m. †
Saturday, November 23, 2019 at 7 p.m.

Tamino	David Portillo
Pamina	Sydney Mancasola *
Queen of the Night	Kathryn Lewek
Sarastro	Wei Wu ‡
Papageno	Michael Adams †
Speaker	Kevin Short

Conductor	Eun Sun Kim *
Director	Christopher Mattaliano
Lighting and Set Designer	Neil Peter Jampolis
Projection Designer	John Garofolo *

American Opera Initiative

Three 20-Minute Operas

World Premieres

Friday, January 10, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Friday, January 10, 2020 at 9 p.m.

In English with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Terrace Theater

Conductor Anne Manson

The 9 p.m. performance is followed by a Talkback with the artists and creative team.

Don Giovanni

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

New WNO Production

Saturday, February 29, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Monday, March 2, 2020 at 7 p.m.

In Italian with projected English titles

Friday, March 6, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 8, 2020 at 2 p.m.

Kennedy Center Opera House

Wednesday, March 11, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 14, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 19, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 22, 2020 at 2 p.m.

Don Giovanni

Ryan McKinny

Donna Anna

Vanessa Vasquez *

Donna Elvira

Keri Alkema †

Don Ottavio

Alek Shrader

Leporello

Kyle Ketelsen

The Commendatore

Peter Volpe

Conductor

Evan Rogister

Director

E. Loren Meeker

Scenic Design

Erhard Rom

Costume Design

Jean-Pierre Ponnelle

Lighting Designer

Robert Wierzel

Projection Design

S. Katy Tucker

Choreographer

Eric Sean Fogel

Samson and Delilah

Music by Camille Saint-Saëns

Libretto by Ferdinand Lemaire

New WNO Production

In French with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Sunday, March 1, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Wednesday, March 4, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, March 7, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Friday, March 13, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Monday, March 16, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, March 21, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Delilah	J'Nai Bridges *
Samson	Roberto Aronica *
High Priest	Noel Bouley *
The Old Hebrew	Peter Volpe

Conductor	John Fiore *
Director	Peter Kazaras
Scenic Design	Erhard Rom
Costume Design	Michael Scott
Lighting Designer	Robert Wierzel
Projection Design	S. Katy Tucker
Assoc. Director/ Choreographer	Eric Sean Fogel

Blue

Music by Jeanine Tesori
Libretto by Tazewell Thompson

Co-production with The Glimmerglass Festival
and Lyric Opera of Chicago

D.C. Premiere

In English with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Eisenhower Theater

The Father	Kenneth Kellogg ±
The Reverend	Lester Lynch

Complete casting to be announced.

Conductor	John DeMain
Director	Tazewell Thompson
Scenic Design	Donald Eastman
Costume Design	Jessica Jahn
Lighting Designer	Robert Wierzel

Porgy and Bess

Music by George Gershwin
Libretto by Ira Gershwin and DuBose Heyward

WNO Production (2005)

In English with projected English titles

Sunday, March 15, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Wednesday, March 18, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, March 20, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Monday, March 23, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Saturday, March 28, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, May 9, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Sunday, May 10, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Monday, May 11, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 15, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, May 17, 2020 at 2 p.m.
Monday, May 18, 2020 at 7 p.m.
Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Friday, May 22, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, May 23, 2020 at 7 p.m.

Porgy	Musa Ngqungwana (5/9, 11, 17m, 20, and 23)
	Alfred Walker * (5/10m, 13, 15, 18, and 22)
Bess	Kristin Lewis * (5/9, 11, 15, 17m, 20, and 23)
	Alyson Cambridge (5/10m, 13, 18, and 22)
Crown	Kenneth Kellogg ±
Sportin' Life	Frederick Ballentine ±
Clara	Janai Brugger (5/9, 11, 15, 17m, 20, and 23)
	Jacqueline Echols ± (5/10m, 13, 18, and 22)
Jake	Norman Garrett ±
Serena	Latonia Moore (5/9, 11, 15, 17m, 20, and 23)
	Simone Paulwell * (5/10m, 13, 18, and 22)
Maria	Denyce Graves
Conductor	Evan Rogister
Director	Francesca Zambello
Set Designer	Peter J. Davison
Costume Designer	Paul Tazewell
Lighting Designer	Mark McCullough
Associate Director/ Choreographer	Eric Sean Fogel

† Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance

* Washington National Opera debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of General Director Timothy O'Leary and world-renowned Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, the company presents a diverse repertory of grand opera across three main venues of the Kennedy Center. From classic operas to more contemporary pieces each season, WNO's artistic output also includes several commissioned American works and a variety of special concerts, youth operas, and events.

Recent celebrated productions have included the world premiere of Philip Glass's reconceived *Appomattox*, presented in conjunction with cultural events throughout Washington, D.C.; the powerful performances of Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars*; and the massive feat of WNO's first complete *Ring Cycle*, which was helmed by Zambello and played to sold-out houses following international acclaim.

Founded in 1956 and an artistic affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 2011, WNO has a storied legacy of more than 100 new productions, plus world premieres, international tours, live recordings and radio broadcasts, as well as 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 for 15 years, as well as luminaries such as Music Director Heinz Fricke and Director of Artistic Operations Christina Scheppelmann.

Among the company's most successful programs is the American Opera Initiative (AOI), a commissioning program that develops new one-act works for WNO's annual festival. By mentoring emerging composers and librettists, the Initiative works to expand the American operatic repertory and enhance its relevance to our time. Since its inception, AOI has commissioned 28 chamber opera world premieres, with some going on to future productions around the country.

With a commitment toward youth, WNO contributes to the future of opera through two signature artist-development programs. The Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, now in its 17th season, is one of the nation's most competitive professional training programs, providing two years of intensive study to a highly selective cadre of young singers and collaborative pianists. Alumni of the program have won major competitions and gone on to successful careers at major opera houses worldwide. 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.

The most popular of WNO's community-engagement programs is *Opera in the Outfield*[®], a free Kennedy Center Opera House production broadcast on 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 3–8, 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.

Discover [Washington National Opera](#) on social media:



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PRESS CONTACT

Sabrina Skacan
(202) 416-8453
smskacan@kennedy-center.org

TICKETS & INFORMATION

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