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Swashbuckling, Family Fun Returns with *The Pirates of Penzance*

Gilbert & Sullivan continue 2022-2023 season across the Commonwealth

Norfolk, Richmond, Fairfax VA (October 20, 2022)—

Gilbert & Sullivan's classic operetta docks in theatres statewide this November at Virginia Opera. One of Virginia Opera's most popular productions, *The Pirates of Penzance* presents a great opportunity for audiences of all ages to return to the theatre for a rollicking good time. With Family Day activities scheduled for select matinees and special pricing for kids, young patrons—and the young at heart—will be treated to world-class performances.

The Pirates of Penzance tells the topsy-turvy tale of the young pirate, Frederic, who is out of his indentures and hopes to "lead a blameless life." *The Pirates of Penzance* takes audiences on a wild ride as timeless characters through classic songs grapple with duty, love, honor, acceptance, and the complications of being born during Leap Year. As Frederic's heart and "sense of duty" is pulled in different directions, the difficulties of modern life and the fine line that exists between pirates and upstanding citizens create glorious chaos.

"*The Pirates of Penzance* is a delight from start to finish, and we cannot wait to enchant audiences across the state," said **Peggy Kriha Dye, general director and CEO of Virginia Opera**. "What makes this show unique is that it appeals to everyone regardless of age, experience, or background. Whether you are interested in hit tunes, pirate antics, lavish spectacle, clever staging, witty puns, or social satire, *The Pirates of Penzance* meets you where you are." **Adam Turner, artistic director of Virginia Opera**, chimes in, "I totally agree. Everyone needs comedy in their lives. Especially when the world feels chaotic, we all need a place to come together, enjoy one another's company, and poke fun at ourselves along the way."

While Gilbert & Sullivan operettas are over one hundred years old, they continue to be performed across the world, bringing new audiences to opera houses. "It's incredible that these pieces have had such staying power," muses **Turner**. "Most comedy doesn't stick around very long, and yet, these operettas continue to be popular. The music never gets old, and the jokes are always funny. I think it's because—despite its silliness—*The Pirates of Penzance* is about ideas and emotions we can relate to in 2022. What is our duty to one another? How do we live a good, honest life? How do we balance personal happiness with civic obligations?"

On select matinees in Norfolk and Richmond (November 5th and 20th), pirate actors and activities will take place in the lobbies and gathering spaces before the show. Pirate Day was organized by Virginia Opera's **Civic Engagement Coordinator, Michelle Ford**. "The opera house is fun and welcoming to all. Therefore, everything we are doing surrounding *The Pirates of Penzance* is about celebrating the joy that's possible when we come together as a community to experience great art."

Virginia Opera's production will be directed by perennial favorite **Kyle Lang** who has led some of Virginia Opera's biggest hits in recent years. "Kyle was our first choice," says **Dye**. "His shows are funny and clever. I think audiences will be delighted with the staging, spectacle, and choreography he and our production department are putting together."

The Pirates of Penzance will be sung in English with English surtitles, and the **Virginia Symphony Orchestra** will accompany the production from the orchestra pit. With **Adam Turner** and **Brandon Eldredge** sharing conducting duties, the orchestra, cast, and chorus of twenty will be the largest musical forces assembled by Virginia Opera since 2020.

The cast of *The Pirates of Penzance* is filled with wonderful singing actors, many of which will be making their Virginia Opera debuts with this production. Tenor **Martin Bakari** and **Amy Owens** will play the central heroes Frederic and Mabel, while **Troy Cook** and **Aubrey Allicock** square-off as Major-General Stanley and The Pirate King. **Lucy Schauer** will vie for Frederic's affections as the unscrupulous Ruth, and an ensemble of Virginia Opera Emerging Artists and local singers will round out the cast, including **Jeremy Harr** as the Sergeant of Police, and **Taylor-Alexis DuPont, Katherine Sanford, and Kaileigh Riess** as the featured daughters of the Major-General.

"If you're wanting to experience opera for the first time, venture back into the theatre again, or bask in timeless fun, *The Pirates of Penzance* is for you," concludes **Turner**. "In short, this piece is for everyone—including you—and we can't wait to see you at the theatre."

Tickets for ***The Pirates of Penzance*** can be purchased at vaopera.org/the-pirates-of-penzance or by calling 866.673.7282.

Harrison Opera House, Norfolk, Virginia

Wednesday, November 2, 2022, Student Night at the Opera

Friday, November 4, 2022, at 8:00 pm

Saturday, November 5, 2022, at 2:30 pm

Sunday, November 6, 2022, at 2:30 pm

Center for the Arts at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia

Saturday, November 12, 2022, at 8:00 pm

Sunday, November 13, at 2:00 pm

Carpenter Theatre at the Dominion Energy Center, Richmond, Virginia

Friday, November 18, 2022, at 8:00 pm

Sunday, November 20, 2022, at 2:30 pm

***The Pirates of Penzance* Production Notes**

Music by Arthur Sullivan & Libretto by W.S. Gilbert

Sung in English with English Surtitles

Orchestra provided by the Virginia Symphony Orchestra

***The Pirates of Penzance* Cast and Creative**

Conductor

Adam Turner

Brandon Eldredge (Nov 18 & 20m)

Stage Director

Kyle Lang

Assistant Director

Nora Winsler

Lighting Designer

Driscoll Otto

Associate Lighting Designer

James Lawlor

Associate Conductor & Chorus Master

Brandon Eldredge

Principal Coach

Jeremy Reger

Production Stage Manager

Karen Federing

CAST

Troy Cook

Baritone, Major-General Stanley

Last Virginia Opera Appearance: Jupiter, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, 2015

Recent Highlights: Enrico, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Madison Opera; Marcello, *La bohème*, Spoleto Festival USA;

Dr Falke, *Die Fledermaus*, Central City Opera

Upcoming: Sharpless, *Madama Butterfly*, Palm Beach Opera; Marcello, *La bohème*, Opera Philadelphia;

Soloist, *Messiah*, Winston Salem Symphony

Aubrey Allicock

Bass Baritone, The Pirate King

Last Virginia Opera Appearance: Alberich, *Das Rheingold*, 2021

Recent Highlights: Yusef Salaam, *Central Park Five*, Portland Opera; Tiridate, *Radamisto*, Philharmonia

Baroque Orchestra; Argante, *Rinaldo*, Glyndebourne

Upcoming: Dick Hallorann, *The Shining*, Lyric Opera Kansas City; Dick Hallorann, *The Shining*, Opera Parallele;

John Henry, *We Shall Not Be Moved* (recording), Philly Music Lab

Martin Bakari

Tenor, Frederic

Last Virginia Opera Performance: Parpignol, *La bohème*, 2015

Recent Highlights: Prince Claus, *Becoming Santa Claus*, Chicago Opera Theater; Sportin' Life, *Porgy and Bess*, Alte Oper Frankfurt; Tenor Soloist, United Kingdom Recital Tour, Mirror Visions Ensemble

Upcoming: Charlie Parker, *Charlie Parker's Yardbird*, New Orleans Opera; Tenor Soloist, *A Nation of Others*, Oratorio Society of New York (Carnegie Hall); Dr. Caius, *Falstaff*, Houston Grand Opera

Amy Owens*

Soprano, Mabel

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Controller/Tina (cover), *Flight*, Dallas Opera; Yan, *Becoming Santa Claus*, Chicago Opera Theater; Johanna Sweeney Todd Michigan Opera Theater; Sweet Potato, *Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun*, Santa Fe Opera; Soprano Soloist, *Carmina Burana*, National Symphony

Lucy Schauer*

Mezzo Soprano, Ruth

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Cecilia March, *Little Women*, Opera Holland Park, London, UK Premiere (Artist Producer); Woman 4, *The Blue Woman*, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, World Premiere; Madeline Mitchell, *Three Decembers*, Opera della Luna at Wilton's Music Hall, UK Premiere

Upcoming: Governess (cover Countess), *The Queen of Spades*, The Grange Festival, UK

Jeremy Harr*^

Bass, Sergeant of Police

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte*, Finger Lakes Opera; Don Basilio, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Opera Saratoga; Zuniga, *Carmen*, Pittsburgh Opera

Upcoming: Potter's Assistant/Bookseller/Technician/French Priest/Party Guest, *Fellow Travelers*, Virginia Opera; Dottore Grenvil, *La traviata*, Virginia Opera

Kyle White*^

Baritone, Samuel

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Nardo, *La Finta Giardiniera*, The Hungarian State Opera; Schaunard, *La bohème*, Kentucky Opera; Older Thompson, *Glory Denied*, Boston Conservatory Opera

Upcoming: Tommy McIntyre (Hawkins Fuller cover), *Fellow Travelers*; Giorgio Germont (cover and performance), *La Traviata*, Virginia Opera

Katherine Sanford*

Soprano, Edith

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Musetta, *La bohème*, Opera Modesto

Taylor-Alexis DuPont*^

Mezzo Soprano, Kate

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent Highlights: Archangel Gabriel, *Holy Ground (World Premiere)*, Glimmerglass Festival; Reba, *Taking up Serpents*, Glimmerglass Festival; Louisa Fernanda, *Louisa Fernanda*, Florentine Opera

Upcoming: Mariah, *You do not recognize the bodies in the water*, Opera America; Flora, *La Traviata*, Virginia Opera

Kaileigh Riess*^

Soprano, Isabel

Virginia Opera Debut

Recent highlights: Caroline (cover), *A Thousand Acres* (world premiere), Des Moines Metro Opera; Anne Trulove, *The Rake's Progress*, Boston University; Contessa Almaviva, *Le nozze di Figaro*, University of Southern California

Upcoming: Lucy (Mary Johnson cover), *Fellow Travelers*, Virginia Opera; Annina (Violetta cover and performance), *La Traviata*, Virginia Opera

*Denotes VA Opera Debut

^Denotes Herndon Foundation Emerging Artist

ABOUT VIRGINIA OPERA

Virginia Opera, the official opera company of the Commonwealth of Virginia, is one of the finest regional opera companies in the nation and is the only company to perform regularly in three separate main stage venues: the Harrison Opera House in Norfolk, the Carpenter Theatre at the Dominion Energy Center in Richmond, and Center for the Arts at George Mason University in Fairfax. Organized in 1974, Virginia Opera is respected nationwide for the identification and presentation of the finest young artists, for the musical and dramatic integrity of its productions, and for the ingenuity and variety of its education and outreach programs.