



## For Immediate Release

October 26, 2017

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### Virginia Opera Selected From Over 350 State-Wide Nominees as a “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration” by the Virginia Commission for the Arts

Richmond, Norfolk, Fairfax, VA (October 26, 2017) – From an original pool of over 350 nominees, the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the state arts agency, has selected Virginia Opera and its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, Adam Turner to receive two of its prestigious “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Awards” in the category of Bedrock Institutions and Emerging Artist.

The “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Awards” were conceived and designed by the Commission as a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary tribute to 50 examples of programs, individuals, and organizations critical to the arts in Virginia. The designated “Arts Inspirations” may have played a critical role in the last 50 years, serve as today’s leaders and exemplars, or may be tomorrow’s visionaries, leading the way to a culturally vibrant future. The Commission was established by law in 1968 to promote awareness of and access to the arts across the state and to support a broad range of artists, arts organizations, and arts educators.

Russell P. Allen, President and CEO, stated “Virginia Opera is grateful for this prestigious award that highlights the Opera’s many years of service to the Commonwealth of Virginia. With an extensive outreach to the entire state, as well as to its three mainstage markets of Hampton Roads, Central Virginia and Northern Virginia, Virginia Opera works to ensure that all Virginia residents have access to professional opera. The Virginia Commission has provided a significant acknowledgement to our company, for which we are grateful.”

Following a statewide call for nominations, nominees for the awards in all categories were accepted for two months this spring. A panel comprised of former commissioners and arts leaders reviewed the nominations this past summer and recommended a slate to the full Board which adopted the final roster this fall. To ensure impartiality, no former commissioners and no state-elected officials were selected for the roster.

“We are indeed fortunate in Virginia to have an abundant and diverse roster of outstanding artists and organizations and their supporters spanning disciplines and decades”, said Margaret Vanderhye, the Commission’s executive director. “The 50 selected winners are representative of the best, but this list is far from definitive. Every day in communities across the Commonwealth, thousands of people benefit from the creative energies and pursuit of excellence that characterize Virginia artists and arts organizations”, she concluded.

VCA Commissioner and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Co-Chair Jo Hodgkin (Annandale) stated: “These awardees carry the banner for countless arts workers and supporters who use the arts to build a strong Virginia”. “We believe the arts are essential for a creative 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce, economically dynamic communities, and a culture based on wellness and accessibility,” she added.

The honoree representing Virginia Opera as an Emerging Artist, Maestro Adam Turner acknowledges, *“It is a distinct honor to be included amongst such a distinguished group of fellow artists and arts organizations in the Commonwealth. Ensuring a bright future for the performing arts in Virginia is a vital component of Virginia Opera’s mission, particularly with respect to our Education and Outreach efforts. With every performance we strive to create bold, innovative, and passionate storytelling, providing audiences with*



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*transformative experiences and securing the next generation of culturally abundant communities throughout our Commonwealth."*

Award recipients were honored with other state arts leaders and supporters at a special reception this fall for a Celebration of the Arts at the Executive Mansion with Governor Terry McAuliffe and First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe.

On Wednesday, January 31, 2018 from 1:00-5:00 p.m. the Commission will hold a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program for arts organizations across the state at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. That afternoon the 50 for 50 Arts Inspiration award recipients Virginia Opera and Maestro Adam Turner will be officially recognized and for their achievements. A reception will follow in the Marble Hall.

Commission Chair Shelley Kruger Weisberg (Williamsburg) commented: "The entire Commission applauds the 50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Award recipients whose work is representative of the transformative power of the arts in our Commonwealth". She added, "The impressive array of arts leaders, arts organizations, pinnacle events and artists are a testament to the extraordinary diversity and vitality of the arts in every corner of the state". Each of the five nomination categories represents a different element of the arts in time and focus.

For the Bedrock Institutions category awarded to Virginia Opera, the criteria were: Winners have been in existence more than ten years, have demonstrated a benefit to the economic health and or tourism in the community, exhibit artistic excellence, celebrate diversity and showcase Virginia as a cultural destination. For the Emerging Artists category awarded to Maestro Adam Turner the criteria were: Winners have demonstrated a serious sustained leadership in the arts that have made a significant contribution to their communities, have encouraged decision makers to create a sustainable environment for artists and arts organizations, have taken an original approach to arts leadership and encouraged the engagement of others, and have championed a broad role for arts organizations and artists to play in their own respective communities.

Virginia Opera in its 43rd season, is known and 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. Mainstage performances in three markets across the Commonwealth reach nearly 50,000 attendees annually. In March of 1994, by unanimous vote of the Virginia General Assembly, Virginia Opera was named The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia in recognition of the organization's contribution to the state as well as to the world of opera.

Maestro Adam Turner is quickly gaining momentum as a conductor to watch on international opera stages. He garners critical acclaim for the breadth of his repertoire, artistic vision, and polished technique. Currently he is in his fourth season as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor at Virginia Opera.

For more information about the Virginia Commission for the Arts, visit [www.arts.virginia.gov](http://www.arts.virginia.gov).

For more information about Virginia Opera, visit [vaopera.org](http://vaopera.org) or call 866.673.7282.

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