



## For Immediate Release

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### Virginia Opera's Master Teacher Series Presents Jill and Jake Gardner

Richmond, Norfolk, Fairfax, VA (September 13, 2017) - On Tuesday, October 10, Virginia Opera will present its annual public **Master Teacher Series** featuring soprano, Jill Gardner and bass-baritone, Jake Gardner. Their combined talents will inspire Virginia Opera's Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists as they immerse themselves in an intensive three-day workshop environment from October 8-10. The Gardners have consistently given-back to the music industry that has supported their talent by teaching work-shops for young artists across the country. They will work with 15 of Virginia Opera's Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists helping them discover important performance techniques invaluable to their operatic careers. The popularity of television programs such as *the Voice* relates to the **Master Teacher Series** format Virginia Opera offers each season. Professionals in the field critique young hopefuls and mentor their presentation style. The public's fascination with the process of developing young talent and watching the performance process live has become big business in the entertainment world. Virginia Opera's Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists will not have the experience with the Gardners of a broadcast on national television, but they will share their discovery with those in attendance at the public performance that is a part of this effort. The final master class on October 10 at Dominion Arts Center is open to the public and always attracts a substantial following of friends, fans, students and teachers.

Russell P. Allen, President and CEO of Virginia Opera stated "Virginia Opera has many facets to its Education Program. The Master Teacher Series has obvious direct benefits for the Emerging Artists, but also benefits the community by allowing opera aficionados, as well as people who simply enjoy a good concert, the opportunity to hear spectacular vocal performances and to better understand the in-depth training process of emerging talent."

Ms. Gardner is consistently hailed for her portrayals of the leading ladies of the Verismo repertoire and Puccini heroines. She will star in Virginia Opera's up-coming production of Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West*. Considered the next great interpreter of the title role of *Tosca*, she recently performed the role in several different productions across the country; Opera Carolina, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Arizona Opera, Lyric Opera Baltimore, Toledo Opera, Mill City Summer Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera.

Mr. Gardner also boasts a career of performances with major opera companies and orchestras worldwide. He remains one of the opera world's most sought-after singing actors. Last season, Virginia Opera announced the notable milestone of his one-hundredth performance in his stellar career. His performance as Ashby in *The Girl of the Golden West* will mark his 15<sup>th</sup> production at Virginia Opera. Jake Gardner first performed with Virginia Opera in the role of Germont in *La Traviata* in 1975, Virginia Opera's premiere season.

Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, Adam Turner, comments "It is always exciting to have performers of the caliber of Jill and Jake in Virginia Opera's main stage productions. It is equally gratifying to be able to show off the additional contribution that they make to the opera field with their professional coaching and expert guidance that so effectively encourages talent on the rise."

The dynamic duo has been married for 15 years and performs together in recital and with multiple opera companies nationwide. Virginia Opera is honored to welcome Jill and Jake Gardner as featured Master Teachers for the 2017 **Master Teacher Series** and encourages the public to attend the final session at 7 P.M. on Tuesday, October 10 at the Gottwald Theatre in Dominion Arts Center.

#### About Virginia Opera

Virginia Opera Association, Inc., in its 43<sup>rd</sup> 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. For tickets and information visit [vaopera.org](http://vaopera.org) or call 866.673.7282.

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