



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Virginia Opera Announces Sizzling 2017-2018 Season

May 2, 2017 – Virginia Opera, *The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, is proud to announce its explosive 2017-2018 Season. The intensely rapturous and gripping repertory of the season reflects the bittersweet quote of Pedro Caldero'n de la Barca - "**Love that is not madness is not love.**"

Russell Allen, President and CEO of Virginia Opera stated, "Virginia Opera provides our state with four attention-grabbing, top-notch productions each season. Virginia Opera's focus on quality makes performance expectation high...and positive audience response testifies that our company truly delivers. Providing exciting, relevant repertory drives the programming focus for the 2017-2018 Season – Virginia Opera's 43rd Season."

Adam Turner, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor commented, "Looking back on Virginia Opera's successful 2016-2017 Season, we are all filled with pride for the artistic triumphs of four innovative productions that captured the attention of our audiences. The new 2017-2018 Season promises to pick up where last season left off and continue to engage and entertain an ever-expanding audience with the highest level of operatic production."

Performance Information

The season opens with Camille Saint-Saëns' provocative operatic version of the biblical story of *Samson and Delilah*. The dramatic tension sizzles when tenor Derek Taylor (Samson) and mezzo-soprano Katharine Goeldner (Delilah) heat up the stage. With Taylor's "ringing top" and blazing good looks" and Goeldner's "warm rich vocal tone and assured artistry," both have garnered excitement in opera houses throughout Europe and the United States as well as right here at Virginia Opera. Taylor dazzled audiences with his bravura performance as Calaf in last season's *Turandot* and Goeldner commanded attention as Herodias in *Salome* in 2014-15. Michael Chioldi (*Pagliacci*, 2016) returns to Virginia Opera in his debut performance of the High Priest.

Samson and Delilah is conducted by Virginia Opera Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Adam Turner. Award-winning stage director, Paul Curran brings fresh excitement to Virginia Opera stages in this First of Firsts production that includes extensive choreography in the opera's signature dance scene, the Bacchanal, as well as his interpretation of the famous destruction of the temple. This opera is famous for providing grand spectacle to audiences world-wide and now Virginia Opera brings this masterwork to its three mainstage venues.

Samson and Delilah will be sung in French with English Supertitles.

Performances across the Commonwealth at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk - September 29, October 1 & 3, 2017

George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – October 7 & 8, 2017
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Arts Center – Richmond – October 13 & 15, 2017

Enter the saloon for what is considered the “first Spaghetti western” in Virginia Opera’s second production. Puccini’s *The Girl of the Golden West (La Fanciulla del West)* ranks as one of Puccini’s most innovative scores both harmonically and orchestrally. Rumored to have been Puccini’s favorite of his own operas, *The Girl of the Golden West* highlights the rigors of the mid-1800’s California mining rush and depicts the rough and tumble world of the Wild, Wild West.

Recognized as a “lyric spinto, Puccini girl through and through,” American soprano, Jill Gardner portrays the heroine *Minnie*, a saloon owner who keeps a close eye on the whiskey-drinking, card-playing minors at her establishment while holding out for her own true love. Canadian tenor Roger Honeywell, portrays Minnie’s love interest, the bandit *Ramerrez* (alias *Dick Johnson*), and shines as a performer with a “burnished sound and crisp diction.”

Virginia Opera favorite Lillian Groag, most recently acclaimed for directing last season’s *Turandot*, recreates her original Glimmerglass Opera production on stage across the Commonwealth directing this all-star cast. Andrew Bisantz (*La Traviata*, 2015) returns to conduct.

The Girl of the Golden West will be sung in Italian with English supertitles.

Performances across the Commonwealth at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – Nov. 10, 12 & 14, 2017
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Arts Center – Richmond – Nov. 17 & 19, 2017
George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – December 2 & 3, 2017

Benjamin Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is far more than the retelling of Shakespeare’s classic story. This tour-de-force production ranks with Verdi’s masterpieces and the best of classic comic opera. The evocative score offers a rich display of musical parody mimicking entangled themes and character interactions throughout. The all-star cast includes Virginia Opera favorites, soprano Heather Buck, singing the role of *Tytania*, and baritone Matthew Burns in the comic role of *Bottom*. Buck last thrilled Virginia Opera audiences as Queen of the Night in the 2013-14 production of *The Magic Flute* and Burns was an uproarious Doctor Bartolo in last season’s *The Barber of Seville*. Former Herndon Foundation Emerging Artist, David Blalock (*The Flying Dutchman*, 2016), returns to Virginia Opera in the role of *Lysander*. Director Michael Shell (*The Magic Flute*, 2013 and *The Barber of Seville*, 2016) creates the magic in this new production and Adam Turner conducts the opera’s bewitching score with its lush melodies and mesmerizing interludes – both ensuring an unforgettable operatic experience.

A Midsummer Night’s Dream will be sung in English with English Supertitles.

Performances across the Commonwealth at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – Feb. 9, 11 & 13, 2018
George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – Feb. 17 & 18, 2018
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Arts Center – Richmond – Feb. 23 & 25, 2018

Finally, the pièce de résistance for this season of love and madness is Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, presenting the pinnacle of operatic high drama. The most iconic of all bel canto operas, it is the consummate tale of thwarted love and dashed expectations—a sensitive portrait of a woman at the breaking point fully expressed in the most famous operatic mad scene ever produced. Metropolitan Opera soprano, Rachele Gilmore, makes her Virginia Opera debut in the title role. Known for her ability to bring layered, compelling performances to the stage; Ms. Gilmore provides the complexity and vocal expertise necessary to make this performance remarkable. Complementing her as *Edgardo* is tenor Joseph Dennis, in his Virginia Opera debut. Well-known for his lush tone, Mr. Dennis ensures a solid interpretation of one of the most impassioned tenor arias ever written, “Tombe degli avi miei.”

Lucia di Lammermoor brings back guest conductor Ari Pelto (*Salome*, 2015) and teams him with returning director Kyle Lang (*La Bohème*, 2015) in what will prove to be a tour-de-force new production.

Lucia di Lammermoor will be sung in Italian with English Supertitles

Performances across the state at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – March 23, 25 & 27, 2018

George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – April 7 & 8, 2018

The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Arts Center – Richmond – April 13 & 15, 2018

Subscription Information

Subscription tickets for all 4 productions are on sale for performances in Norfolk and Richmond starting as low as just \$71 in Norfolk AND Richmond. Subscriptions for performances at George Mason University's Center for the Arts will go on sale later this spring.

Subscription tickets and ticket information at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L.
Harrison Opera House
Norfolk, VA
866.673.7282
vaopera.org

George Mason University's
Center for the Arts
Fairfax, VA
703.993.2787
cfa.gmu.edu

The Carpenter Theatre at
Dominion Arts Center
Richmond, VA
866.673.7282
vaopera.org

About Virginia Opera

Virginia Opera Association, Inc., currently in its 43rd Season (2017-2018), 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 60,000 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 or call 866.673.7282.