The Virginia Commission for the Arts celebrates and champions artistic excellence and encourages growth in artistic creativity, quality, and innovation. So, congratulations are in order for our Virginia Opera and for Maestro Adam Turner, its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor.

At its awards ceremony in January of this year the Commission celebrated its 50th anniversary with a “50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Awards.” The fifty awardees were selected from over 350 nominees and are “people and organizations that have inspired and championed Virginia’s cultural heritage.” The winners’ stories “remind us of why the arts are ...essential to original thinking ... and freedom of expression.”

The commission named the Virginia Opera a Bedrock Institution. To earn that honor, an arts institution must have “demonstrated artistic excellence; been a significant benefit to their community; celebrated diversity; and showcased Virginia as a cultural destination.” Virginia Opera was cited for its “identification and presentation of young artists, for the musical and dramatic integrity of its productions, and for the ingenuity and variety of its outreach programs.” President and CEO Russell P. Allen accepted the award, highlighting the Association’s commitment to its artists and to its statewide education activities.

MEET THE ARTIST
Scales, Trills and Runs
By POWERS PETERSON

Singing the title role in Lucia di Lammermoor has special meaning for soprano Rachele Gilmore. It was while debuting the role at Knoxville Opera (Knoxville, TN) in 2010 that she met her husband, tenor Dinyar Vania. Appropriately, he sang the role of Lucia’s lover, Edgardo.

Growing up in Roswell, GA, Rachele initially played clarinet in the high school band. She was recruited into the chorus and found she enjoyed singing more than playing an instrument. After earning a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance degree from Indiana University, she went on to graduate studies at Boston University. She has performed in the young artists programs of Glimmerglass Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Aspen Music Festival's Opera Center.

To date, Rachele’s most memorable moment was her 2009 debut at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. She was the cover for Olympia in Les contes d’Hoffman. The winter cold and flu viruses had already felled several of the cast, including the tenor.

Notified a day in advance that soprano Kathleen Kim might not be available to perform, Rachele remained on call in her apartment in Queens. The day of the performance there were three phone calls keeping Rachele abreast of the soprano’s condition. At 4:15 p.m., however, Rachele was notified she would sing that night. Could she come in right away? She recalls first “being shocked,” then getting to Lincoln Center in rush hour, putting on the costume and

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Fellow Guild members, we had a very successful Guild Night in February. Eighty members and guests enjoyed the evening. Many thanks to Dr. Glenn Winters for providing an entertaining and informative lecture on Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. And special thanks to the Events Committee, including the volunteer bartenders, Neal Quesnel and Betsy Sangster! Spring has sprung! Virginia Opera’s last production, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, premieres on Friday, March 23rd. Why not bring a guest to their first opera? Single tickets are on sale now. Call the box office at 866-673-7282 or visit vaopera.org.

The Hampton Roads Opera Gala will take place on Saturday, April 21st at the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel. (See article on p. 4.) The Guild will host a table — or perhaps several. Please inform Lisa Sands if you wish to be seated at the Guild table.

We’re organizing our biennial Merchant of Venice Rummage Sale at the Harrison Opera House to be held on Saturday, April 28th. Fundraising Chair Barbara Buchmann is already at work organizing this. If you’re like me, you look forward to letting the Guild find new homes for items around the house that have outlasted their appeal. Contributions to the sale are tax deductible and all proceeds go to support the Virginia Opera. If you’re willing to help, please contact Barbara at barbarab4700@gmail.com or text her at 757-831-8010.

Our annual Membership Meeting is Saturday, May 12th at Harbor’s Edge. Events Co-Chairs Amber Taylor Reeves and Marianne Nicholson have been working with Harbor’s Edge residents and hosts, Dr. Edward and Mrs. Linda Lilly. Sponsored and under-written by Harbor’s Edge, this is going to be an amazing, not-to-be-missed Members’ meeting. As always... bring some friends!

Guild membership renewals will be on sale at the annual meeting. Dues remain $50 for single membership and $75 for dual. A membership runs from the date of sale to June 30, 2019. We look forward to having each of you renew.

Virginia Opera has four productions next season: *Street Scene*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Elixir of Love*, and *Madame Butterfly*. Let’s renew our 2018/19 subscriptions before this season ends! Join me in helping the Guild reach the goal of surpassing the 75% mark. See you at the opera...
Gioacchino Rossini, composer of The Barber of Seville and 38 other operas, was asked to reveal the secret of the craft of opera. “To create good opera, three things are needed,” he replied, “voice, voice and voice.”

This might have served as a motto for the early nineteenth-century style known as bel canto, the meaning of which encompasses more than its translation of “beautiful singing.” After all, what composer in his right mind would want ugly singing?

So the full implications of bel canto are that the human voice is responsible for EVERYTHING: drama, character, psychology – all of it. Composers didn’t particularly care if you looked your part. A forty-one-year-old soprano weighing 15 stone could portray a teenaged nymph, just as long as her voice provided the illusion of an ingénue. Bottom line: it’s the voices in bel canto that give us 100% of the information about the characters.

As for the bel canto orchestra, don’t look for it to churn out Wagnerian motifs or to provide commentary on the action or characters. Its role was mostly relegated to colorful and discreet accompaniment for the singers. So here’s a paradox: Lucia di Lammermoor is a bel canto opera, yet it contains important moments in which Donizetti went against the Rossini ideal.

True, throughout the opera, vocal flourishes provide abundant insight into Lucia, Enrico, and Edgardo; but Donizetti’s departures from the old formula are inspired and brilliant.

Three of Lucia’s entrances are preceded by substantial passages for solo instrument and orchestra — passages that document her devolving psyche. The first two of these solos are themes never heard again, played solely to tell us about her psychology at that moment in time. In Act 1, Scene 2, it’s the harp. In almost a “mini concerto,” the harp paints a vivid portrait of Lucia before she sings and before any tragedy occurs. The music is delicate, highly sensitive and, given the timbre of the harp, fragile-sounding. That’s the character; her sensitivity and emotional fragility foreshadow a mind too easily undone by adversity. Then in Act 2, Scene 1, a solo oboe and orchestra provide Lucia’s entrance music. Rich with pathos, the oboe depicts the affect of depression, which is highly apt considering that Lucia has received no letters from her lover since his departure.

Finally, in Act 3, Scene 1, the famous “Mad Scene” depicts Lucia, now deranged and...
From the Cover
makeup, and mentally preparing herself for the performance. “It was nerve wracking, for sure, to be doing everything for the first time!” Since the Met rehearses covers in a rehearsal room, she had never walked the set before. The Met actually held the opening curtain so that she could familiarize herself with the stage. (A video of this performance on YouTube has had several hundred thousand hits.) “It was so special to sing with the Metropolitan Orchestra on that stage!”

Rachele has sung Olympia in many theaters, and there have been interesting variations along the way. At Teatro alla Scala (Milan, 2011) the costume included a heavy plastic mannequin underneath the dress. The mannequin covered everything except Rachele’s arms. “The movements were very difficult. It was tough to maneuver. Timing the involved choreography to every note meant numerous rehearsals.” Then at the Bayerische Staatsoper (Munich, 2013) the character’s legs were taped. They were actually moved by a sort-of puppeteer beneath the stage.

But she comes here to sing Lucia, her specialty role. She last sang the role at Opera Lille (France, 2014), and she welcomes her Virginia Opera debut. “I will take every opportunity to sing Lucia, wherever it is.” Since a singer’s voice changes constantly with age, Rachele says the lower parts of Lucia’s arias will now be “more full” than four years ago. Rachele much admires Beverly Sills’ performances as Lucia. Ms. Sills “combined technical ability, acting skills, and a commanding coloratura voice with joy in her singing. She had charisma and did it all.” Singing Olympia is a test of a soprano’s coloratura voice, as is singing Lucia, whose highest note is E flat above high C. Since Rachele Gilmore has acquitted herself admirably in both roles on other stages, expect nothing less on The Harrison Opera House stage.

Virginia Opera Gala

The Virginia Opera hosts its 2018 Gala on Saturday, April 21, 2018. This year’s event is co-chaired by Dana Jo Decker and Andrea Holloway and underwritten by Troutman Sanders. The theme, Opera is Amore, will fill the Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel ballroom with music, color, and camaraderie. Festivities will begin at 6.00 p.m. with cocktails and a silent auction. Guests will then be transported to a land of romance. A seated dinner with an open bar will be followed by entertainment from Virginia Opera vocalists and then dancing to the sounds of The Bachelor Boys, a group of professional musicians from Richmond.

The Gala is the largest fundraising event for Virginia Opera. And each year it takes on a new theme and venue. Tickets are $250 per person. The Gala seeks to net at least $75,000 to support Virginia Opera’s Education Program that travels the Commonwealth bringing opera performances to more than 120,000 students each year. Contact Lisa Sands at 757-213-4554 or lisa.sands@vaopera.org for tickets.
Maestro Ari Pelto began his university musical studies at Oberlin Conservatory intending to become a concert violinist, but he changed his mind after a professional opportunity as assistant conductor at Spoleto Festival. “I loved being in the pit. I was in the theater, looking at the stage and loving the whole theatrical experience. It still doesn’t matter whether it’s opera, ballet, or a concert – I love the whole concept of performing. And it fits in with my lifelong interest in language. Knowing a language is critical when conducting an opera. A musician needs to speak the language of the piece he is performing.” According to Pelto, one must interpret the words not from a translation, but from one’s own understanding of the original text’s emotion and tone. It’s what he tells the young musicians he coaches. Since the Maestro speaks English, Finnish, Italian, German, and French and dabbles in Russian and Spanish, he speaks with authority on this aspect of musicianship.

Where did this intense interest with languages originate? Born in Connecticut, Maestro Pelto grew up bilingual because his father spoke to him in Finnish. Both anthropologist parents instilled in him an appreciation of other cultures and languages. While still a child, he traveled with his parents on their expeditions. As a child and again as a teenager he lived in an Indian village in central Mexico and took violin lessons in Mexico City. One of his more vivid memories is living and going to school in a Skolt Lapp reindeer-herding village in the northernmost tip of Finland. Because his parents frequently hosted guests from all over the world, dinner table conversations touched on innumerable topics and were often multilingual. Ari credits these first-hand experiences with helping form his appreciation of “people and things that are other.”

Whatever their undergraduate and higher university or conservatory degrees, all conductors prepare by learning the score for every instrument in the orchestra, understanding the composer’s notations, and practicing their stick (baton) techniques. In truth, however, it’s apprenticing with other conductors by which all conductors learn. It is necessary to communicate with singers and musicians with one’s facial gestures, eyes, and arms; these skills are enhanced by observing and working with a more experienced conductor. Maestro Pelto studied with Jorma Paluma at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, with Mendi Rodan at the Rubin Academy in Jerusalem, and with Imre Palló at Indiana University. In addition, he admires both Riccardo Muti and Carlos Kleiber for “their connections to the textual material and to the players and singers.” That’s one quality that Maestro Pelto strives for in his conducting. Achieving that connection was especially challenging when he conducted Salome (2015) at Virginia Opera. “Salome is about as hard as it gets,” he states. Strauss’ music is complicated in its rhythm and orchestration. It’s “technically difficult for the musicians to play all those notes and the singers to sing all those notes. And as for the conductor – I had to orchestrate the traffic, keeping everyone together.” Success depends on developing a “positive dynamic, a chemistry” with all involved in the production so that everyone understands what’s expected. “The psychology of process is central to conducting.”

Maestro Pelto is delighted to return to Virginia Opera. He describes conducting here as “very gratifying” and attributes the feeling to a special kind of ease that comes with working with the singers, the technicians, the musicians and the staff on the highest level. From his first conducting opportunity at VO with A Streetcar Named Desire (2013), he “has felt at home.” He anticipates nothing different with Lucia di Lammermoor, which he has had the opportunity to perform on several occasions. He even has an affinity for the slightly elevated pit at Harrison Opera House (compared to other opera houses) because it allows him a better view of both the musicians in the orchestra and the singers on stage. His challenge, however, as with conducting any opera, is to “achieve balance between the singers and the orchestra.” It’s safe to say he’ll conquer that challenge.
Also honored was Maestro Adam Turner, Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor of Virginia Opera. Maestro Turner was one of only six named as an Emerging Artist. The criterion for the Emerging Artist Award was that individuals or organizations must have consistently demonstrated a leadership role in the arts. Maestro Turner was the only individual selected; the other winners were organizations. He was cited for his “broad repertoire, artistic vision, and polished technique.” (For more about Maestro Turner, see page 7).

These awards are well-deserved recognition for everyone involved with our Virginia Opera. Sincere congratulations!

From the Cover

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suffering from hallucinations. She horrifies the wedding guests by rambling incoherently until she collapses. And this entrance music is a masterstroke. Donizetti chose the glass armonica to provide a sound one can only describe as chillingly unearthly and eerie. Invented by Benjamin Franklin, the glass armonica is based on the principle of dampened hands coaxing musical vibrations from crystal goblets filled with varying levels of liquid. Although it’s an easily transported single machine, few modern orchestras have one available; so the composer’s authorized substitute is a flute.

These three instruments take over functions Rossini would have limited to the human voice, revealing how Donizetti paved the way for the masters who followed him. Rest assured that Verdi, Wagner, and even Puccini studied *Lucia di Lammermoor* in detail. Be sure to take note of them when you come to our production!
Maestro Rising
By POWERS PETERSON

Congratulations, Maestro Adam Turner, on your promotion to Artistic Director of the Virginia Opera! Further congratulations are in order on your having been selected as an Emerging Artist by the Virginia Commission for the Arts.

The promotion begins with the 2018-2019 season, during which Maestro Turner will conduct all four productions. Coincidentally, one of those operas just happens to be the one in which he made his very first appearance with Virginia Opera, *The Elixir of Love* (*L’elisir d’amore*, 2008). He was both the Chorus Master and the Assistant Conductor. He returned for the 2010-2011 season in those same roles and then became the Resident Conductor and Chorus Master in the 2011-2012 season. In 2014 Maestro Turner was named Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor. In 2015 he was awarded the Julius Rudel/Kurt Weill Conducting Fellowship by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music. This one-year award enables a young conductor in the early stages of a career to assist a conductor in the preparation and performance of a work by Kurt Weill or Marc Blitzstein and expand his knowledge of the works of those two men. Turner served as cover conductor under John DeMain, one of his mentors, for the Washington National Opera production of Weill’s *Lost in the Stars* in 2016 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. To date, whether as pianist, casting director, chorus master, or conductor, he has participated in 35 Virginia Opera productions.

In addition to a Bachelor of Music degree from Morehead State University and a Master of Music in Conducting from the Catholic University of America, he is a skilled pianist and sings baritone. In February of this year he was named one of six Emerging Artists for the Commonwealth of Virginia. The criteria for this award included having demonstrated artistic excellence and having taken a visionary or innovative approach in one’s work. (See related article on p. 1.) And, as needs sometimes must, he’s survived potential operatic disasters. The first such occurred during a stint as a guest conductor. The opera was Gounod’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Well into a group scene in Act II, Adam realized the baritone portraying Gregorio was not on stage; he’d missed his cue. And Gregorio had a recitative coming up immediately. Maestro Turner saved the day by singing the part from the pit where he was conducting. “Luckily,” he recalls, “it was in my vocal range and in French, a language I’m familiar with.” Also unforgettable were the last two performances of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (2014). When circumstance arose that caused the guest conductor to be unavailable, Maestro Turner had to take over on very short notice. “Really learning a Richard Strauss score is not an overnight task, or even a week’s task, but I did it.”

According to John Mauceri in *The Art of Conducting*, the role of a conductor is “to be a silent enabler of an invisible audible force, music.” Maestro Turner has been cited by *Opera News* and other publications for his ability to play such a role. By establishing an interactive relationship with the music, the musicians, and the audience, a conductor can achieve greatness. If not there already, Maestro Turner is well on his way.

One final note: Well deserved, Maestro!

Adam Turner accepting his award from a member of the Virginia Commission for the Arts
Contact Information

Are you intrigued about the Guild? Do you want to join us to support the Virginia Opera Association? Perhaps you would enjoy volunteering for a committee or for one of our activities. And don’t forget to check us out on the Virginia Opera website.

Here's how to contact us:

Write us Virginia Opera Guild
P.O. Box 11572, Norfolk VA 23517

Call us RSVP: 757-627-9545, ext. 3584

Email us vaopera.guild@vaopera.org

Like us on Facebook: Virginia Opera Guild

Website https://vaopera.org/experience

The Merchant of Venice Rummage Sale is on Saturday, April 28, 2018 at the Harrison Opera House from 8 am to 2 pm. We’re looking for donations — everything except clothing and shoes. For information and/or if you would like to volunteer to help, text Barbara Buchmann at 757-831-8010.

New Members

Susan and Jeff Bergner
Norfolk

Virginia Opera Guild Calendar

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<tr>
<td>Mar 18</td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Artists Dinner for <em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em>, HOH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 23</td>
<td>8:00 p.m.</td>
<td><em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em></td>
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<td>Mar 25</td>
<td>2:30 p.m.</td>
<td><em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em></td>
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<td>Mar 27</td>
<td>7:30 p.m.</td>
<td><em>Lucia di Lammermoor</em></td>
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<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>4:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Board Meeting, HOH</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 21</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Virginia Opera Gala, Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 28</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Merchant of Venice Sale, HOH</td>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>Annual Meeting, Harbor's Edge</td>
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The Met Live in HD

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 31</td>
<td>12:55 p.m.</td>
<td><em>Così fan tutte</em> / Mozart</td>
<td>Robertson / Majeski, Malfi, O’Hara, Bliss, Plachetka, Maltman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 14</td>
<td>12:30 p.m.</td>
<td><em>Luisa Miller</em> / Verdi</td>
<td>de Billy / Yoncheva, Petrova, Beczala, Domingo, Vinogradov</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 28</td>
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<td><em>Cendrillon</em> / Massenet</td>
<td>de Billy / Kim, DiDonato, Coote, Blythe</td>
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