



## For Immediate Release

March 7, 2018

Contact: Lana Sadowski,

Acting Director of Marketing, Hampton Roads

P.O. BOX 2580 • Norfolk, VA 23501

PHONE: 757.627.9545 X 3316

EMAIL: LANA.SADOWSKI@VAOPERA.ORG

### Virginia Opera Names New Artistic Director, Announces 2018-2019 Season

**Hampton Roads, Richmond, Fairfax, VA (March 7, 2018)** - Principal Conductor Adam Turner takes over as Virginia Opera's new **Artistic Director** with Kurt Weill's "American opera for Broadway" *Street Scene*, kicking off the company's 44th season on Friday, September 28, 2018 at the Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House, Norfolk, VA. Virginia Opera's 2018–2019 Season also features the return of three favorites: Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore (The Elixir of Love)*, and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. In honor of his new appointment, Maestro Turner will conduct all four operas, each of which tells of love won and love thwarted, within distinctive communities that either welcome or shun the passions in their midst. Acclaimed directors Dorothy Danner (*Street Scene*) and Lillian Groag (*Don Giovanni*) return to thrill Virginia Opera audiences once again, joining directors Kyle Lang (*The Elixir of Love*, his third production with the company) and Richard Gammon (*Madama Butterfly*, debut).

One of America's most acclaimed young conductors, Maestro Turner came to Virginia Opera in 2010 as Resident Conductor and Chorus Master. For the last four seasons as Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor, he has helmed the company's performances of such varied repertory as Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, as well as standard repertory like *Carmen* and *La Bohème*. A graduate of Morehead State University (Bachelor of Music in piano performance) and the Catholic University of America (Master of Music in conducting), he is the recipient of the Julius Rudel/Kurt Weill Conducting Fellowship (2016–2017) and the "50 for 50 Arts Inspiration Award" for Emerging Artists, bestowed by the Virginia Commission for the Arts. He has also worked as an assistant conductor with Seattle Opera, Central City Opera, and Florida Grand Opera, among other companies.

In announcing the new appointment, Virginia Opera President and CEO, Russell P. Allen, stated "Virginia Opera is excited about the work that Maestro Turner has done for the company. His artistic work is extraordinary and his involvement to date in shaping the artistic growth of the company has been significant. As Maestro Turner begins his 9<sup>th</sup> season with the company, the promotion to Artistic Director could not be more timely and important for the company."

Allen continued by expressing his pride in the 2018-2019 Season and stating "Virginia Opera's new season offers repertory that continues to emphasize the Opera's ability to successfully produce both the traditional and the contemporary. The 2018-2019 Season is an excellent base of offerings on which the company can continue to grow and develop."

“When I first came to Virginia Opera, the company’s artistic product was already at a level of which we could all be proud,” Maestro Turner says. “We’ve built on that and continue to accomplish exceptional artistic achievements: incredible singing and orchestral playing. We’ve been on a steady incline, in terms of quality, and that’s going to continue.”

In appearances with Virginia Opera, as well as past and upcoming appearances with such companies as San Diego Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Central City Opera, and American Lyric Theater, Maestro Turner has devoted special attention to 20th-century and contemporary works by composers such as Weill, Sondheim, Britten, Heggie, and Adamo.

“That’s why I’m also looking forward to upholding and expanding on Virginia Opera’s commitment to works like ***Street Scene***, which our audiences haven’t seen before — part of our First of Firsts initiative — as well as providing a fresh look at more familiar works,” Maestro Turner says.

#### Performance Information

The 2018–2019 Virginia Opera season opens with Weill’s ***Street Scene***, based on Elmer Rice’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, with lyrics by renowned American poet Langston Hughes, mixes comedy, romance, and tragedy within a single New York City tenement, where even minor characters play vital roles. Weill’s score features jazz, Broadway show-stoppers, and full-throated verismo lyricism, affirming the German-born composer’s belief that a real American opera, like American society, must be a melting pot of styles and voices. Danner returns to Virginia Opera for her 16th production with the company, starring sopranos Maureen McKay as Rose (debut) and Jill Gardner (who sang Minnie in last season’s *The Girl of the Golden West*) as her mother, Anna Maurant; tenor David Blalock (a former Emerging Artist) returns to VO as the idealistic Sam Kaplan. Virginia Opera is proud to announce its second award from the Kurt Weill Foundation for its upcoming production of ***Street Scene***. The first one was awarded two seasons ago when the Opera produced an innovative new production of *The Seven Deadly Sins*. ***Street Scene*** will be sung in English with English Supertitles.

Performances across the state at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – September 28, 30, & October 2, 2018  
George Mason University’s Center for the Arts – Fairfax – October 6 & 7, 2018  
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Energy Center – Richmond – October 12 & 14, 2018

Comedy and tragedy mingle, too, in Mozart’s ever-popular ***Don Giovanni***, in which only supernatural forces can put a stop to the Spanish nobleman’s compulsive amorous conquests. (1,003 women in Spain alone!) Lillian Groag’s 24th production for Virginia Opera features a number of exciting young singers making their company debuts: baritone Tobias Greenhalgh as Don Giovanni; bass-baritone Zachary Altman as his beleaguered manservant, Leporello; and soprano Rachelle Durkin as Donna Anna, Giovanni’s most recent victim. Former Emerging Artist Sarah Larsen makes her mainstage debut as Donna Elvira — the only woman Giovanni must wed before he can bed. Last performed by Virginia Opera in 2010, ***Don Giovanni*** will be sung in Italian with English Supertitles.

Performances across the state at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – November 2, 4 & 6, 2018  
George Mason University’s Center for the Arts – Fairfax – November 10 & 11, 2018  
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Energy Center – Richmond – November 16 & 18, 2018

Sometimes Mr. and Ms. Right need a little help to get together, and in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, that help comes out of a bottle — an “elixir of love” sold by a wily con artist. This perfectly constructed romantic comedy, last seen at Virginia Opera in 2008, features a sparkling bel canto score, memorable characters, and profound emotion, best represented in the tenor's hit aria, “Una furtiva lagrima.” Stage director Kyle Lang returns for his third production with Virginia Opera, and soprano Cecilia Violetta López, unforgettable in Verdi's *La Traviata* in 2014–2015, returns to VO to sing another of Italian opera's most appealing heroines, Adina; baritone Alexander Birch Elliott makes his company debut as the blustering soldier Belcore. Bass-baritone Matthew Burns, returning for his 5<sup>th</sup> production at Virginia Opera, rounds out the cast as Dulcamara. *The Elixir of Love* will be sung in Italian with English Supertitles.

Performances across the state at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – February 8, 10 & 12, 2019  
George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – February 16 & 17, 2019  
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Energy Center – Richmond – February 22 & 24, 2019

Closing Virginia Opera's 2018–2019 season is Puccini's tragic *Madama Butterfly*, a tale of love and sacrifice set against a clash of cultures that's still relevant today. (The popular musical *Miss Saigon* updated the story to the Vietnam War era.) Puccini's score, not heard at Virginia Opera since 2011, uses authentic Japanese themes and soaring Italian lyricism to create a powerful emotional experience and the aria “Un bel dì” is just one reason sopranos yearn to sing the title role. Soprano Danielle Pastin, who sang Liù in Puccini's *Turandot* with VA Opera in 2016–2017, sings *Butterfly*, opposite tenor Jonathan Tetelman (mainstage debut) as the callow American naval officer who loves her and leaves her. Baritone Levi Hernandez returns to VO as the sympathetic American consul, Sharpless, the role he sang with the company in 2011; former Emerging Artist and audience favorite Kristen Choi returns as *Butterfly*'s devoted servant, Suzuki. *Madama Butterfly* will be sung in Italian with English Supertitles.

Performances across the state at:

The Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House – Norfolk – March 15, 17 & 19, 2019  
George Mason University's Center for the Arts – Fairfax – March 23 & 24, 2019  
The Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Energy Center – Richmond – March 29 & 31, 2019

“It is my sincerest hope that Virginia Opera audiences next season will be moved, mesmerized, and engaged with bold, passionate stories that stir them to the core,” Maestro Turner says. “Reviews say every season is getting better and better — and our audiences have consistently affirmed that. I'm really excited about our productions and about the artists who are performing next season.”

#### Subscription Information

Subscription tickets for all 4 productions are on sale for performances in Norfolk and Richmond starting as low as \$71. 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 Energy Center  
Richmond, VA  
866.673.7282  
vaopera.org

### About Virginia Opera

Virginia Opera Association, Inc., in its 44th Season (2018-2019), 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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