



For Immediate Release

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Virginia Opera Presents Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*: Triumphant 44th Season Finale Performances Scheduled Statewide March 15-31, 2019

Hampton Roads, Richmond, Fairfax, Virginia (February 20, 2019) — Virginia Opera announces a total of seven statewide performances of **Giacomo Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*** as the concluding main stage production in its **2018-2019 Season**. Performances begin with three nights at the Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House in Norfolk beginning Friday, March 15, 2019, and continue Sunday, March 17 and Tuesday, March 19. Two performances are scheduled for George Mason University's Center for the Arts on Saturday and Sunday, March 23 and 24. Final performances occur Friday and Sunday, March 29 and 31 at Richmond's Dominion Energy Center for the Performing Arts.

(Full venue and performance details below.)

Madama Butterfly is Puccini's three-act tale of love and sacrifice set against a clash of cultures that continues to resonate with audiences today. Taking its narrative from a series of *fin de siècle* sources—in particular the one-act play *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan*—which, after premiering in London just after the turn of the century inspired the composer to adapt it for operatic treatment. Written first in two acts, Puccini expanded it to three after a less than warm critical debut at Milan's La Scala opera house in February 1904. He re-debuted it that May to triumphant reviews, signaling a rise to global success that now makes it the third of Puccini's triumvirate of operas (including *La Bohème* and *Tosca*) to occupy the ten most-performed operas in the world.

Virginia Opera Artistic Director Adam Turner: "If Virginia Opera's most recent production—Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*—can truly be viewed as the quintessentially lighthearted nineteenth-century "rom-com" of the operatic stage, *Madama Butterfly* is almost its exact opposite—a bleak, stormy tale of love doomed by insensitivity and callowness. *Butterfly* is, in many ways, the complete tragedy one envisions when thinking of opera's abilities to explore the depths of human longing and desperation on a grand stage and scale. It is an opera that has universal resonance, and a must-see for novice and seasoned operagoer alike."

MADAMA BUTTERFLY PRODUCTION | PERFORMANCE NOTES

Madama Butterfly was last performed by the Virginia Opera in 2011. The current production will employ the long-held tradition of using Japanese thematic elements, staging, and costuming that, combined with Puccini's soaring Italian lyricism, evoke powerful responses from audience members familiar or otherwise with its heart-rending plot. Its legendary score—and, in particular, the aria "Un bel dì

vedremo" ("One fine day")—remains just one of the primary reasons soprano vocalists yearn to perform the title role of Cio-Cio san (Madama Butterfly). Soprano **Danielle Pastin**, who sang Liù in the Virginia Opera's 2016–2017 production of Puccini's *Turandot*, sings the lead role opposite tenor **Matthew Vickers**, former Herndon Foundation Emerging Artist at Virginia Opera who sang in *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Pagliacci* that same season, who performs as the American naval officer who loves but inevitably leaves her. Baritone **Levi Hernandez** returns to the VO stage as the sympathetic American consul, Sharpless, reprising the role he sang with the company in 2011. In addition, former VO Herndon Emerging Artist, mezzo-soprano (and audience favorite) **Kristen Choi** returns to Virginia Opera as Cio-Cio san's devoted servant, Suzuki. Bass, **Hidenouri Inoue** is the unforgiving Bonze, and, tenor **Julius Ahn** plays the wicked marriage broker, Goro. New York-based director **Richard Gammon** directs. Virginia Opera **Artistic Director Adam Turner** takes the podium to lead the Richmond Symphony Orchestra for this fourth and final 2018-2019 season production. *Madama Butterfly* will be sung in Italian with English Supertitles.

ON THE PRODUCTION

Virginia Opera Artistic Director Adam Turner: "Virginia Opera is extremely fortunate to have assembled a stellar cast for this production—some names will be familiar to Virginia Opera audiences; some will be new. Richard Gammon has directed and assistant directed at Virginia Opera over a period of ten years, and we welcome his expertise in the staging of this classic opera. *Madama Butterfly* is an unparalleled work somehow fitting as the finale of our 44th main stage season."

Russell Allen, Virginia Opera President and CEO: *Madama Butterfly* has spun countless narratives, copies, and variations, including the long running stage blockbuster, *Miss Saigon*. This striking Puccini original is a great opportunity for audiences to discover firsthand the enduring quality of both the tale and its music. Also, as part of Virginia Opera's Puccini Cycle, *Madama Butterfly* helps round out the company's retrospective of a specific composer's genius and seminal work."

ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE VIRGINIA OPERA 2018-2019 SEASON

Russell Allen, Virginia Opera President and CEO: "As we come to the close of yet another successful Virginia Opera season, it is with great pride that I also look back on a season of hard work by each member of our Virginia Opera organization. We cannot speak highly enough, however, of our very own Artistic Director, Adam Turner, who ensures that every season surpasses the prior one, as he grows and develops the company."

Elisabeth Wollan, Virginia Opera Chair: "I extend my heartfelt thanks to each and every person at Virginia Opera for their dedication in providing our Commonwealth audiences with truly memorable productions and joyful experiences throughout the season. In addition, I want to thank our Virginia Opera Association Board and leadership for their valuable time and generous contributions in steering our company. Thanks to the efforts of all of you, our extraordinary company continues to present selections of repertory that extend the Virginia Opera's reputation for the highest quality operatic productions imaginable."

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About Maestro Adam Turner, Virginia Opera Artistic Director

One of America's most acclaimed young conductors, Maestro Adam Turner first came to Virginia Opera in 2010 as Resident Conductor and Chorus Master. For four seasons he served as VO Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor and helmed the company's performances of such varied repertory as Weber's *Der Freischütz* and Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, as well as such standard repertory as *Carmen* and *La Bohème*. Maestro Turner was appointed as Artistic Director beginning with the 2018-2019 Season.

Maestro Turner is a graduate of Morehead State University (Bachelor of Music/Piano Performance) and the Catholic University of America (Master of Music/Conducting). He is a 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 served as an assistant conductor with Seattle Opera, the Central City Opera (Colorado), and the Florida Grand Opera (Miami), among others. In past appearances with Virginia Opera—as well as in his both past and upcoming appearances with such companies as San Diego Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre (Honolulu), Central City Opera, the Buffalo Philharmonic, the Virginia Symphony and New York’s American Lyric Theater—Maestro Turner has devoted special attention to 20th-century and contemporary works by composers such as Kurt Weill, Stephen Sondheim, Benjamin Britten, Jake Heggie, and Mark Adamo.

About Virginia Opera

Virginia Opera, now 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. Main stage 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 or call 866.673.7282.

2018–19 Virginia Opera Season Subscriptions

Virginia Opera’s last 2018–2019, 44th Season offering is Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*. Tickets are available in Norfolk, Richmond, and Fairfax. Call the VO Box Office today at 866.673.7282, or visit us at vaopera.org.

Madama Butterfly Statewide Performance Schedule

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

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
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