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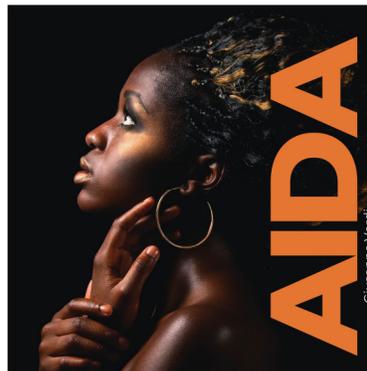
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VIRGINIA OPERA PRESENTS VERDI'S EPIC, AIDA
FINAL MAIN STAGE PRODUCTION OF VO 45th ANNIVERSARY SEASON
ENJOYS TWO-VENUE RUN IN NORFOLK & RICHMOND



NORFOLK, VA (February 18, 2020) — Virginia Opera, *The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, announces the fourth and final main stage production in the company's 2019-2020, 45th anniversary season—composer **Giuseppe Verdi's** epic, *Aida*. The four-act opera is presented in a two-venue presentation beginning with Friday evening, Sunday matinee, and Monday evening performances (**March 20, 22, & 23, 2020**), at the Edythe C. and Stanley L. Harrison Opera House (**Norfolk**), and Friday and Sunday performances (**March 27 & 29**) at the Carpenter Theatre at Dominion Energy Center (**Richmond**). **GMU Center for the Arts (Fairfax)** area audience members interested in attending a performance are offered a special day trip to Richmond for the matinee on Sunday, March 29. Details and tickets are available through the VO box office at 866.673.7282. Last performed by Virginia Opera in 2011, *Aida* will be sung in Italian with English supertitles.

Set in ancient Egypt, Verdi's *Aida* (1871) is the story of an enslaved Ethiopian princess who captures the heart of her Egyptian conqueror, dividing allegiances and setting in motion what is arguably among the world's most recognized narratives of undying love. *Aida* remains among the most popular and canonical operas of all time. Virginia Opera's 2020 staging of it revealing both its sprawling scope and deeply personal tragedy in the form of three of Verdi's most famous and captivating arias, "*Celeste Aida*," "*O Patria Mia*," and, "*Ritorna vincitor*," along with

the opera's beguiling portrayal of its ancient and exoticized world. Originally commissioned to celebrate the opening of Cairo's Khedivial Opera House, *Aida* first debuted in Egypt on December 24, 1871.

The 2020 VO production of *Aida* sees **Lillian Groag** in her second appearance as stage director in 2019-2020 (her twenty-sixth with the VO during her history with the company), as it welcomes the debuts of soprano **Laquita Mitchell** in the title role, tenor **Brian Cheney** as Radamès, and **Joshua Jeremiah** as Amonasro. Making his return to the VO stage, the company welcomes back bass-baritone **Ashraf Sewailam** as Ramfis. The production sees former Herndon Foundation Emerging Artist Program mezzo-soprano **Leah Heater** in the role of Amneris.

Virginia Opera Artistic Director Adam Turner returns to the podium to conduct the **Richmond Symphony Orchestra**, and the production also features the talented corps of **The Richmond Ballet** and an unprecedented 40-voice **Virginia Opera Chorus**. Dr. Glenn Winters will present his "Opera Up Close" pre-curtain talk forty-five minutes before each performance.

Maestro Turner: "If there is a grander finale to celebrate this memorable Virginia Opera 45th season than *Aida*, I cannot imagine it. It is as advertised: a masterpiece and the spectacle of opera on its grandest scale, and yet, it focuses on the most basic of human emotions—love. Despite its historically epic scale and some rather legendary past stagings, it is really the push/pull of power and conquest pitted against the intimacy of attraction and longing that give *Aida* its true grandeur, and it is this and yet another of Verdi's musical triumphs that have kept audiences rapt by and returning to it for so long."

Virginia Opera President and CEO, Russell P. Allen: "With this production, Virginia Opera presents a popular work that our audience members have not had a chance to enjoy in almost a decade. Also, with this production, the Opera concludes yet another remarkable season featuring a stellar set of opera titles that have been nothing less than sheer artistic successes. It is exciting to present such a masterwork as *Aida* as my final production as President and CEO, particularly with this grand production and our outstanding cast. As I conclude my fifteen years of service to this a great opera company, I am grateful, honored, and privileged that we've been able to maintain Virginia Opera's long-standing tradition of featuring incredible emerging talent and nurturing these emerging artist as they develop their expertise in their craft. It has truly been a privilege to serve amongst such a group of incredibly talented people who are regularly making Virginia Opera the leading opera company that it is today. It has also been my privilege to have helped provide the best productions possible for the best audience members for which one could ever hope. A great partnership with the incredibly talented artistic leadership of Adam Turner has ensured the quality level that our audiences expect. I know Virginia Opera will continue to bring the finest opera to the Commonwealth for many years to come."

Virginia Opera's 45th Anniversary Season (2019-2020)

***Tosca* – Giacomo Puccini**

Norfolk - OCT 4, 6 & 8, 2019 | Fairfax - OCT 12 & 13, 2019 | Richmond - OCT 18 & 20, 2019

***Il Postino (The Postman)* – Daniel Catán**

Norfolk - NOV 8, 10 & 12, 2019 | Fairfax - NOV 16 & 17, 2019 | Richmond - NOV 22 & 24, 2019

***Cinderella (La Cenerentola)* – Gioachino Rossini**

Norfolk - JAN 31, FEB 2 & 4, 2020 | Fairfax - FEB 15 & 16, 2020 | Richmond - FEB 21 & 23, 2020

***Aida* – Giuseppe Verdi**

Norfolk - MAR 20, 22 & 23, 2020 | Richmond - MAR 27 & 29, 2020

Ticket Information

Tickets for all productions are on sale now for performances in Norfolk and Richmond starting as low as \$25. 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 45th 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 or call 866.673.7282.

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