



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Virginia Opera Presents *VARIATIONS: Opera for Here & Now*—Contemporary Works Performed by the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists**

**NORFOLK, VA (February 06, 2020)** — Virginia Opera, *The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, announces ***VARIATIONS: Opera for Here & Now***, a semi-staged concert performance to be presented on **Wednesday, February 12, 7:00 p.m.**, at the **Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center, Virginia Wesleyan University**.

With seven compositions represented, *VARIATIONS: Opera for Here & Now* provides engaging selections that highlight opera as a constantly evolving art form, showcasing the next generation of opera through works by new composers performed by members of Virginia Opera's own **Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program**.

The evening's performance will feature two scenes from operas by composer **Jake Heggie**, including Sister Helen's aria "This Journey," from the first act of his groundbreaking work, *Dead Man Walking* (2000), as well as "Bea's aria," from *Three Decembers*. Other works include "I Want Magic!" from **André Previn's** *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998); selections from **Stephen Sondheim's** 1987 work *Into the Woods*; scenes from two operas premiered in 2016, **Gregory Spears's** *Fellow Travelers* and **Evan Mack's** *Roscoe*; as well as **John Musto's** *Later the Same Evening* (2007).

**Shelby Rhoades, Principal Coach and Director of Emerging Artists** will accompany the program, **Kyle Lang** (whose work for the VO includes his current role as main stage director for *Cinderella*) will provide staging and directorial guidance, and **Virginia Opera Artistic Director Adam Turner** will serve as emcee, setting up all of the numbers for the audience to enjoy.

Of *VARIATIONS: Opera for Here & Now*, Maestro Turner offers: "For those familiar with our Virginia Opera "Arias and Duets" format, this very special evening of performances will be similar in treatment— a semi-staged concert in an intimate setting with some background provided for those who may not have experienced some, or even any, of these amazing works of contemporary opera. For those curious about the truly breathtaking work that is being accomplished in the modern era, this hour-long performance will provide an experience of new

composers and our amazing ensemble of Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists that, as I always say, will only leave you wanting more.”

Virginia Opera’s *Variations Series* is presented with support from Virginia Eye Consultants.

**Performance tickets are \$20 each, and can be purchased at [VAOPERA.ORG](http://VAOPERA.ORG) or 866.673.7282**

**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](http://vaopera.org) or call 866.673.7282.

**About the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program**

The Virginia Opera Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program provides training, performance opportunities, and access to industry connections and resources to a group of opera’s talented rising stars. As one of the most competitive training programs in the nation, the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program receives over 650 applicants annually for an average of 12-20 artist contracts. Led by Shelby Rhoades, Virginia Opera Principal Coach and Director of the Emerging Artists Program, Emerging Artists appear in Virginia Opera mainstage productions, tour in fully-staged educational programs, and perform in recitals, donor events, and the VO Master Teacher Series. In addition, Emerging Artists receive regular coachings with VO’s artistic staff, including Artistic Director Adam Turner, as well as guest conductors and mainstage artists. Recent alumni of the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program include: Megan Marino, David Blalock, Courtney Miller, David Pershall, Brian Jagde, Jeni Houser, Shannon Jennings-Holman, and Nathan Stark.

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