

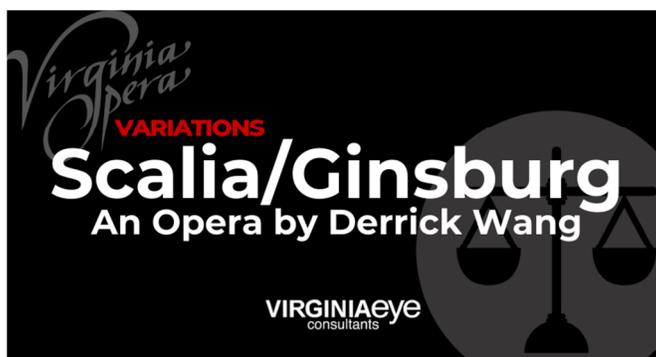


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Virginia Opera Presents One-Night-Only *VARIATIONS* Series
Performance of *Scalia/Ginsburg* in Norfolk



VO VARIATIONS Series productions feature contemporary works performed by both main stage artists and current members of the company's Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program

NORFOLK, VA (March 06, 2020) — Virginia Opera, *The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, announces a special one-night-only Virginia Opera *VARIATIONS* series performance of composer/librettist **Derrick Wang's** critically lauded comic opera, *Scalia/Ginsburg*, on **Saturday, April 4, at 7:00 p.m.** at the **Harrison Opera House, Norfolk**.

Inspired by the unlikely friendship of **Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Antonin Scalia**, the highly popular one-act features actual lines from each of the justices' opinions and speeches, as it provides musical nods to the works of such composers as **Handel, Mozart, Puccini, Verdi**, and others. Written on a contemporary American topic, composed in a highly accessible musical language, and featuring numerous references to famous operas, *Scalia/Ginsburg* is intended to delight both first-time and long-time opera and theatergoers alike.

As the next production in the VO's ongoing *VARIATIONS* series, *Scalia/Ginsburg* once again provides Virginia Opera audiences an engaging selection that highlights opera as a constantly evolving art form, showcasing the next generation of opera through works by new composers as

performed by the Opera's main stage artists and regularly featuring current members of Virginia Opera's own **Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program**.

The VO presentation of *Scalia/Ginsburg* will be directed by **Haley Stamats**, whose 2019-2020 VO season credits began with her assistant direction of *Tosca, Il Postino* and *Aida*. **VO Artistic Director Adam Turner** will conduct the evening's chamber ensemble. The role of Justice Antonin Scalia will be portrayed by tenor **Benjamin Werley**, previously seen on Virginia stages in the 2018-2019 VO production of *Street Scene*, and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg will be played by soprano **Alyssa Martin**, who recently charmed Virginia main stage audiences as the lead character, Angelina, in the opera's 2020 production of *Cinderella (La Cenerentola)*. The Commentator will be played by bass-baritone Andrew Simpson, a current member of the Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program who has performed in this season's main stage productions of *Tosca* and *Il Postino*.

VO Artistic Director, Maestro Adam Turner: "The saying that 'dynamite comes in small packages' could not be more accurate than when it comes to *Scalia/Ginsburg*. And, as we draw to the close of the Virginia Opera's 2019-2020 season and begin the run-up to the forthcoming national election cycle, nothing could be more appropriate than staging this amazingly compact yet explosively smart and cheeky work. With both incredible humor and sensitivity to its subjects, Derrick Wang has captured a kind of *zeitgeist* in the US right now through the portrayal of two very real and incredibly important figures in our judicial system, who despite having championed very opposite ideological viewpoints, always remained great friends. On top of that you have Derrick's deft compositional style and use of quotation of some of the greatest canonical operatic works—which somehow reflects a canny nod to legendary opera works as kinds of 'official precedents' to be re-explored to contemporary ends, just as it pays homage to the fact that both justices are renowned for their love of opera. There's a lot packed into this work in sixty minutes, but it's a breathtaking and joyful ride."

Scalia/Ginsburg is sung in English with English supertitles with a running time of one hour and is presented by special arrangement with Consequent Music. Orchestra provided by members of the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

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 or 866.673.7282

About Derrick Wang

Composer, writer, and creator of *Scalia/Ginsburg*, Derrick Wang is an interdisciplinary thinker who demonstrates the power of the arts to transcend intellectual and ideological divides. His scholarly work has been published in academia (the *Columbia Journal of Law and the Arts*), featured in legal periodicals (e.g. *ABA Journal*, *Landslide*), and cited on network television (*Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*). His creative work has been featured in national news outlets ranging from *The Wall Street Journal* to MSNBC, among other outlets, and, as a speaker and pianist, has given talks and recitals for artists, judges, and lawmakers across the political spectrum. As a composer, Wang has received awards from musical organizations including ASCAP and BMI. His compositions have been presented by artists and groups including the American Modern Ensemble, Baltimore Concert Opera, Castleton Festival, Glimmerglass Festival, Maryland Opera Studio, Opera Delaware, Opera Naples, Opera North, Philharmonia Orchestra of

Yale, Washington National Opera, and others. As a librettist and lyricist, Wang has served as a Resident Composer–Librettist at American Lyric Theater among his other accomplishments. He received his A.B. *magna cum laude*, Phi Beta Kappa, from Harvard University and his M.M. in music composition on a Richardson Scholarship from the Yale School of Music. He serves on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory of The Johns Hopkins University, where he designs and teaches interdisciplinary courses in music and law.

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.

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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