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**VIRGINIA OPERA REVISES SCHEDULE OF 2020–2021 SEASON PRODUCTIONS: OPENER *RIGOLETTO* CANCELLED; REVISED TRIO OF PERFORMANCE OFFERINGS TO BEGIN FEBRUARY 2021 WITH DOUBLE BILL *LA VOIX HUMAINE/GIANNI SCHICCHI* TO REPLACE COMPANY DEBUT OF *COLD MOUNTAIN*; MOZART’S *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* AS SCHEDULED; AND *THE PIRATES OF PENZANCE* RESCHEDULED TO APRIL 2021**

***Virginia Opera makes major changes to offerings and events in continuing response to effects of COVID-19***

Hampton Roads, Richmond, Fairfax, VA (June 30, 2020)—Today, Virginia Opera, *The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, announces an overhaul of the company’s previously announced main stage opera schedule for the 2020-2021 “Love is a Battlefield” season due to ongoing effects and circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of revisions affecting every facet of the company’s operations both on and off stage were required, including debuting the 2020–2021 Season offerings in February 2021, with an attenuated three-production statewide schedule between February 5, and April 25, 2021.

Giuseppe Verdi’s *Rigoletto*, formerly the company’s lead-off October 2020 production, will not be performed; Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance* will be rescheduled from November 2020 to April 2021; and the VO season will now begin in February 2021 with the change of a double bill featuring Francis Poulenc’s *La Voix Humaine* and Giacomo Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi* performed in place of Jennifer Higdon and Gene Scheer’s *Cold Mountain*. The realignment of performance dates and the shifting of one VO production to spring has also necessitated some changes in casting and resulted in *The Pirates of Penzance* only being performed in Norfolk and Richmond. Details of these changes will all be posted on Virginia Opera’s website, [vaopera.org](http://vaopera.org).

**Virginia Opera Artistic Director, Adam Turner:** “As we are so well aware at this stage, the COVID-19 pandemic has forced nearly every performing arts organization throughout the globe into re-positioning their offerings and rearranging or canceling productions in their seasons—ours is no exception. The sheer safety concerns for our audiences, performers, and staff; the travel restrictions imposed on our artists;

the new social distancing needs required both onstage and throughout the theater present myriad uncertainties and restrictions, and all of these factors have led us to this difficult decision. Although altered, artistically, the season remains an incredible line-up and includes what is an exciting new addition to our repertoire with *La Voix Humaine*. We, of course, share everyone's disappointment in the loss of both *Rigoletto* and *Cold Mountain*, but, rest assured, they will be included in our planning for future seasons. We will have our time to enjoy them anew."

The VO also remains committed to presenting and creating quality educational experiences—both online and in person—for students and educational partners throughout Virginia. Based on the current restrictions in school protocols, VO has elected to postpone its fall in-school education program of *Pinocchio*, which will be rescheduled to soon-to-be announced performance dates in the spring of 2021.

**Virginia Opera's President and CEO, Russell Allen:** "Despite best efforts, Virginia Opera simply could not see a clear and definite way to safely perform the 2020-2021 Season as planned. As much as we want to gather again in our theaters across the Commonwealth, it is clear that we cannot sufficiently assure our audiences, our artists, our Orchestras, or our staff itself an experience that would allow all that an afternoon or evening at the opera can truly be under these trying circumstances. These significant changes to our plans are absolutely necessary, and we thank everyone for their understanding in that realization."

NOTE: Current subscribers to the 2020-2021 Season are encouraged to contact the Virginia Opera Box Office to discuss available options for their *Rigoletto* tickets. The Box Office can be reached at [info@vaopera.org](mailto:info@vaopera.org) or by calling the temporary line 757-347-1906.

### **Virginia Opera 2020-2021 Production Overview**

#### ***La Voix Humaine* – Francis Poulenc**

If breaking up is hard to do, Francis Poulenc's intimate one-act, one-soprano operatic adaptation of Jean Cocteau's 1928 play manages to grab hold of that truth by its very soul. A young woman, a one-sided phone conversation, *La Voix* allows us to eavesdrop as the agony of love lost is fully illuminated in a spotlight shone on a single human heart. In her VO mainstage debut, soprano **Jessica E. Jones** performs the role of Elle. Sung in French with English supertitles.

#### ***Gianni Schicchi* – Giacomo Puccini**

Is true love even possible? In this case, yes—as long as you are willing to pose as a dead guy and falsify some documents to smooth the way. But, of course, when has the path of true love *ever* been smooth, much less with a will in the mix. *Gianni Schicchi* treats audiences to twists, turns and more than a few laughs along the way, and includes one of Puccini's most beloved and breathtaking arias: "O mio babbino caro" (Google it and see!). **Troy Cook** sings the title role, **Benjamin Werley** the role of Rinuccio, and **Jessica E. Jones** returns to the evening's stage to play Rinuccio's love interest, Lauretta. Sung in Italian with English supertitles.

**DOUBLE BILL: Norfolk - FEB 5, 7 & 9, 2021 | Fairfax - FEB 13 & 14, 2021 | Richmond - FEB 19 & 21, 2021**

#### ***The Marriage of Figaro (Le nozze di Figaro)* – W.A. Mozart**

Just the kind of mad and frantic bedroom farce of which guilty (and not-so-guilty) pleasures are made. Full of scheming and wooing, flirting and folly, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro's* joyful and absurd twists pile the truly outrageous on top of the joyfully scandalous to provide what we all wish for—the very happiest of endings. Driven by the music of Mozart at his most spirited in collaboration with his entrusted librettist,

Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Figaro* promises captivating performances that will leave you walking on air. *Figaro* will welcome esteemed Stage Director **Lawrence Edelson** to the VO stage, just as the company welcomes back, as Count Almaviva, bass-baritone **Richard Ollarsaba**—Raimondo in the VO’s 2018 production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Making their VO mainstage debuts are Argentinian bass-baritone **Federico De Michelis** as Figaro and **Vanessa Becerra** as Susanna. Sung in Italian with English Supertitles.

**Norfolk - MAR 12, 14 & 16, 2021 | Fairfax - MAR 20 & 21, 2021 | Richmond - MAR 26 & 28, 2021**

***The Pirates of Penzance* – W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan**

A young apprentice pirate with no stomach for a future of piracy is due to be released from his required service on his twenty-first birthday... Trouble is, fate might just intervene with the plan. With his newly found sweetheart, a long-winded but well-intentioned father, and a Pirate King boss with his own merry band of buccaneers, *Pirates* presents a timeless comedic romp. Hijinks and hilarity don’t miss a beat, and love works to win the day. Tenor **David Blalock** (Frederic) and soprano **Jeni Houser** (Mabel)—both **Herndon Foundation Emerging Artists Program alumni**—headline the cast for the production. Sung in English with English supertitles.

**Norfolk – APR 16, 18 & 20, 2021 | Richmond - APR 23 & 25, 2021**

**Subscription Information**

Subscription tickets for all 3 productions are on sale now for performances in Norfolk and Richmond starting as low as \$56.25. Subscriptions for performances at George Mason University’s Center for the Arts will go on sale later this fall. 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., was founded in 1974, 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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