



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2016

## Washington National Opera

Francesca Zambello, Artistic Director  
announces its

### 2016–2017 SEASON

*The Marriage of Figaro*  
*The Daughter of the Regiment*  
*Dead Man Walking*  
*Champion*  
*Madame Butterfly*

**Plus, American Opera Initiative Festival,  
*Justice at the Opera* with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg,  
two Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performances,  
the return of M&M'S® *Opera in the Outfield*,  
special concerts, and more**

(WASHINGTON)—Washington National Opera (WNO), led by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello, today announced its 2016–2017 season, one that continues its focus on classic, contemporary, and American works. The season includes Mozart’s comic masterpiece *The Marriage of Figaro*, Donizetti’s charming *The Daughter of the Regiment*, a festival weekend of four world premieres as part of the American Opera Initiative, the company premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally’s *Dead Man Walking*, the East Coast premiere of Terence Blanchard and Michael Cristofer’s “opera in jazz” *Champion*, and an eye-popping staging of Puccini’s beloved classic, *Madame Butterfly*. The season also includes the return of M&M'S® *Opera in the Outfield*, WNO’s largest community program, plus two special Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist performances and other vocal events.

“Our next season at WNO will showcase the breadth of opera at its most exhilarating, with a diverse mix of classic, contemporary, and American works. Plus, our audiences will experience fresh, never-before-seen-in-Washington stagings of each production in our season,” said Ms. Zambello. “I am particularly excited about our weekend festival of four new American works to celebrate the fifth season of our American Opera Initiative, and our two new American operas running in repertory next spring. These new operas are balanced with classics by Mozart, Donizetti, and Puccini in engaging and new theatrical productions. I hope these programming choices show WNO’s dedication to its role as the national opera company and its firm commitment to showcasing the best in American artistry.”

### Washington National Opera 2016–2017 Season Schedule

Performance Dates	Theater	Production
September 22–October 2, 2016	Opera House	<i>The Marriage of Figaro</i>
November 12–20, 2016	Opera House	<i>The Daughter of the Regiment</i>
January 13–15, 2017	Family Theater	American Opera Initiative Festival
February 25–March 11, 2017	Opera House	<i>Dead Man Walking</i>
March 4–18, 2017	Opera House	<i>Champion</i>
March 9, 2017	Opera House	<i>Justice at the Opera</i> with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg
May 6–21, 2017	Opera House	<i>Madame Butterfly</i>

#### *The Marriage of Figaro*

WNO’s 2016–2017 season opens with one of opera’s most enduring and beloved classics: Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, September 22 to October 2, 2016 in the Opera House. *The Marriage of Figaro* tells an upstairs/downstairs story of love, lust, seduction, infidelity, and ultimately, forgiveness, all set to some of the most sublime and memorable music ever written.

The cast is led by rising star soprano Amanda Majeski in her WNO debut as the Countess, a role she has sung to great acclaim at the Metropolitan Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Another rising star soprano, Lisette Oropesa, sings the first of her two starring roles in the WNO season as the wily Susanna. Baritone Joshua Hopkins, who delighted audiences in 2014’s *The Magic Flute*, returns as Count Almaviva. Bass-baritone Ryan McKinny, soon to be seen in WNO’s *Ring Cycle*, is the handsome valet Figaro. Two alumni of WNO’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program also return for featured roles: mezzo-soprano Aleksandra Romano is the lovestruck page Cherubino and bass-baritone Valeriano Lanchas is Don Bartolo. Rounding out the cast are WNO veteran mezzo-soprano Elizabeth Bishop as Marcellina and tenor Keith Jameson in his WNO debut as Don Basilio.

James Gaffigan, chief conductor of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and the principal guest conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, makes his WNO debut leading the WNO Orchestra in interpreting Mozart's effervescent score. The production, adapted from The Glimmerglass Festival, is directed by Peter Kazaras (WNO's *La bohème*, 2014).

WNO continues its partnership with the Washington Nationals with an **M&M'S® Opera in the Outfield** presentation of *The Marriage of Figaro* on Saturday, September 24, 2016 at Nationals Park. Gates will open at 5 p.m. for "pregame" activities for the entire family, and the opera will be broadcast live from the Kennedy Center Opera House to the high-definition NatsHD scoreboard at 7 p.m. Free seating will be available on the outfield grass and in the stands. More information on this popular family event will be announced in the coming months.

A special **Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance** of *The Marriage of Figaro* is presented in the Opera House on Saturday, October 1, 2016 and features current singers and alumni of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. Complete casting for this special performance will be announced later this year.

### **The Daughter of the Regiment**

WNO's season continues with a new production of Donizetti's delightful comedy *The Daughter of the Regiment*, November 12–20, 2016 in the Opera House. The opera, a rollicking combination of slapstick comedy and innocent romance, is best known for the vocal acrobatics required of its singers. Sharing the role of Tonio, who must sing the daunting nine high Cs in the show-stopping aria "Ah, mes amis," are American tenors Lawrence Brownlee, a favorite of WNO audiences last seen in 2009's *The Barber of Seville*, and Juan José De León in his WNO debut. Sharing the role of Marie, the spunky canteen girl adopted by the entire regiment, are sopranos Lisette Oropesa, fresh off her role in WNO's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Andriana Chuchman, who charmed audiences in WNO's *Show Boat* in 2013. In-demand bass Kevin Burdette is the bumbling Sulpice in his WNO debut, and mezzo-soprano Deborah Nansteel, a former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist, returns as the Marquise of Birkenfeld. The brand-new WNO production is directed by acclaimed Broadway director and choreographer Robert Longbottom, and the WNO Orchestra is led by rising conductor Christopher Allen, both in their WNO debuts.

## **American Opera Initiative Festival**

To celebrate the fifth season of the American Opera Initiative, WNO's comprehensive commissioning program to stimulate, enrich, and ensure the future of contemporary American opera, WNO will for the first time host an **American Opera Initiative Festival** weekend featuring all four world premieres in the season's program, January 13–15, 2017 in the Family Theater.

Following the sold-out success of *Approaching Ali* (2013), *An American Soldier* (2014), *Penny* (2015), and *Better Gods* (2016), WNO is proud to present the world premiere of ***The Dictator's Wife***, a new hour-long opera by American composer Mohammed Fairouz and librettist Mohammed Hanif, based on Hanif's acclaimed play of the same title, on January 13 and 15, 2017. Fairouz, born in 1985, is one of the most frequently performed, commissioned, and recorded composers working today. His fourth symphony, *In the Shadow of No Towers* for wind ensemble, about American life in the aftermath of 9/11, premiered in 2013 at Carnegie Hall. He became the youngest composer on the Deutsche Grammophon label to have an album dedicated to his works with the 2015 release of *Follow, Poet*. Hanif's first novel, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008), was shortlisted for the 2008 Guardian First Book Award and longlisted for the 2008 Man Booker Prize; he is also a regular Contributing Op-Ed Writer for the *New York Times*. *The Dictator's Wife* will be conducted by Nicole Paiement, who led the WNO Orchestra in *The Little Prince* in 2014.

The popular **Three 20-Minute Operas**, featuring the work of three new composer-librettist teams, will be presented at two performances on January 14, 2017, conducted by Steven Osgood, the general and artistic director of the Chautauqua Opera Company and the conductor of the forthcoming world premiere opera *JFK* at Fort Worth Opera. The season's three new operas will focus on themes and values related to the Kennedy Center's 2016–2017 centennial celebration of President Kennedy. More information on the composer-librettist teams, as well the mentors who will work with the artists during the 2016–2017 season, will be announced in the coming months.

## **Dead Man Walking and Champion in repertory,** **plus Justice at the Opera with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg**

As part of the Kennedy Center's celebration of the Centennial of President Kennedy, WNO has selected two modern American operas to play in repertory in the Opera House to explore the themes of social justice that are often associated with his presidency: Jake Heggie and Terrence

McNally's *Dead Man Walking*, February 25 to March 11, 2017, and Terence Blanchard and Michael Cristofer's *Champion*, March 4–18, 2017. Using many of the same designers and scenic elements, the directors of each opera have worked collaboratively to create two distinct worlds that will showcase the issues of justice, courage, and freedom at the heart of these two compelling stories.

*Dead Man Walking* is based on Sister Helen Prejean's 1993 memoir, which tells of her time working with death row inmates at Louisiana State Penitentiary and of a particular relationship she developed with one of the inmates, Joseph De Rocher. The opera explores the human conflicts posed by society's demands for vengeance and the Christian imperative for forgiveness and love. The lyrical score by composer Jake Heggie (WNO's *Moby-Dick*, 2014) is widely regarded as a modern classic, while Terrence McNally's balanced libretto has been called one of the most perfect librettos of an American opera ever written.

*Dead Man Walking* is one of the most performed of new American operas. Since its world premiere at San Francisco Opera in 2000, it has been staged internationally in more than 40 productions on five continents; it has also received two live recordings. Sister Helen's memoir was also the subject of a celebrated 1995 film starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn.

The extraordinary young mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey, who has been seen in many productions at the Metropolitan Opera and is known to Washington audiences for her thrilling work in Washington Concert Opera's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and the recent *La favorite*, makes her WNO and role debut as Sister Helen. Baritone Michael Mayes, a favorite of composer Jake Heggie, makes his WNO debut in his signature role of death row inmate Joseph De Rocher. Susan Graham, the superstar mezzo-soprano who originated the lead role of Sister Helen in the opera's world premiere, returns to WNO's new production to captivate audiences as Joseph's mother, Mrs. De Rocher. Former Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist soprano Jacqueline Echols is Sister Helen's colleague Sister Rose, and baritone Robert Orth is Owen Hart, the father of the murdered girl, a role he also performed in the opera's world premiere. Francesca Zambello directs, and conductor Michael Christie, the sought-after music director of the Minnesota Opera, leads the WNO Orchestra in his WNO debut.

In *Champion*, five-time Grammy Award<sup>®</sup>-winning composer Terence Blanchard uses jazz as the basis for his cinematic, groundbreaking score; Pulitzer Prize winner Michael Cristofer's libretto ably tells the true story of Emile Griffith, a professional boxer from the U.S. Virgin Islands who threw a fatal punch in the boxing ring in 1962 after being taunted for his sexuality by his rival. Using a diverse soundscape along with powerful multimedia elements,

*Champion* explores issues of race, sexuality, and self-discovery. The opera had its world premiere at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2013.

Distinguished worldwide for his searing portrayals of some of opera's most complex characters, the towering bass Arthur Woodley originated the lead role of boxing legend Emile Griffith at *Champion*'s premiere and reprises it for WNO. Also repeating his role from the premiere is rising bass-baritone Aubrey Allicock, who plays Young Emile in his WNO debut. Singing the role of Emile's mother, Emelda, is renowned mezzo-soprano and WNO favorite Denyce Graves, an alumna of D.C.'s Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Tenor Victor Ryan Robertson is Emile's rival, Benny Paret, in his WNO debut, while baritone Robert Orth is Howie Albert and in-demand contralto Meredith Arwady makes her WNO debut as Kathy Hagan. The production is led by director James Robinson, the artistic director of the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and conductor George Manahan, the music director of Portland Opera, both of whom were involved in *Champion*'s world premiere production.

The work of Terence Blanchard will be featured in other aspects of the Kennedy Center's 2016–2017 season as part of a special series of programming called *Terence Blanchard All-In*. His residency builds on his multi-faceted talents to offer a year-long arc of programming that also includes collaborations with the National Symphony Orchestra (Spring 2017 in the Concert Hall), the Kennedy Center's theater department (the world premiere of a work for young audiences, *Bud, Not Buddy*, January 9–15, 2017 in the Eisenhower Theater), as well as a headlining appearance with his band The E-Collective (October 22, 2016 in The Crossroads Club) and a mentorship role in the Kennedy Center's education programs in District of Columbia Public Schools.

Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg—a longtime WNO fan and patron—will be joined by WNO Artistic Director and host Francesca Zambello for a special one-night-only event: *Justice at the Opera*, Thursday, March 9, 2017 in the Opera House. The program features a lively balance of performance and commentary, with members of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program enacting selected opera scenes and arias that deal with law and justice, followed by Justice Ginsburg's engaging insights. This unique event is a perfect companion to WNO's productions of *Dead Man Walking* and *Champion*.

### **Madame Butterfly**

WNO's 2016–2017 concludes with the return of one of the most beloved operas in the repertory, Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, May 6–21, 2017 in the Opera House. Featuring some of the most

enduring and memorable music in all of opera, this production also features dazzling sets and costumes by production designer Jun Kaneko, whose dramatic designs for WNO's 2014 production of *The Magic Flute* dazzled audiences. This new-to-Washington production from San Francisco Opera and Opera Omaha is directed by Leslie Swackhamer and conducted by WNO Music Director Philippe Auguin.

Heading the cast are two beloved sopranos in the title role: Ermonela Jaho, who has sung this signature role in opera houses from London to Paris to Berlin and makes her WNO debut with these performances, and Hei-Kyung Hong, a favorite at the Metropolitan Opera, who will make her role debut in this production. The dual casts also include two rising-star tenors making their WNO debuts as Lt. Pinkerton, Brian Jagde and Dimitri Pittas. Baritones Troy Cook and Trevor Scheunemann (an alumnus of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program) share the role of Sharpless, while Suzuki is sung by the gifted young mezzo-soprano Kristen Choi and Goro is sung by the young tenor Ian McEuen.

A special **Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance** of *Madame Butterfly* is presented in the Opera House on Friday, May 19, 2017 and features current singers and alumni of WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program. Complete casting for this special performance will be announced in the coming months.

### **Other Special Vocal Events of the 2016–2017 Season**

WNO's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists will join the WNO Orchestra for their annual *Stars of Tomorrow* concert on Friday, March 17, 2017 in the Opera House. This annual tradition features a program of favorite opera scenes and arias.

Named after the groundbreaking African-American contralto, the Kennedy Center's **Marian Anderson Vocal Award** recognizes a young American singer with outstanding promise for a significant career. In addition to a cash prize and an educational residency at Washington's Duke Ellington School of the Arts, the winner performs in a recital co-presented by WNO and the Kennedy Center's Fortas Chamber Music Series. This year's recipient, gifted soprano **Janai Brugger**, recently portrayed Micaëla in WNO's *Carmen* (2015) and was named by *Opera News* as one of its top 25 "brilliant young artists." In this intimate recital on Thursday, September 8, 2016 in the Family Theater, Brugger will showcase the vocal artistry that won her this prestigious prize.

The Kennedy Center presents a special performance by **Chanticleer, hosted by Mason Bates**, Tuesday, May 2, 2017 in the Eisenhower Theater. Hailed as "the world's reigning male

chorus” by the *New Yorker*, Grammy Award®–winning a cappella ensemble Chanticleer is known for the seamless blend of its 12 male voices and original interpretations of vocal literature, from Renaissance to jazz to popular contemporary compositions. In a program hosted by genre-defying Kennedy Center Composer-in-Residence Mason Bates, the San Francisco-based super-group will perform the world premiere of a new Kennedy Center co-commissioned work composed by Bates.

Superstar American mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** comes to the Kennedy Center for two special vocal events in the 2016–2017 season. She performs with the **Brentano String Quartet** on Wednesday, October 5, 2016 to kick off the new Fortas Chamber Music season. Vocal works on the program include songs by R. Strauss and *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, which composer Jake Heggie wrote especially for DiDonato.

Ms. DiDonato also headlines a special concert performance of *Ariodante* on Tuesday, May 2, 2017 in the Concert Hall, co-presented with Washington Performing Arts and Vocal Arts DC. DiDonato sings the title role in Handel’s passionate Italian opera of love, vengeance, and deceit in medieval Scotland, which she has performed and recorded to great acclaim. World-renowned conductor Harry Bicket leads the period-instrument orchestra The English Concert; the performance also features soprano Christiane Karg as Ginevra, tenor David Portillo (Prince Ramiro in WNO’s *Cinderella*, 2015) as Lurcanio, soprano Joëlle Harvey as Dalinda, baritone Matthew Brook as the King of Scotland, and contralto Sonia Prina as Polinesso.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Subscription renewals and new subscriptions to WNO’s 2016–2017 season are available now. To purchase a subscription, patrons should call the Subscription Office at (202) 416-8500 or go to [www.kennedy-center.org/subscriptions](http://www.kennedy-center.org/subscriptions). Subscriptions may be purchased in advance of general on-sale dates, which will be announced soon. Groups of 20 or more may contact the Kennedy Center Group Sales office at (202) 416-8400.

*Artists and performances are subject to change*

## The 2016–2017 Season

### *The Marriage of Figaro*

(*Le nozze di Figaro*)

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

September 22–October 2, 2016

The barber of Seville is getting hitched today! Handsome Figaro, now the personal valet to Count Almaviva, is head over heels for sweet Susanna, the Countess's maid. It's certainly a day of madness in the palace—especially with the Count's lustful designs on the bride-to-be. So Figaro hatches a plan to outfox his master and expose his wandering ways with a barrage of humiliating tricks. Soon everyone is involved in the farcical antics, from a vengeful doctor and his matronly housekeeper to a bumbling teenage page.

Mozart's breathlessly paced comic masterpiece—one of the world's all-time favorites based on French playwright Beaumarchais's "sequel" to *The Barber of Seville*—comes to vibrant life through enchanting music marked by glorious arias, tender duets, and of course the celebrated effervescent overture. Clever disguises and absurd mix-ups keep the laughs and surprises coming in this charming exploration of the perils of temptation, the grace of forgiveness, and the triumph of love.

Production adapted from The Glimmerglass Festival

In Italian with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Thursday, September 22, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 24, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.<sup>o</sup>

Monday, September 26, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, September 28, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, September 30, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 1, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.<sup>†</sup>

Sunday, October 2, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

Countess Almaviva: Amanda Majeski<sup>\*</sup>

Susanna: Lisette Oropesa<sup>\*</sup>

Count Almaviva: Joshua Hopkins

Figaro: Ryan McKinny

Cherubino: Aleksandra Romano ±

Marcellina: Elizabeth Bishop

Don Bartolo: Valeriano Lanchas ±

Don Basilio: Keith Jameson<sup>\*</sup>

Director: Peter Kazaras

Conductor: James Gaffigan<sup>\*</sup>

Original Scenery Designer: Benoit Dugardyn

Additional Scenery Designer and Costume Designer: Myung Hee Cho<sup>\*</sup>

Lighting Designer: Mark McCullough

Choreographer/Fight Master: Kevin Williamson<sup>\*</sup>

<sup>o</sup> M&M'S® *Opera in the Outfield* performance simulcast to Nationals Park

<sup>†</sup> Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance, casting to be announced

<sup>\*</sup> Washington National Opera debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

# *The Daughter of the Regiment*

Music by Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges and Jean-François Bayard

November 12–20, 2016

Marie is no ordinary canteen girl—she was orphaned on a battlefield and adopted by a squadron of French soldiers she affectionately calls her fathers. All grown up, this spunky young woman is in love with strapping Tonio, a peasant who once saved her life but is still woefully forbidden to ask for her hand. Adding to this troublesome snafu, a mysterious Marquise from Marie’s past has come to whisk her away and raise her as a proper lady. Facing a future of high-society fashions, classical ballet lessons, and a dreaded arranged marriage, what’s a tomboy like Marie to do?

Military might meets aristocratic delight in this stylish production of Donizetti’s masterful *opéra comique*, which blends instantly hummable melodies and flag-waving anthems with innocent romance and plenty of slapstick *faux pas*. Among all the vocal acrobatics, perhaps the most famous is the show-stopping “Ah, mes amis,” sometimes dubbed the “Mount Everest” of arias, requiring the tenor to sing a succession of nine high Cs.

New WNO Production

In French with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, November 12, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 13, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

Monday, November 14, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, November 16, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 17, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, November 18, 2016 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, November 19, 2016 at 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 20, 2016 at 2:00 p.m.

Tonio: Lawrence Brownlee / Juan José De León \*

Marie: Lisette Oropesa / Andriana Chuchman

Sulpice: Kevin Burdette \*

The Marquise of Birkenfeld: Deborah Nansteel ±

Director: Robert Longbottom \*

Conductor: Christopher Allen \*

Set Designer: James Noone

Lighting Designer: Mark McCullough

\* Washington National Opera debut

‡ Member of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

# American Opera Initiative Festival

January 13–15, 2017

WNO's acclaimed commissioning program for contemporary American opera enters its fifth exciting season with four more world premiere presentations featuring Domingo-Cafritz Young Artists and other talented performers.

## *The Dictator's Wife*

Music by Mohammed Fairouz

Libretto by Mohammed Hanif

In this biting satirical work, the glamorous yet tormented wife of a once-powerful third-world dictator bemoans that she is now having to answer for all of the terrible atrocities committed by her husband, who has taken to cowering in the bathroom as their country falls apart. Young American composer-on-the-rise Mohammed Fairouz and prominent Pakistani writer/librettist Mohammed Hanif—whose collaborative opera *Bhutto* has just been selected for a world premiere at Pittsburgh Opera—will develop this semi-staged production based on Hanif's critically acclaimed play of the same title. *The Dictator's Wife* will be conducted by Nicole Paiement (WNO's *The Little Prince*, 2014).

World Premiere

Friday, January 13, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, January 15, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Kennedy Center Family Theater

## Three 20-Minute Operas

Three new 20-minute operas will be staged in a concert performance, accompanied by a small chamber orchestra conducted by Steven Osgood and followed by a Q&A with the artists and creative team. This new season's three operas will focus on themes and values related to the Kennedy Center's 2016–2017 centennial celebration of President Kennedy.

*Complete casts and creative teams to be announced at a later date.*

World Premieres

Saturday, January 14, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Saturday, January 14, 2017 at 9:00 p.m.

Kennedy Center Family Theater

*Part of the John F. Kennedy Centennial Celebration*

# *Dead Man Walking*

Music by Jake Heggie

Libretto by Terrence McNally

February 25–March 11, 2017

Sentenced to die for a double-murder he swears he didn't commit, hardened convict Joseph De Rocher asks a kindhearted nun to help him with one last appeal. Sister Helen Prejean accepts his request, only to begin her own searing journey through the emotional and spiritual ramifications of his supposed crime. As execution day ticks closer, the young nun finds herself empathizing with Joseph's predicament. But once his family and the victims' relatives share their harrowing stories, she struggles to reconcile the paradox of mercy and compassion with society's demand for justice.

Based on Prejean's real-life memoirs, which also inspired the 1995 film, *Dead Man Walking* infuses its score with American popular styles to become an instant modern classic—hailed as one of the most gripping and important operas of the new century at its landmark premiere in 2000.

Company Premiere

New WNO Production

In English with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, February 25, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Monday, February 27, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Friday, March 3, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, March 5, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 11, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

*Part of the John F. Kennedy Centennial Celebration*

Sister Helen Prejean: Kate Lindsey\*

Joseph De Rocher: Michael Mayes\*

Mrs. De Rocher: Susan Graham

Sister Rose: Jacqueline Echols ±

Owen Hart: Robert Orth

Director: Francesca Zambello

Conductor: Michael Christie\*

Set Designer: Allen Moyer

Costume Designer: Jessica Jahn\*

Lighting Designer: Christopher Akerlind

Projection Designer: Greg Emetaz\*

Fight Master: Joe Isenberg

\* Washington National Opera debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

# *Champion*

Music by Terence Blanchard

Libretto by the Michael Cristofer

March 4–18, 2017

“I kill a man and the world forgives me. I love a man and the world wants to kill me.” The story of Emile Griffith—the closeted gay welterweight boxer whose knockout of a homophobic rival led to unexpected tragedy—comes roaring to the stage in this riveting and haunting opera. Through flashback, an aging Emile reflects on his tumultuous life, from his Caribbean upbringing and conflicted sexuality to his meteoric rise in the ring and ensuing decline in health. Battling years of guilt, regret, and denial, he now faces his greatest fight: to come to terms with his true self.

Five-time Grammy<sup>®</sup>–winning jazz powerhouse Terence Blanchard, whose music ranges from film to Broadway to the concert hall, has composed a soulful, groundbreaking score filled with jazz-inflected vocals, bluesy harmonies, and Afro-Caribbean beats. Mixing bold characterizations with visually stunning multimedia and a jazz trio within the orchestra, *Champion* has impressed audiences since its world premiere in 2013.

East Coast Premiere

New WNO Production adapted from  
Opera Theatre of Saint Louis

In English with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

*Part of the John F. Kennedy Centennial Celebration*

Saturday, March 4, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Monday, March 6, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Friday, March 10, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Sunday, March 12, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, March 18, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.

Emile Griffith: Arthur Woodley  
Young Emile: Aubrey Allicock\*  
Emelda Griffith: Denyce Graves  
Benny Paret: Victor Ryan Robertson\*  
Howie Albert: Robert Orth  
Kathy Hagan: Meredith Arwady\*

Director: James Robinson  
Conductor: George Manahan\*  
Set Designer: Allen Moyer  
Costume Designer: James Schuette  
Lighting Designer: Christopher Akerlind  
Projection Designer: Greg Emetaz  
Fight Master: Joe Isenberg

\* Washington National Opera debut

# ***Madame Butterfly***

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

May 6–21, 2017

The sun rises on turn-of-the-century Nagasaki, where dashing American naval officer Pinkerton has chosen delicate Cio-Cio-San to be his bride. A naïve young geisha on the verge of womanhood, the clearly smitten and fiercely loyal “Butterfly” dismisses warnings of the lieutenant’s ulterior motives. When betrayal inevitably strikes and Butterfly must endure both shame and sorrow, she decides to take destiny into her own hands—leading to one of the most devastating and legendary final scenes in all of opera.

This dramatic staging of Puccini’s beloved masterpiece features dazzling sets and costumes by Jun Kaneko, whose kaleidoscopic designs for 2014’s *The Magic Flute* left WNO audiences spellbound. *Madame Butterfly* also soars with some of the most treasured music in all of opera, including the extended Act I love duet and the Act II soprano showcase “Un bel dì.”

Co-Production of San Francisco Opera  
and Opera Omaha

In Italian with projected English titles

Kennedy Center Opera House

Saturday, May 6, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 7, 2017 at 12:30 p.m.  
Monday, May 8, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 9, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 10, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday, May 11, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Saturday, May 13, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 14, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.  
Monday, May 15, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Wednesday, May 17, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.  
Friday, May 19, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.<sup>†</sup>  
Saturday, May 20, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.  
Sunday, May 21, 2017 at 2:00 p.m.

Butterfly: Ermonela Jaho\* / Hei-Kyung Hong  
Pinkerton: Brian Jagde\* / Dimitri Pittas\*  
Sharpless: Troy Cook\* / Trevor Scheunemann ±  
Suzuki: Kristen Choi\*  
Goro: Ian McEuen

Director: Leslie Swackhamer\*  
Conductor: Philippe Auguin  
Production Designer: Jun Kaneko  
Lighting Designer: Gary Marder\*

<sup>†</sup> Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Performance, casting to be announced

\* Washington National Opera debut

± Alumnus of the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program

## **ABOUT WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA**

Washington National Opera (WNO) is one of the leading opera companies in the United States. Under the leadership of Artistic Director [Francesca Zambello](#), the company presents a diverse season of grand opera—including both classics from the repertory and more contemporary pieces—plus an annual holiday family opera, several newly commissioned American works, and a variety of special concerts and events. The WNO Orchestra is led by Music Director [Philippe Auguin](#). Founded in 1956 and an affiliate of the Kennedy Center since 2011, WNO has a storied legacy of world premieres, new productions, international tours, live recordings and radio broadcasts, and innovative education and community-engagement programs. Throughout its history, WNO has been led by titans in the opera field, including the legendary Plácido Domingo, who headed the company from 1996 to 2011.

WNO contributes to the future of opera through two signature artist-development programs. The [Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program](#), which will celebrate its 15th season in 2016–2017, has become one of the nation’s most competitive and comprehensive professional training programs for young singers and collaborative pianists. Alumni of the program have won major competitions and gone on to successful careers at major operas houses in the U.S. and abroad. The WNO Opera Institute nurtures the ambitions of high-school-age singers from across the nation during an intensive three-week summer program held at American University in Washington.

Among the company’s most successful recent programs is the 2012 launch of the American Opera Initiative, a comprehensive commissioning program that works to expand the American operatic repertory, to give WNO’s young artists the chance to collaborate with living composers and librettists on new works, and to make American opera more relevant to 21st-century audiences. The most popular of WNO’s community-engagement programs is M&M’S® *Opera in the Outfield*, during which an opera is broadcast live from the Kennedy Center Opera House stage to the high-definition scoreboard at Nationals Park. The company’s other education programs include the *Kids Create Opera* program at local elementary schools, Look-In performances for students in grades 4–8, and the Student Dress Rehearsal Program for middle and high school students. The company also offers free Opera Insights programs before every mainstage performance.

To celebrate the company’s 60th anniversary, Washington National Opera will present three complete cycles of [Wagner’s Ring](#) in spring 2016. These performances, featuring an acclaimed production by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Music Director Philippe Auguin, will be the first time the company has presented *The Ring* in complete cycles in its history.

Discover [Washington National Opera](#) on social media:



## **FUNDING CREDITS**

Major support for WNO is provided by Jacqueline Badger Mars.

**David and Alice Rubenstein** are the Presenting Underwriters of WNO.

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### **TICKETS & INFORMATION:**

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