

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PITTSBURGH  
FESTIVAL  
OPERA

## PITTSBURGH FESTIVAL OPERA RELEASES DETAILS OF 2020 SEASON

PITTSBURGH, PA (February 17, 2020) – Pittsburgh Festival Opera has released the details of its 2020 schedule. Productions this season include classic opera, one world premiere, one Pennsylvania premiere and the conclusion of Pittsburgh's Ring Cycle with scenes from *Siegfried* and *Twilight of the Gods* in concert. The Festival also presents a wider breadth of programming in different venues to include lectures, a poetry reading, two concerts by its Young Artists Program and festival favorite Daphne Alderson. The Festival runs from July 11 until July 26, 2020.

New for 2020, the Pittsburgh Festival Opera summer season will kick off with a gala benefit concert and celebration at the award winning Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University on Saturday, June 20, 2020. **Gathering of the Goddesses** will feature a gala concert performance with Pittsburgh Festival Opera's new Artistic Director and world renown mezzo-soprano **Marianne Cornetti** and two of today's most in-demand dramatic sopranos **Christine Goerke** and **Alexandra Loutsion**. The summer solstice celebration benefits the Pittsburgh Festival Opera's Young Artists Program.

The centerpiece of the 2020 summer festival is Ruggero Leoncavallo's famous one act tragedy **Pagliacci**. With a nod to the circus and commedia dell'Arte, *Pagliacci* will be preceded by an original staging of Igor Stravinsky's **Pulcinella Suite** complete with circus performers and vocalists. Opening Saturday, July 11, 2020 and running for four performances at the Pittsburgh CAPA Theater downtown, the title role will be sung by American operatic tenor **Carl Tanner**, a regular performer at the world's leading opera houses. Stage director Chuck Hudson will make his Pittsburgh Festival Opera debut in a new production.

In 2014, Pittsburgh Festival Opera launched its *Music that Matters* series with the goal of commissioning new operas that address important social issues and how those issues affect the people of western Pennsylvania. The world premiere of **Virgula Divina**, a one-hour chamber opera by composer Karen Brown and Librettist Jessica Lanay is the next in this series of commissions. The opera will be performed in the Richard E. Rauh Studio Theatre on the campus of the University of Pittsburgh starting on July 18, 2020. Tickets for **Virgula Divina** are "Pay what you can" at the door or can be purchased in advance.

**Virgula Divina** presents a post-apocalyptic future world in which the composer and librettist explore their own personal feelings about being demographically marginalized women in society. Focused on creating a sense of immediateness for the audience and the performers,

the opera was written with three different endings, randomly selected by software written by the composer. The cast of three including **Anqwenique**, **Courtney Porter** and **Edward Washington II** will navigate this first-of-its-kind music drama where no two performances of the work could be the same. The all-female production team includes **Ellen Jackson**, stage director and **Michelle Rofrano**, conductor, both making their Pittsburgh Festival Opera debuts.

The 2020 Young Artists Program has been transformed into a professional opera training program for young singers who are paid a stipend to participate in a five-week intensive of vocal coaching, role preparation, master classes and a vigorous rehearsal schedule leading up to a brand new production and the *Pennsylvania premiere* of composer Mark Adamo's ***Lysistrata, or the Nude Goddess*** running for two back-to-back performances at the Ace Hotel Pittsburgh on July 22-23, 2020. ***Lysistrata*** was written after Aristophanes' comic tragedy on love and war. It received its world premiere at Houston Grand Opera in 2005. Mark Adamo also created the lyrics. Two concerts of arias and scenes will also feature the Young Artists Program during the sixteen day summer festival.

**Derrick R. Brown**, last seen at the Festival in 2019 as stage director of *Gianni Schicchi*, returns to Pittsburgh as stage director and production designer. **Robert Frankenberg** conducts the two hour opera featuring each of the thirteen singing members of the Young Artists Program and a new orchestration for fifteen players. Pittsburgh Festival Opera is also partnering with its East End neighbor **The Ellis School** on an engagement project that helps community organizations with problems that would lend themselves to the design of a physical solution. For Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Ellis students will design a prototype acoustical treatment that will enhance the audience enjoyment of the opera. The Ellis School educates girls and young women to become bold, authentic, and intellectually vibrant changemakers; a mission that links with the Festival's *Music That Matters* initiative.

In 2018, **Pittsburgh's Ring Cycle** began its revival run at the Festival. This summer, the Festival will end the cycle with a *concert performance* of scenes from the final two installments Richard Wagner's epic operas ***Siegfried*** and ***Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods)***. This version uses British composer **Jonathan Dove**'s brilliant reduction of the massive score and will feature international Wagnerian superstar **Jane Eaglen** singing the famous 'Immolation Scene'. She will also be the stage director of the concert with Walter Morales conducting members of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Orchestra at the award-winning Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University for one night only, Friday, July 24, 2020. Two Ring Cycle lectures including one pre-curtain lecture will feature **Michael Bolton**, Vice President of Community Initiatives at Opera Philadelphia. Renowned for his educational opera presentations, Mr. Bolton has lectured for Opera Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Curtis Institute of Music, Academy of Vocal Arts, University of Pennsylvania, American Association of University Women, among many others. He has curated opera programming at the African American Museum of Philadelphia, Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, The Barnes Foundation, National Museum of American Jewish History, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology.

In 2020, festival programming will be expanded with the addition of pre-performance lectures at every performance and with two special events intended to create conversation about contemporary issues. The first will spotlight Pittsburgh-based poet **Cameron Barnett** in a reading from his award winning book, ***The Drowning Boy's Guide to Water***, which serves as inspiration behind a new song cycle commissioned by Pittsburgh Festival Opera to premiere in the 2021 season. The 2019 Carol Brown Award winning poet will read selected work and participate in a moderated discussion at the Dance Alloy Studios on Sunday, July 12, 2020. Internationally acclaimed opera singers **Marianne Cornetti** and **Jane Eaglen** will sit down with WQED-FM's Jim Cunningham on Monday, July 20, 2020 at the WQED Fred Rogers Studio in ***The Diva's Dish***, stories and insights from the world's stages.

For the youngest audience members, the children's opera ***Rusalka: A Mermaid's Tale*** will premiere on Saturday, July 11, 2020 at the Dance Alloy Studios and performs every Saturday morning of the Festival. Directed by **Seamus Ricci**, a cast of four will perform the opera throughout the City of Pittsburgh as part of the company's flagship education program *Opera in the Schools* in the spring, leading to the fully staged version during the summer festival. The colorful production was created by **Opera for the Young** in Madison, WI and follows the tale of Rusalka the Mermaid finding her voice in the world using arrangements of music from Dvorak's opera *Rusalka*. It is appropriate for all audiences and especially children.

Finally, perennial festival favorite **Daphne Alderson** presents a one-night only engagement titled ***Daphne... These Days*** at WQED's Fred Rogers Studio on Saturday, July 25, 2020. Daphne weaves her stylish interpretations and unforgettable stories into a musical odyssey of love and loss while discovering the quirkiness of faith. Featuring the music of Clyde Otis, Alex North, Nico, and Freddie Mercury plus original songs by Daphne and the **St. Michel Band**, this evening of unexpected renditions will delight and inspire.

Performances of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera season will take place July 11-26, 2020.  
Subscriptions go on sale February 17, 2020.  
Single tickets go on sale March 2, 2020.  
Ticket prices range from \$10-\$50  
All seats for all performances are general admission.

## **2020 PFO Season Information at-a-glance**

### **Gathering of the Goddesses Gala Concert**

**June 20, 2020 at the award winning Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University**

### **Pagliacci (1892)**

**July 11 (8pm), 14 (7:30pm), 17 (7:30pm), 19 (2:00pm), 2020**

### **Pittsburgh CAPA Theater**

Composer: Ruggero Leoncavallo

Librettist: Ruggero Leoncavallo

Conductor: Christian Capocaccia

Director: Chuck Hudson

**Principal Cast**

Canio: Carl Tanner

Nedda: Danielle Pastin

Tonio: Stephen Gaertner

Silvio: Xiaomeng Zhang

Beppe: Mason Gates Neipp

Performed with members of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Orchestra

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

**Virgula Divina (2020)**

**July 18 (8:00pm), 21 (7:30pm), 26 (4:00pm), 2020**

**Richard E. Rauh Studio Theatre at the University of Pittsburgh**

Composer: Karen Brown

Librettist: Jessica Lanay

Conductor: Michelle Rofrano

Director: Ellen Jackson

**Principal Cast**

Constance: Anqwenique

Hortense: Courtney Porter

Jason: Edward Washington II

Performed with members of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Orchestra

Sung in English with English supertitles

**Lysistrata (2005)**

**July 22 and 23, 2020 at 7:30pm**

**Ace Hotel Pittsburgh**

Composer: Mark Adamo

Librettist: Mark Adamo

Conductor: Robert Frankenberry

Director: Derrick R. Brown

Principal Cast are members of the 2020 Young Artists Program

Performed with members of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Orchestra

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Sung in English with English supertitles

**Siegfried/Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods) in concert (1876)**

**July 24, 2020 at 7:30pm**

**Pittsburgh Playhouse at Point Park University**

Composer: Richard Wagner

Arranger: Jonathan Dove/Walter Morales

Conductor: Walter Morales

Librettist: Richard Wagner

Director: Jane Eaglen

**Principal Cast**

Siegfried: Kevin Ray

Mime: Robert Chafin

Wanderer: Alex Boyd

Brunnhilde: Elisabeth Rosenberg/Jane Eaglen (Immolation Scene)

Fafner: Andrew Potter

Bird: Alexa Zeremenko

Performed with members of the Pittsburgh Festival Opera Orchestra

Sung in German with English supertitles

**Rusalka: A Mermaid's Tale (2017)**

**A children's opera based on the Dvorak opera Rusalka (1901)**

**July 11, 18, 25, 2020 at 11:00am**

**Dance Alloy Downstairs Studio**

Music by Antonín Dvořák

Libretto by Jaroslav Kvapil

Music adapted by Jeffrey Sykes

Original libretto by Diane Garton Edie

Director: Seamus Ricci

Pianist: Agnieszka Sornek

**Principal Cast**

Rusalka: Adrianna Cleveland

Jezibaba/Foreign Princess: Alexa Zeremenko

The Prince: Kevin Adamik

Sea King: Miles Wilson Toliver

Performed with permission from Opera for the Young, Madison, WI

Sung in English

**The Drowning Boy's Guide to Water with Cameron Barnett**

**July 12, 2020 at 2:00pm**

**Young Artists Program Concerts**

**July 16 (7:30pm) and July 18 (2:00pm), 2020**

**Dance Alloy Downstairs Studio**

**The Diva's Dish, Marianne Cornetti & Jane Eaglen in conversation with Jim Cunningham**

**July 20, 2020 at 7:30 PM**

**WQED's Fred Rogers Studio**

**Daphne...These Days**

**July 25, 2020 at 8:00pm**

**WQED's Fred Rogers Studio**

Subscriptions go on sale Monday, February 17, 2020 and single tickets go on sale March 2, 2020 at [www.pittsburghfestivalopera.org](http://www.pittsburghfestivalopera.org), or by calling the Festival Box Office at 412-326-9687.

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Pittsburgh Festival Opera is dedicated to presenting innovative opera, including American works, reinterpretations of older works, and new works, for the widest possible audience, focusing on diversity in programming and casting, crossing boundaries and bringing together talents from all the arts, encouraging new talent, and broadening audiences through outreach and education to create a body of work that is original, entertaining, contemporary and relevant. Pittsburgh Festival Opera. Epic stories. Intimate experience.

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