Seattle Opera unveils 2020/21 Season:

*Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci, The Elixir of Love, Don Giovanni, Flight, and Tosca*

McCaw Hall
Tickets start at $35

SEATTLE—Seattle Opera has just unveiled its 2020/21 season—a year that highlights opera’s rich past, and its bold, diverse future. Audiences will be treated to beloved classics *Tosca* and *Don Giovanni*, as well as a contemporary work *Flight*, inspired by the true story of stateless refugee Mehran Karimi Nasseri, who was stranded for 18 years and forced to live in the Charles de Gaulle airport. The romantic comedy *The Elixir of Love* and the double-bill *Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci* will all be performed for the first time in decades.

This marks the first season to be programmed by General Director Christina Scheppelmann—one of only a few women to lead a major opera company in North America. Scheppelmann is proud to reveal the internationally acclaimed roster of artists she’s selected, including the “superb” (*Sidney Morning Herald*) Saioa Hernández. Hernández, who “won La Scala hearts [in] an instant love affair between soprano and audience” (*Bachtrack*), makes her company debut as Tosca. South African soprano and international rising-star Vuvu Mpofu will sing Adina in *The Elixir of Love*. Growing up in a small town, Mpofu taught herself to sing by
mimicking opera DVDs before auditioning for college as a self-taught artist.
Scheppelmann is bringing in two visionary women, stage director Brenna Corner and conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya, to create a new Don Giovanni. The season also includes a debut for countertenor David DQ Lee as the Refugee in Flight. The Canadian Korean singer has made a name for himself: “With a powerful instrument and high As to rival any mezzo’s, he reinterprets the same kind of voice as something voluptuous and exotic” (The Globe and Mail).

“Seattle Opera has a history of bringing exceptional talent to the stage and pushing the art form forward; that’s a legacy I hope to both continue and expand on,” Scheppelmann said. “My goal is to build enthusiasm for music and storytelling—not only through our performances at McCaw Hall, but through our programming at the Opera Center and throughout Washington State. The arts are so important for the identity of a great city like Seattle, and for the dynamic vitality and creativity of our entire region.”

Naomi André, Seattle Opera Scholar in Residence, is excited about the upcoming season because it shows how beloved opera staples find additional relevance today with thoughtful staging and new interpretations.

“As Seattle has been a strong leader in promoting People of Color onstage (even when the race/ethnicity of the character is unspecified), it’s especially nice to see South African Vuvu Mpofo making her debut here in Elixir,” André said. “Also, with a more recent work such as Flight this season, we get to re-think issues around borders, immigration, migration, and belonging. The opera stage is one of the best places to sit in an uninterrupted space to think broadly and openly in my opinion.”

The season kicks off in August 2020 with one-act operas presented together: Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci. Two distinct yet complementary tales of jealousy, adultery, and revenge explore elemental emotions when affairs lead to crimes of passion. This performance will transform the public squares of southern Italy into a Greek theater-arena with commedia dell’arte costumes for Leoncavallo’s
clowns. **Gregory Kunde**, one of the most accomplished singers on the opera stage today, returns to Seattle Opera as Turiddu in *Cavalleria*, alternating with award-winning Armenian tenor **Arsen Soghomonyan**. *Pagliacci* includes the return of **Vanessa Goikoetxea** (Micaëla in *Carmen*, ‘19) and **Joyce El-Khoury** (the title character in *Mary Stuart*, ‘16) as Nedda.

In October 2020, *The Elixir of Love* returns to Seattle Opera for the first time in more than 20 years. With winking humor and charming characters, this *bel canto* masterpiece calls for the return of two high-flying tenors: **Liparit Avetisyan** (the Duke in *Rigoletto*, ‘19), and **Matthew Grills** (Don Ramiro in *Cinderella*, ‘19) as the love-struck peasant Nemorino. On Oct. 23, between *Elixir* performances, Seattle Opera presents a concert with two special, internationally acclaimed singers: **Angela Meade & Jamie Barton in concert with John Keene, pianist**. Fresh from acclaimed performances at the Met and Carnegie Hall, the soprano and mezzo-soprano return to McCaw Hall following Seattle Opera debuts in Verdi’s *Il trovatore*, ‘19 (Meade) and *Nabucco*, ‘15 (Barton). Along with John Keene—pianist and Seattle Opera chorusmaster—the singers will delight audiences in this mixed-genre performance.

Then in January 2021, Seattle Opera presents Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. Staged by Brenna Corner and conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya, this portrait of the ultimate male predator includes debuts of bass-baritones **Daniel Okulitch** (lauded as "flat out brilliant" by *Opera News*) and **Jared Bybee** (2016 George London Foundation Vocal Competition awardee).

The Seattle Opera premiere of *Flight* (February 2021) will offer a comic, complex, and deeply human story based in part on true events. The 1998 opera depicts an omniscient air traffic controller who watches over a bustling departure lounge with jaded flight attendants, a couple on vacation, a mysterious older woman, an Eastern European diplomat, and his expectant wife, all of whom must wait out a storm. Sharing the role of the Refugee with David DQ Lee is American countertenor **Randall Scotting**, who returns following his debut as Athamas in *Semele* (‘15).
Since its premiere, *Flight* has been performed close to 100 times around the world. Composer Jonathan Dove’s catalog of 28 often-performed works includes full-length mainstage operas, operas for children, television operas on the death of Princess Diana and the first moon landing, and a pair of micro-operas lasting under 15 minutes.

“Airports have always fascinated me as a location,” Dove told *The Julliard Journal* in an interview. “People arrive at the airport with various hopes and fears. They think when they travel away they will start a new life. But this was written pre-9/11, when air travel was much more carefree. One thing I noticed while watching a recent production of *Flight* in London was that it felt curiously more topical.”

Seattle Opera’s 2020/21 season concludes with the ultimate diva opera: Puccini’s timeless *Tosca*. A fiery prima donna struggles to free her true love from the clutches of a sadistic, lustful police chief. Filled with iconic arias and impressive moments, it’s the ideal performance for anyone who loves epic music and drama. Alternating with Saioa Hernández in the title role is another international headliner: the “splendid” (*Das Opernglas*) Armenian soprano Karine Babajanyan, whose “voice is strong and appealingly colored,” and who “sings with confidence and intelligence” (*OPERA*).

Seattle Opera Ticket Information: Subscriptions on sale now. Subscription ticket prices start at $215. Opera Ticket Office: 206.389.7676 or 800.426.1619. Online orders: [seattleopera.org/subscribe](http://seattleopera.org/subscribe) or in person at the box office located at the Opera Center, 363 Mercer Street. Mainstage performances take place at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street. Young professionals ages 21–39 who join BRAVO! and students under 18 save 50 percent on tickets.

2020/21 Season Sponsor:
Barbara Stephanus

*Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci*
**Cavalleria rusticana**  
Music by Pietro Mascagni  
Libretto by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci  
Premiere: May 17, 1890 at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome  
Previous Seattle Opera Performances: 1966, 1983, 1990

**Pagliacci**  
Music and libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo  
In Italian with English captions  
Premiere: May 21, 1892 at the Teatro Dal Verme in Milan  

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall  
Performances: August 8, 9, 12, 15, 16, 19, 21, & 22, 2020

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours, including one intermission.  
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m

**Cast:**  
Santuzza (*Cav.*)  
Melody Moore (Aug. 8, 12, 16, & 22)  
Marcy Stonikas (Aug. 9, 15, 19, & 21)  
Turiddu (*Cav.*) and Canio (*Pag.*)  
Arsen Soghomonyan* (Aug. 9, 15, 19, & 21)  
Nedda (*Pag.*)  
Vanessa Goikoetxea (Aug. 8, 12, 16, & 22)  
Joyce El-Khoury (Aug. 9, 15, 19, & 21)  
Alfio (*Cav.*) and Tonio (*Pag.*)  
Michael Mayes  
Mamma Lucia (*Cav.*)  
Tichina Vaughn  
Lola (Cav.)  
Sarah Larsen  
Silvio (*Pag.*)  
Will Liverman  
Beppe (*Pag.*)  
Andrew Stenson  
Conductor  
Oksana Lyniv*  
Director  
Guy Montavon*  
Set Designer  
Hank Irwin Kittel*  
Costume Designer  
Bianca Deigner*

* Company Debut

**Production Sponsor:**  
Kreielsheimer Foundation

---

**The Elixir of Love**  
Music by Gaetano Donizetti  
Libretto by Felice Romani
In Italian with English captions
Premiere: May 12, 1832 at the Teatro della Canobbiana in Milan
Previous Seattle Opera Performances: 1969, 1985, 1998

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: October 17, 18, 21, 24, 25, 28, 30, & 31, 2020

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours, 45 minutes including one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m

Cast:
Adina Madison Leonard (Oct. 17, 21, 25, & 31)
Vuvu Mpofu* (Oct. 18, 24, 28, & 30)
Nemorino Liparit Avetisyan (Oct. 17, 21, 25, & 31)
Matthew Grills (Oct. 18, 24, 28, & 30)
Dulcamara Peter Kálmán (Oct. 17, 21, 25, & 31)
Patrick Carfizzi (Oct. 18, 24, 28, & 30)
Belcore Michael Adams
Conductor Carlo Montanaro
Director Stephen Lawless*
Set and Costume Ashley Martin-Davis*
Designer

* Company Debut

Angela Meade & Jamie Barton in concert with John Keene, pianist

A special concert featuring a mixed-genre program with a variety of favorite opera arias and rarities. One night only!
Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performance: 7:30 p.m., October 23, 2020

Don Giovanni

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte

In Italian with English captions
Premiere: Oct. 29, 1787, National Theatre in Prague

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: January 16, 17, 20, 23, 24, 27, 29, & 30, 2021

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours, 25 minutes including one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m

**Cast:**

Don Giovanni: Daniel Okulitch* (Jan. 16, 20, 24, & 30)
Jared Bybee* (Jan. 17, 23, 27, & 29)

Donna Anna: Vanessa Goikoetxea (Jan. 16, 20, 24, & 30)
Laura Wilde* (Jan. 17, 23, 27, & 29)

Leporello: Michael Sumuel* (Jan. 17, 23, 27, & 29)
Don Ottavio: Edgardo Rocha (Jan. 16, 20, 24, & 30)
Miles Mykkanen* (Jan. 17, 23, 27, & 29)

Donna Elvira: Keri Alkema (Jan. 16, 20, 24, & 30)
Helena Dix* (Jan. 17, 23, 27, & 29)

Zerlina: Jasmine Habersheim*
Masetto: William Thomas*

Conductor: Lidiya Yankovskaya*
Director: Brenna Corner*
Scenic Designer: Mimi Li*
Costume Designer: Erik Teague*
Lighting Designer: Robert Wierzel

* Company Debut

**Production Sponsor:**

Ann P. Wyckoff
with additional support from 4Culture

---

**Flight**

Music by Jonathan Dove
Libretto by April De Angelis
In English with English captions
Premiere: Sept. 24, 1998 with Glyndebourne Touring Opera in Glyndebourne
Seattle Opera premiere

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: February 27, 28 and March 3, 6, 7, 10, 12, & 13, 2021

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours and 40 minutes including one intermission
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m
Cast:
Refugee: David DQ Lee* (Feb. 27, Mar. 3, 7, & 13)
Randall Scotting (Feb. 28, Mar. 6, 10 & 12)
Bill: Joshua Kohl
Tina: Karen Vuong
Steward: Mark Diamond
Minskwoman: Renée Rapier
Immigration Officer: Damien Geter

Conductor: Viswa Subbaraman*
Director: Brian Staufenbiel*
Set Designer: Dave Dunning*
Costume Designer: Alina Bokovikova*
Projection Designer: David Murakami*
Lighting Designer: Matthew Antaky*
* Company Debut

Production Sponsors:
Tagney Jones Family Fund at Seattle Foundation
with support from the National Endowment for the Arts

Tosca
Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa
Performed in Italian with English captions
Premiere: Rome, 1900

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall
Performances: May 8, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 22, & 23, 2021

Approximate Running Time: 2 hours, 40 minutes including two intermissions
Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., Sunday matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Cast:
Floria Tosca: Saioa Hernández* (May 8, 14, 16, 19, & 22)
Karine Babajanyan* (May 9, 12, 15, & 23)
Mario Cavaradossi: Marco Berti* (May 8, 14, 16, 19, & 22)
Robert Watson* (May 9, 12, 15, & 23)
Baron Scarpia: Lucio Gallo* (May 8, 14, 16, 19, & 22)
Michael Chioldi* (May 9, 12, 15, & 23)

Conductor: Kazem Abdullah*
Director: Dan Wallace Miller