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Seattle Opera announces 2021/22 season— a return to live, in-person performances

La bohème
Orpheus and Eurydice
Blue
The Marriage of Figaro
Plus a special recital by Lawrence Brownlee

McCaw Hall and The Opera Center

Subscriptions begin at \$240 (BRAVO! Club, senior, and student pricing is also available). Single tickets will go on sale closer to each production. seattleopera.org

SEATTLE—After more than a year without live, in-person performances due to COVID-19, Seattle Opera will officially return to the theater this fall with its 2021/22 Season. Offerings include immortal favorites (*La bohème*, *The Marriage of Figaro*), historic works with a modern twist (*Orpheus and Eurydice*), plus an award-winning piece speaking to racial injustice in America (*Blue*). It will take years for Seattle Opera—and the arts sector as a whole—to recover from the pandemic’s economic impact. Feeling the presence and excitement of live performance again is one way that the healing can begin, said **General Director Christina Schepelmann**.

“The theater, where music, storytelling, lights, performers, and audiences meet, is a space of magic and impact,” Schepelmann said. “This past year has been

difficult and challenging on so many levels. As we process all that we've been through, we can come here to enjoy ourselves. We can rediscover the positive moment and outlook we are seeking. Through opera, we can reconnect with our deepest emotions and our shared humanity."

In addition to mainstage productions, the company will offer a special, one-night-only recital by tenor **Lawrence Brownlee** (April 29, 2022, at McCaw Hall) with pianist **John Keene**. A regular at the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, and Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Brownlee's versatile "instrument of great beauty and expression" (*NPR Music*) elicits standing ovations whether he's performing Rossini or Donizetti, or works from his song-cycle on African American identity. More information is available at seattleopera.org/brownlee.

This season begins with a long-awaited ***La bohème*** (Oct. 16–30, 2021, at McCaw Hall) featuring Seattle Opera favorites, debuts, and artists who had been scheduled to sing in the cancelled 2020 *bohème*. Performers include **Ginger Costa-Jackson** (*Carmen* '19, *Cinderella* '19), **John Moore** (*Eugene Onegin* '20, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* '19), **Brandie Sutton** (*Porgy and Bess* '18), **Michael Chiodi**, **Theo Hoffman**, **Barry Johnson**, **Yosep Kang**, **Federico De Michelis**, **Ashraf Sewailam**, **Talise Trevigne**, **Eugene Villanueva**, and **Kang Wang**. An audience favorite for more than a century, this tale of young Bohemians who dedicate their lives to art and love is told through Giacomo Puccini's lush, romantic score. For the full cast and creative team list—and to purchase tickets—go to seattleopera.org/boheme.

Christoph Willibald Gluck's ***Orpheus and Eurydice*** (Jan. 12–30, 2022, at Tagney Jones Hall, The Opera Center) will blur the line between fantasy and reality. Set in the company's intimate glass-box theater, audiences will have a front-row seat to the action as Orpheus descends into the underworld to rescue his beloved wife Eurydice. **Chía Patiño**, former head of Ecuador's National Theatre, creates an all-new production with three principal singers and a small orchestra. Returning artists include **Stephen Stubbs**, a Grammy-winning conductor and respected authority on

early music, plus **Sharleen Joynt**, whose recent performance as The Controller in *Flight* was praised by *Bachtrack*: "We know we're in for an acting treat when we see Joynt's impeccably turned-out Controller ... we see her arched eyebrows and penetrating stare in close-up as she delivers stratospheric coloratura." Two countertenors make their debuts: **Christopher Ainslie** "A Rockstar of Baroque Opera" (*New York Times*) and **Key'mon W. Murrah**, an artist with "unreal," "expressive," and "effulgent vocal acrobatics" (*Schmopera*). Full production details and ticket information is available at seattleopera.org/orpheus.

The season continues in February with **Blue**, (Feb. 26 – March 12, 2022, in McCaw Hall) the 2020 winner of Best New Opera by the Music Critics Association of North America. This portrait of contemporary African American life is the creation of librettist **Tazewell Thompson** (five NAACP Awards, plus two Emmy nominations) and composer **Jeanine Tesori** (Tony-winner known for *Fun Home*). A story of love, loss, church, and sisterhood, *Blue* depicts a young couple celebrating the joy of family with the birth of their son. Later they lean on close-knit community in the wake of their son's death at the hands of a police officer.

"Unfortunately, the themes in *Blue* have no expiration date," wrote Thompson in *The New York Times*. "I add my voice to those of the characters singing in the opera, and to those of the real families suffering great losses. Our eyes will never be free of tears."

The opera will include three cast members from the original, 2019 Glimmerglass festival production: Seattle Opera veterans **Gordon Hawkins** (*Aida* '18, *Nabucco* '15) and **Kenneth Kellogg** (*Don Giovanni* '21), plus mezzo-soprano **Briana Hunter** in her company debut. Seattle Opera will center the voices of its Black American community partners to guide conversations surrounding the work. More information is available at seattleopera.org/blue.

Rounding out the season is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's **The Marriage of Figaro** (May 7–21, 2022, in McCaw Hall). From exuberant overture to uplifting finale, this

beloved comedy based on the radical Beaumarchais play comes alive with rich commentary on social class and gender roles. The first woman to lead St. Petersburg's historic Mikhailovsky Theatre, **Maestro Alevtina Ioffe** makes her company debut with this traditional production, to be directed by **Peter Kazaras** (*The Turn of the Screw* '18, *An American Dream* '15 and '17), leader of Opera UCLA. In the title role stars Grammy-winning bass-baritone **Ryan McKinny** whose "powerful voice drips with gold" (*Opera News*) and **Michael Sumuel**, whose vocals are "smooth and ingratiating" (*Daily Camera*). Complete cast, creative team, and ticket information is at seattleopera.org/figaro.

After months of producing streaming content, **Seattle Opera Chorusmaster John Keene** says he's most looking forward to the magic that only happens with a live audience.

"Even the most brilliant technology cannot replicate the energy of artists and audience coming together to experience live performances in real time," Keene said. "We performers are built for that, and we have missed you more than words can say."

Seattle Opera is prioritizing the health and safety of artists, staff, and the public. The upcoming season will include safety protocols in accordance with the Washington State Performing Arts Reopening Plan for large venues in place at the time of each performance. Masks will be required at all Seattle Opera performances and events next season regardless of vaccination status. The most up-to-date safety protocols can be found at seattleopera.org/safety.

Tickets are available now to renewing subscribers from the 2020/21 season. New subscriptions and individual tickets will go on sale later this summer, as more information about capacity restrictions becomes available. The ticket office can be reached at seattleopera.org or by calling 206.389.7676 (tickets are not currently available in-person) between 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Monday–Friday.

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest with performances of the highest caliber and through innovative educational and engagement programs for all. Each year, more than 95,000 people attend Seattle Opera performances, and more than 400,000 people of all ages are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. By drawing our communities together, and by offering opera's unique fusion of music and drama, we create life-enhancing experiences that speak deeply to people's hearts and minds. Connect with Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on 98.1 Classical KING FM.