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Seattle Opera Unveils Virtual Fall Season

Everyone can enjoy opera with free online recitals, classes, and programming

SEATTLE—Like all arts and cultural groups this year, Seattle Opera has faced the pain of cancelled performances and setbacks due to COVID-19. And yet, the company is ramping up efforts to make the arts more accessible, finding new opportunities to bring music, storytelling, and performance for all during the global pandemic. As **Songs of Summer**, a free, 15-performance recital series concludes this week, Seattle Opera unveils its **Fall Season**. With a variety of free performances and programming to enjoy at home, the Fall Season was created with both artistic innovation—and public safety—in mind, said **General Director Christina Schepelmann**.

"We hope to entertain you, bring you quality singing and music to lift your spirits," Schepelmann said. "It's disappointing that we cannot offer productions the way we had promised in January. However, ceasing to present opera was not an option. Seattle Opera deeply values creating and sharing art that heals and entertains. So, we're not closing our doors; we're producing new musical experiences for you that employ artists safely."

Free online recitals offer a chance for people who have never experienced opera before to give it a try. The next recital will be performed by **Mary Elizabeth Williams**—the “vocal phenomenon and immense actress” (*classiquenews.com*) who’s starred in *Tosca*, *Nabucco*, and *Mary Stuart*. Williams’ concert will be available on Seattle Opera’s Facebook, YouTube, and website until Sept. 10.

Beginning in October, enjoy free online recitals by **Frederick Ballentine**, **Marcy Stonikas**, and **Jorell Williams**. Ballentine previously earned fans for his most recent role as the title character in *Charlie Parker’s Yardbird* and Don José in *Carmen* (“the most real, most convincing José I’ve ever seen,” according to *Seattle Magazine*). With “a voice that can really thrill” (*The Seattle Times*) and “secure vocal beauty” (*Bachtrack*), Stonikas began her Seattle Opera career long ago as a Young Artist, and has developed into a dramatic soprano who’s starred in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Tosca*, *Turandot* and *Fidelio* to wide acclaim. A gifted performer of Seattle Opera’s mainstage and chamber operas, Williams most recently performed as Dizzy Gillespie in *Yardbird*, where he “stole the show with his easy charm and stunning vocals” (*The Seattle Times*). These performances will be available for three weeks after they premiere on Seattle Opera’s Facebook, YouTube, and website.

Opera fans can also sign up for a class this fall. Online sessions for adults include Opera 101 (currently sold out, but join the waitlist by emailing tickets@seattleopera.org), plus Opera in The Making, on writing libretti. Classes are \$150 and \$350 respectively, and are offered for eight weeks. Youth ages 7–18 can also sign up for courses that meet in late September–December ([financial assistance](#) is available). Participants will learn excerpts from a youth opera that they will share in a live Zoom performance.

Safety is the number-one priority for Seattle Opera during COVID-19—especially because Fall Season performances will be newly recorded. Recitals will be filmed in singers’ homes or personal studios, but some events for subscribers will be captured at McCaw Hall—now operating as Seattle Center Studios. This essential

business was created with approval from government health officials as a designated safe area. With state-of-the-art film equipment, this virtual portal allows audiences to engage with the performing arts safely from home. All Seattle Opera rehearsals and on-site recording sessions will also be monitored by COVID-19 Site Monitors, who helps maintain official health and safety protocols.

With ever-changing conditions during the pandemic, the Fall Season was created after exploring numerous scenarios.

“In the coming months, we must be nimble and adaptable,” said Scheppelmann, who plans to announce 2021 programming toward the end of the year. “We are constantly monitoring local health guidelines, travel restrictions, and the availability of artists in order to plan performances for the near future and the season ahead.”

In addition to free performances for everyone, this fall includes programming exclusively for Seattle Opera subscribers, of which the company has more than 6,600 for each production this season. Subscribers will receive access to recital versions of ***Cavalleria Rusticana*** and ***Pagliacci***, a new ***Elixir of Love*** production designed for film, plus **Angela Meade** and **Jamie Barton** in recital with pianist **John Keene**. Single tickets to these subscriber events are not being sold. However, subscriptions to a modified spring season—which the company plans to pursue—start at \$162 and would also include access to fall programs. For more information, go to seattleopera.org/subscribe.

Fall Season Schedule:

Online performances will be available for three weeks after the premiere.

Ongoing every Saturday, Seattle Opera Mornings on KING FM

Broadcasts of previous Seattle Opera performances offered at Classical KING FM 98.1 or king.org. Full schedule at seattleopera.org/kingfm

Thursday, Aug. 27, Songs of Summer: Mary Elizabeth Williams

A free, online recital streaming from Facebook, YouTube and seattleopera.org and available from Aug. 27–Sept. 10. More info at seattleopera.org/mew

Sept. 8-Oct. 27, Opera 101 Class

Offered Tuesdays online via Zoom weekly for eight weeks.

Learn more at seattleopera.org/operaclasses

September 13-Nov. 1, Opera in the Making: Libretto Writing

Offered Sundays online via Zoom weekly for eight weeks.

Learn more at seattleopera.org/operaclasses

Friday, Sept. 25, Cavalleria Rusticana Highlights Recital—exclusively for subscribers

Many of the artists originally scheduled to perform in the August double bill are thrilled to participate in recitals offering highlights from the opera. Featured singers include Gregory Kunde, Sarah Larsen, Alexandra Lo Bianco, and Nerys Jones.

Friday, Oct. 2, Frederick Ballentine in Recital

A free, online recital available to enjoy on Seattle Opera's Facebook, YouTube, and website Oct. 2–Oct. 23.

Friday, Oct. 9, Marcy Stonikas in Recital

A free, online recital available to enjoy on Seattle Opera's Facebook, YouTube, and website Oct. 9–Oct. 30. Filmed at Ruby Diamond Concert Hall on the Florida State University College of Music campus, the recital features pianist Valerie Trujillo.

Friday, Oct. 16, Pagliacci Highlights Recital —exclusively for subscribers

Gregory Kunde, Michael Mayes, Vanessa Goikoetxea, and Will Liverman—artists originally scheduled to perform in the August double bill—are excited to perform in this presentation featuring highlights from the opera.

Friday, Oct. 23, Jorell Williams in Recital

A free, online recital available to enjoy on Seattle Opera's Facebook, YouTube, and website Oct. 23–Nov. 13.

Friday, Oct. 30, Angela Meade & Jamie Barton in Concert—exclusively for subscribers

Fresh from acclaimed performances at the Met and Carnegie Hall, two world-renowned singers offer a mixed-genre program with pianist John Keene.

Friday, Nov. 13, The Elixir of Love—exclusively for subscribers

Madison Leonard, Michael Adams, Patrick Carfizzi, Andrew Stenson, and Tess Altiveros will be joined by pianists and several instrumentalists in a staging by David Gately, conducted by Carlo Montanaro, especially for online streaming.

September-December, 2020 Youth Programming Online

Seattle Opera is committed to providing equitable access to the arts. Financial assistance is available. Camps are offered twice a week. Offerings include **Artful Explorers** for ages 7-9 (\$240), **Maestros** for ages 10-13 (\$360), and **Advanced** for ages 14-18 (\$480). Learn more at seattleopera.org/youthonline