



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Page 1 of 2

Photos: N/A

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## Virginia Opera announces program changes for 2013-14 Season

**NORFOLK, Va. (June 27, 2013)** – Virginia Opera, *the Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, will be expanding its reach throughout the Commonwealth this coming season. The company is pleased to announce the additions of multiple programming initiatives designed to cultivate new audience members from across the state.

“Virginia Opera is seeing growth statewide. Not only did our subscription rates show a dramatic increase this past season, but we experienced unprecedented attendance at community outreach events and concerts. We have a responsibility to address demand by making opera as accessible as possible,” says Russell P. Allen, President & CEO of Virginia Opera. “We are unique in being the only opera company in the nation readily equipped to bring opera directly to the people of an entire state.”

The most significant of these initiatives is the expansion of its mainstage season to include performances at the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts in Virginia Beach, Va. The company performed at the Sandler Center for the first time this past January when it presented the Broadway-musical, *Camelot* to near sell-out houses. Virginia Opera will present three of its five productions in Virginia Beach during its inaugural season at the Center, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, Georges Bizet’s *Carmen*, and a co-presentation of Stephen Sondheim’s *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* with the Virginia Arts Festival.

General Manager of the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts, David Semon, welcomed the addition by stating: “The Sandler Center is thrilled to have a regular series of performances by Virginia Opera on its season schedule. *Camelot* was such a successful collaboration and we look forward to the Opera’s three spectacular productions this coming season.”

Prices for the Sandler Center Series package range from \$110 - \$327 and are available for sale through Virginia Opera’s Box Office and website. Single tickets for all Virginia Opera performances at the Sandler Center go on sale in August and will be available for sale through both the Opera and the Center. Performances are scheduled as follows:

<u><i>The Magic Flute</i></u>	<u><i>Carmen</i></u>	<u><i>Sweeney Todd</i></u>
Fri., Nov. 15, 2013 at 8:00 p.m. Sat., Nov. 16, 2013 at 2:30 p.m.	Fri., Mar. 28, 2014 at 8:00 p.m. Sat., Mar. 29, 2014 at 2:30 p.m.	Fri., May. 16, 2014 at 8:00 p.m. Sat., May. 17, 2014 at 2:30 p.m.

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Virginia Opera recently announced that it will also expand its audience development efforts in the Richmond, Va. area by bringing its annual *Opera in the Park* concert to the Dogwood Dell Amphitheatre on Saturday, Aug. 31, as part of the City's 57<sup>th</sup> Festival of Arts. The popular event is now entering its 5<sup>th</sup> year in Hampton Roads and has attracted upwards of 5,000 attendees each year, many of whom are new to opera. The concert is free and open to the public of all ages and will feature a casual, picnic-style atmosphere. Gates will open at 6 p.m. and the concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

Virginia Opera has also planned several expansions to its Outreach and Education programs. The company will be returning to the Eastern Shore and Alexandria, Va. this year to present its "An Evening of Arias & Duets" Series in both locales. These concerts feature Virginia Opera Mainstage and Emerging Artists performing songs from operas, operettas, and musicals, including selections from the current season's repertoire. Additionally, the Opera has already committed to presenting its In-School Touring productions of *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *The Adventures of Pinocchio's Sister* to families with public performances in Fairfax, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg in the coming season. Last season, the company increased its In-School Touring presentations by over 50 schools from the previous year.

Adult education programming also grew last year with the addition of Lifelong Learning Classes by Virginia Opera Community Outreach Musical Director, Dr. Glenn Winters, to George Mason University in Fairfax, Va. This coming season, Dr. Winters has added yet another session at Hampton University in Hampton, Va., bringing his total to nine across the Commonwealth.

In order to address the statewide need to bring opera to its audience, executive leadership at Virginia Opera has made the decision to postpone performances of Giacomo Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West* until it can be incorporated into a future season as part of the mainstage lineup. A special engagement of the opera had been scheduled for January 2014, in addition to Virginia Opera's 2013-14 Subscription Season.

Allen explains: "As Virginia Opera moves towards its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, we must work to ensure the long-term sustainability of the company for all our patrons. Our cultural landscape has changed over the past decade; we're working harder than ever to keep up with shifts in the economy and technology, all while striving to serve the public by staying true to our mission. This means that we must look closely at our programming and make fiscally responsible decisions so that we can continue to produce opera without sacrificing artistic quality. The current climate tells us we must focus on growing our reach, rather than just our repertoire. We assumed the responsibility of presenting two productions on behalf of Lyric Opera of Virginia with the absolute best of intentions and look forward to fulfilling that promise in the near future when *Girl of the Golden West* will be part of the mainstage season."

For more information or media inquiries about Virginia Opera and its programs, please call Anna Russell at 757.627.9545, ext. 3316, or email [anna.russell@vaopera.org](mailto:anna.russell@vaopera.org).

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### About Virginia Opera

*Virginia Opera is entering its 39th year of operation. The Company has a working budget of \$5.5 million with over 40 mainstage performances in three markets, reaching nearly 60,000 attendees. In March of 1994 Virginia Opera was named The Official Opera Company of the Commonwealth of Virginia in recognition of the organization's contribution to the Commonwealth and to the world of opera.*