



NEWS RELEASE
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Fort Worth Opera Announces Expanded 2021 Spring Line-Up

Newly announced offerings include FWO's *Moonlight Film Fest* in collaboration with the *Metropolitan Opera* at Coyote Drive-In, *A Night of Black Excellence: Past, Present, and Future All-Star Virtual Benefit Concert* to celebrate Black History Month, a partnership with Opera San José to stream its critically acclaimed digital production of *Three Decembers*, the world premiere family film of *Stone Soup*, and more.

Fort Worth, Texas — Fort Worth Opera (FWO) is proud to announce today the company's expanded line-up of innovative programs and performances for the spring of 2021. Following the fall launch of digital initiative *FWO Green Room*, this month's world premiere Zoom opera, *Bernadette's Cozy Book Nook*, by FWO Artistic director Joe Illick and Pulitzer Prize-winning librettist Mark Campbell, and *Music Speaks: The Language of Poetry and Libretti Workshop Series* with opera coaches Lucy Yates, J.J. Penna, and Rachelle Jonck, FWO has more exciting offerings on the horizon for opera lovers of all ages.

"Fort Worth Opera remains committed to bringing world-class music and musicians to Fort Worth and the surrounding area," says **FWO General Director Afton Battle**. "Through the impactful partnerships with the Met, Tarrant County Pearls, IM Terrell and Opera San José, Fort Worth Opera will continue to expand our reach, engage our community, and bring accessible intersections with Fort Worth Opera that offer a rich experience while building the People's Company.

"We know that our audience is counting on us, perhaps more than ever during the pandemic, to provide content that is meaningful, entertaining and uplifting," says **FWO Artistic Director Joe Illick**. "So, we have created an extraordinary lineup of experiences for you during this time when we can't perform for you in theaters!"

For the first time in Fort Worth Opera's 74-year history, the company will be collaborating with the *Metropolitan Opera* for an opera film festival in North Texas. *FWO's Moonlight Film Fest*, the second such collaboration of its type with the Met and a regional US opera company, following

Arizona Opera this past November, will present three encore performances from the Met's award-winning cinema series, *The Met: Live in HD*, February 4, 11, and 18.

The festival will showcase the Met's productions of Philip Glass's smash-hit minimalist masterpiece *Akhmaten* (February 4), with countertenor **Anthony Roth Costanza** as the eponymous ancient Egyptian pharaoh and mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges** as Nefertiti; Puccini's timeless romantic tragedy, *La Bohème* (February 11), with soprano **Sonya Yoncheva** and tenor **Michael Fabiano** as ill-fated lovers Mimí and Rodolfo; and Donizetti's hilarious comedy, *La Fille du Régiment* (February 18), starring soprano **Pretty Yende** as Marie, mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** as Marquise of Berkenfield, tenor **Javier Camarena** as Tonio, and screen legend **Kathleen Turner** as the Duchesse of Krakentorp.

The Met: Live in HD series is made possible by a generous grant from its founding sponsor, Neubauer Family Foundation. Digital support of *The Met: Live in HD* is provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Driving Digital Innovation in Arts and Culture. *The Met: Live in HD* series is supported by Rolex. The HD Broadcasts are supported by Toll Brothers, America's luxury home builder®. Dr. John Forestner is the official venue sponsor for Fort Worth Opera, in presenting *The Met: Live in HD*.

February is **Black History Month**, and Fort Worth Opera is throwing a huge virtual celebration on **Sunday, February 21, at 2:00 pm CST**, to honor our Black community, and the pioneering generation of Black opera singers who paved the road for today's exceptional musicians and performers. Hosted by WFAA Channel 8's Daybreak anchor **Tashara Parker**, FWO's star-studded benefit concert, *A Night of Black Excellence: Past, Present, and Future*, will feature some of the greatest Black opera singers of the 21st century.

The extraordinary line-up of local and internationally renowned artists includes **Patrice P. Eaton**, **Nicole Heaston**, **Cameo Humes**, **Keron Jackson**, **Latonia Moore**, **NaGuanda Nobles**, **Kenneth Overton**, **Chivonne Perkins**, **Adam Richardson**, **Audra Scott**, **Karen Slack**, **Takesha Meshé Kizart-Thomas**, **Russell Thomas**, **Darius Thomas**, **Kevin Thompson**, and **Jorell Williams**. They will be joined by Houston's original pop string quartet **Amp'd Quartet**, presented by **DIVISI**, spoken word poet and author **Leslie N. Polk** accompanied by **Mondo Drummers**, dynamic sister duo **Tutt²**, Dallas-based **Bandan Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble**, **Amphibian Stage: Tad-Poles Stilt Dancing Program**, and a Black History narrative by **Baldwin Brown** (Principal of Fort Worth's historic I.M. Terrell Academy for STEM and VPA).

Black History Month and this historic concert are generously sponsored by the **Tarrant County Pearls Chapter of The Society, Incorporated**. Fort Worth Opera is grateful for our partnership with Fort Worth's **IM Terrell Academy for STEM and VPA**, allowing the company to film local performers in the auditorium for this exciting online event. All proceeds will go towards Fort Worth Opera's landmark 75th anniversary season in the fall of 2021.

In March and April, Fort Worth Opera will be partnering with **Opera San José** to stream the company's acclaimed digital production of composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer's *Three Decembers*. Last seen by audiences here in Fort Worth during FWO's 2012 spring Festival, this stunning new film version of the 90-minute chamber opera stars world-renowned mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham**, soprano **Maya Kherani**, and baritone **Efraín Solís**, who joined Fort Worth Opera this fall for some marvelous performances through the *FWO Green Room*.

Based upon Tony Award-winning playwright Terrence McNally's unpublished play, "Some Christmas Letters," *Three Decembers* follows the fascinating portrait of a famous actress, Madeline Mitchell (Graham), and her volatile, often strained relationships with her two adult children, Beatrice (Kherani) and Charlie (Solís). Over three tumultuous decades, long-held family secrets come to life, and family dynamics are powerfully explored. This poignant American opera is about family — the ones we are born into and those we create. Dates, times, and ticket information will be announced at a later date.

In late spring, FWO will be collaborating with **Rocket Cinema** out of Austin, Texas, to present a pop-up, drive-in screening of our Texas-themed world premiere, *Stone Soup*, in the vast parking lot of Fort Worth stadium, Farrington Field. This charming Great Depression-era family fable was a hit with North Texas audiences when the company presented socially distanced performances this past November. Partially filmed on green screens with full costumes, set, and props, *Stone Soup*, the film, is FWO's second foray into the world of cinema after *Bernadette's Cozy Book Nook*, and one of three fantastic collaborations between FWO Artistic Director and composer Joe Illick and Grammy-winner Mark Campbell.

Initially set to take the virtual stage this fall, the company decided to offer live performances instead, as production wrapped on filming this delightful new family opera. FWO Manager of Education **Sheran Goodspeed Keyton** (Virtual project producer), Producer **Charles W. Bush** of Appointed Productions (Film Producer), and FWO Head of Music, **Dr. Charlene Lotz** (Music Producer) teamed up to create one of the most imaginative family offerings in recent memory with this 30-minute film. Fort Worth Opera looks forward to sharing *Stone Soup* with our community in the months ahead.

Throughout the months of March-May, weather-permitting, the company will present spring performances of *FWO GO*, its nationally recognized series of live pop-up concerts in neighborhoods throughout Dallas was Fort Worth. Fort Worth Opera's incredibly talented young artists will perform opera arias, musical theater favorites, pop songs, and classic standards from the Great American Songbook from a flat-bed trailer "stage," pulled by a pick-up truck. Finally, in May of 2021, tenor **Darius Thomas**, soprano **Megan Koch**, and FWO Head of Music and Director of the Children's Opera Theatre, **Dr. Charlene Lotz**, will be featured in Fort Worth Opera's hour-long **Lesley Resident Artist Virtual Recital**, streamed free for audiences through the *FWO Green Room*.

www.fwopera.org

2021 Spring Line-Up:

Fort Worth Opera's Moonlight Film Fest with the Metropolitan Opera

The Met: Live in HD series is made possible by a generous grant from its founding sponsor, Neubauer Family Foundation. Digital support of *The Met: Live in HD* is provided by Bloomberg Philanthropies, Driving Digital Innovation in Arts and Culture. *The Met: Live in HD* series is supported by Rolex. The HD Broadcasts are supported by Toll Brothers, America's luxury home builder®.

Dr. John Forestner is the official venue sponsor for Fort Worth Opera, in presenting *The Met: Live in HD*.

February 4, 11, 18, 2021

Akhmaten (Thursday, February 4, at 7:00 pm)

Philip Glass (Composer), Karen Kamensek (Conductor); Dísella Lárusdóttir (Queen Tye), J'nai Bridges (Nefertiti), Anthony Roth Costanzo (Akhnaten), Aaron Blake (High Priest of Amon), Will Liverman (Horemhab), Richard Bernstein (Aye), Zachary James (Amenhotep). From November 23, 2019.

La Bohème (Thursday, February 11, at 7:00 pm)

Giacomo Puccini (Composer), Marco Armiliato (Conductor); Sonya Yoncheva (Mimi), Susanna Phillips (Musetta); Michael Fabiano (Rodolfo), Lucas Meachem (Marcello), Alexey Lavrov (Schaunard), Matthew Rose (Colline). From February 24, 2018.

La Fille du Régiment (Thursday, February 18, at 7:00 pm)

Gaetano Donizetti (Composer), Enrique Mazzola (Conductor); Pretty Yende (Marie), Stephanie Blythe (Marquise of Berkenfield), Javier Camarena (Tonio), Maurizio Muraro (Sulpice); Kathleen Turner (Duchesse of Krakentorp). From March 2, 2019.

Tickets are \$35 per car for one film, \$60 per car for two films, and \$75 per car to view all three films at the Coyote Drive-In. Gates open at 6:00 pm with a 7:00 pm showing each night.

Tickets can be purchased online at <https://www.fwoopera.org/moonlight-film-fest> or by contacting Fort Worth Opera's box office at 817.731.0726, Monday-Friday, 9 am–5 pm CST

A Night of Black Excellence: Past, Present, and Future

All-Star Virtual Benefit Concert

Sponsored by Tarrant County Pearls Chapter of The Society, Incorporated

February 21, 2021, at 2:00 pm CT

Available to stream live through the *FWO Green Room*

Starring Patrice P. Eaton, Nicole Heaston, Cameo Humes, Keron Jackson, Latonia Moore, NaGuanda Nobles, Kenneth Overton, Chivonne Perkins, Adam Richardson, Audra Scott, Karen Slack, Takesha Meshé Kizart-Thomas, Russell Thomas, Darius Thomas, Kevin Thompson, and Jorell Williams.

Featuring spoken word poet and author Leslie N. Polk accompanied by Mondo Drummers, dynamic sister duo Tutt², Baldwin Brown, Koro African Drum and Dance Ensemble, Amphibian Stage: Tad-Poles Stilt Dancing Program, and Amp'd Quartet, presented by DIVISI.

A Night of Black Excellence Production Team:

Sheran Goodspeed Keyton (FWO Manager of Education and Community Engagements)

- Virtual Producer and Director

Tyrinika Marie (FWO Development and Production Administrative Coordinator)

- Virtual Production Manager

Charles W. Bush (Founder of Appointed Productions)

- Video Production

\$25 Individual tickets for homes where only an individual will be viewing the recital.

\$40 Household tickets for households with more than one individual viewing this recital.

\$80 VIP tickets include recital and virtual reception, including an online meet & greet.

Tickets can be purchased online at <https://www.fwopera.org/a-night-of-black-excellence> or by contacting Fort Worth Opera's box office at 817.731.0726, Monday-Friday, 9 am–5 pm CST

Three Decembers

Digital Production in March & April 2021
Partnership with Opera San José

Starring Susan Graham (Madeline Mitchell), Maya Kherani (Beatrice), and Efraín Solís (Charlie)
Jake Heggie, composer
Gene Scheer, librettist
Available to stream through the *FWO Green Room*
Ticket information coming soon

Stone Soup

World Premiere Family Film in Spring 2021
Partnership with Rocket Cinema

Starring Flora Wall (Sally), Christopher Curcuruto (Max), Kayla Nanto (Edna), Darius Thomas (Stan), and Meredith Browning (Delia)
Joe Illick, composer
Mark Campbell, librettist
Ticket information coming soon

FWO Lesley Resident Virtual Recital

Coming in May of 2021

Starring Darius Thomas, Megan Koch, and Dr. Charlene Lotz
Available to stream through the *FWO Green Room*
Tickets are free for the public
Information coming soon

ABOUT FORT WORTH OPERA: Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is poised to celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2021. For the last fifteen years, FWO has become one of the leading American companies dedicated to nurturing and performing new opera, in addition to producing traditional repertoire with rising American stars. The company's acclaimed Frontiers program was held digitally this fall with our first digital Libretto Workshop. The company's Children's Opera Theatre typically reaches about 60,000 students across North Texas each season with live, interactive performances.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, FWO has created online educational curriculum for local music students to supplement their in-school studies, and COT can also now serve entire families and communities beyond the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Fort Worth Opera is committed to celebrating all North Texans, and through our ongoing *Noches de Ópera* program, the company offers community-driven events and powerful operas that represent the diverse cultures of all of the Americas.

Fort Worth Opera is sponsored in part by awards from The Arts Council of Fort Worth & Tarrant County, The City of Fort Worth, and the Texas Commission on the Arts. Additional Fort Worth Opera sponsors include: the Amon G. Carter Foundation; the Sid W. Richardson Foundation; Visit Fort Worth; Virginia Hobbs Charitable Trust, Simmons Bank, Trustee; and the Hattie Mae Lesley Foundation, Bank of America, Trustee.

A Night of Black Excellence: Past, Present, and Future, Black History Month, and Fort Worth Opera's Children's Opera Theatre are sponsored by Tarrant County Pearls Chapter of The Society, Incorporated.

FWO Green Room is sponsored by Haltom's Jewelers, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, The Kimbell Art Museum, Kardaras Insurance Agency, UNT Health Science Center, and The Trew Barry Group.

American Airlines is the Official Airline of Fort Worth Opera. Arts and Culture Texas Magazine is the Official Media Sponsor of Fort Worth Opera.