



North Carolina Opera Opens 2018-19 Season with Concert Performance of Bellini's Bel Canto Masterpiece *Norma*

OCTOBER 1, 2018—RALEIGH, NC—North Carolina Opera opens its 2018-19 season with a concert performance of Bellini's bel canto masterpiece *Norma* at 2 p.m. on October 21, Meymandi Concert Hall at the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, 2 East South Street in Raleigh. Tickets start at \$25 and are available for purchase online at www.ncopera.org or by phone at 919-792-3853. *Norma* is sung in the original Italian with projected English translations.

Norma features superb cast of internationally acclaimed singers, including soprano **Leah Crocetto**, who made her NCO in 2012 as Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore*, singing her first performance of the title role. Mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong**, *Norma*'s rival Adalgisa, and tenor **Chad Shelton**, their shared love interest Pollione, make their NCO debuts. **Antony Waters**, Music Director of the Pittsburgh Opera and Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera, makes his company debut conducting the North Carolina Opera Orchestra and Chorus.

The Druid high priestess *Norma* tries to keep a fragile peace as her people clamor for war. She betrays them by taking a Roman lover, with disastrous consequences. This classic love triangle features a surprising and heroic finale, coupled with gorgeous melodies including the signature aria, "Casta Diva."

"*Norma* is a touchstone work of bel canto repertory. Not only is the music beautiful, but it dazzles with both fire and ice in this classic story of love and revenge. *Norma* had its world premiere in 1831 and we are proud to present its long overdue Triangle premiere," said NCO's General Director **Eric Mitchko**. *Norma* is generously sponsored by Rosemarie Sweeney.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Antony Walker (conductor) is the Music Director of the Pittsburgh Opera. His recent performances with that company include *Tosca* (with Leah Crocetto in the title role), *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Moby-Dick*, *Turandot*, *Salome*, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Summer King*, *Nabucco*, and *Così fan tutte*. He is the Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera, where he recently conducted Massenet's *Hérodiade* and Beethoven's *Leonore*.

Maestro Walker made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2011 conducting Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* and has returned to the house to conduct performances of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Les pêcheurs de perles* and *Die Zauberflöte*.

Leah Crocetto (Norma) made her NCO debut in 2012 as Leonora in Verdi's *Il trovatore*. This afternoon, she returns to sing her first performance of the title role in Bellini's *Norma*. Ms. Crocetto is a frequent guest of the San Francisco Opera, where she has sung the title roles in *Aida* and *Luisa Miller*, Mimì in *La bohème* and Liù in *Turandot*, the role in which she made her 2015 Metropolitan Opera debut. She has also sung *Aida* with Seattle Opera and Washington National Opera, Élisabeth de Valois in Verdi's *Don Carlo* at Washington National Opera and Opera Philadelphia, and two Puccini roles (Mimì and the title role in *Tosca*) at Pittsburgh Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth DeShong** (Adalgisa) makes her NCO debut as Adalgisa, a role that she sang last year at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Ms. DeShong has performed at the world's finest opera companies including, the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Last season, she scored a triumph at the Metropolitan Opera as Arsace in Rossini's *Semiramide*, which was telecast Live in HD to movie theatres around the globe.

Tenor **Chad Shelton** makes his NCO debut as Pollione, a role that he sang last season at Houston Grand Opera and sings later this season at Utah Opera. He is a frequent leading presence with Houston Grand Opera. His roles there include Alfredo in *La traviata*, Don Jose in *Carmen*, Chairman Mao in *Nixon in China*, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. Later this season he returns to the Metropolitan Opera in Verdi's *Otello*.

Bass-baritone **Ao Li** makes his NCO debut with this concert performance of *Norma*. He is a past winner of the Plácido Domingo Operalia World Opera Competition and the National Council Auditions of the Metropolitan Opera. He has sung several roles with the San Francisco Opera as Ascanio Petrucci (*Lucrezia Borgia*), Lorenzo (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), Uberto (*La serva padrona*), and Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*). Last season, he sang the role of Colline in *La bohème* at Utah Opera.

Tenor **Wade Henderson** (Flavio) is a frequent guest artist at NCO, where he has appeared in productions of *Rigoletto*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Das Rheingold*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Tristan and Isolde*, *La bohème*, *Aida*, and *Carmen*. Elsewhere he has sung leading roles in *Madama Butterfly* (Lt. Pinkerton), *Pagliacci* (Canio), *L'amico Fritz* (Fritz), and Scarce's *A Tree – A Rock – A Cloud* (Old Man).

Mezzo-soprano **Kathleen Felty** (Clotilde) performed at NCO's 2017-18 Season Reveal and makes her company mainstage debut with this concert performance of *Norma*. She is a Fellow at the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute. Her roles there include Angelina (*La Cenerentola*), Geneviève (*Impressions de Pelléas*), Dinah (*Trouble in Tahiti*), the Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Paula (*Florença en el Amazonas*).

ABOUT NORTH CAROLINA OPERA

North Carolina Opera was formed in 2010 from the merger of The Opera Company of North Carolina and Capitol Opera Raleigh. It is dedicated to presenting operatic performances at the highest level throughout the Triangle. North Carolina Opera brings international level artists to Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill, and also engages the best in local Triangle talent. The company has presented a wide range of repertoire, from Handel and Mozart to John Supko, D.J. Sparr, and Philip Glass. NCO has presented the local premieres of works by Wagner, Verdi, Britten, Tchaikovsky, and Dvořák. NCO was part of the consortium that commissioned Jennifer Higdon's and Gene Scheer's *Cold Mountain*, which was presented in partnership with Carolina Performing Arts in 2017 in Chapel Hill.

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