

## Virginia Arts Festival Announces 23<sup>rd</sup> Season

2019 highlights include world premiere dance commissions, a Broadway superstar, a new Chamber Music Series Director, and Shakespeare celebration

For 23 years the Virginia Arts Festival has presented world class performances throughout Southeastern Virginia and continues to transform the cultural scene. Among the more than 40 events and performances planned this season, including U.S. artists and performers from around the world, the 2019 season will be full of awe-inspiring and memory making moments, including many ground breaking firsts for the Festival.

Among the “firsts” coming this season are two world premiere dance works from **Dance Theatre of Harlem** and **Richard Alston Dance Company**, which have been commissioned through the Festival’s partnership with the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution. The season also marks a new chapter for chamber music programs as Van Cliburn Gold Medalist **Olga Kern** takes the stage as the new Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music. And, the East Coast premiere of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*, originally produced by Shakespeare’s Globe in London will feature JoAnn Falletta with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra.

### **Best of Broadway**

The Virginia Arts Festival’s season will kick off with the Emmy and Tony Award winning actress and singer, **Kristin Chenoweth** on Friday, April 12 at Chrysler Hall with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and Broadway conductor and Festival favorite **Rob Fisher**. Chenoweth’s career spans film, television, voiceover and stage. The critically acclaimed star originated the role of Glinda the Good Witch on Broadway’s *Wicked* in 2004. She has also been nominated for two Emmy Awards and a People’s Choice Award for her role on *Glee*. Norfolk native Rob Fisher is one of the most sought-after music directors on Broadway, having led such hits as *An American in Paris*, *Anything Goes*, *Wonderful Town*, *Chicago* and more.

In what is sure to be a brilliant finale for the Virginia Arts Festival’s 23<sup>rd</sup> season, **Michael Feinstein**, known as “the ambassador of the Great American Songbook,” will close the Festival on Sunday, May 19, at the Sandler Center featuring beloved songs and the tales behind the music. A great musician and storyteller, Feinstein has dedicated his life to preserving and celebrating the unforgettable songs that defined American popular music in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Dance Series**

Virginia Arts Festival and the [2019 Commemoration, American Evolution™](#) have commissioned a new ballet from **Dance Theatre of Harlem**, which will premiere May 3-5, 2019, at Chrysler Hall. Themes of the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution, which commemorates key historic events that occurred in Virginia in 1619, will be reflected in the work. The new ballet is being created by award-winning choreographer **Claudia Schreier**, and is set to a score composed by **Jessie Montgomery**, whose music has been hailed as “wildly colorful and exploding with life” (*The Washington Post*).

One of the greatest living contemporary choreographers, Richard Alston is revered for his musicality, creating dances of “amazing speed, explosive power and linear grace...that change your breathing while you watch” (*The New York Times*). On March 21 at Chrysler Hall, this prolific, influential creator brings **Richard Alston Dance Company**, presenting a program of works never before performed in the U.S.

including a world premiere of a new work commissioned by Virginia Arts Festival and 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution.

In another first this season, **Jessica Lang Dance** will make their Festival debut Sunday, April 14 at Chrysler Hall. Choreographer Jessica Lang has been hailed as “a master of visual composition” by *Dance Magazine*, seamlessly incorporating striking design elements and transforming classical ballet language into artfully crafted, emotionally engaging contemporary works.

Rounding out the Festival’s robust dance series this year is **Pilobolus**, the beloved company known for making impossible shapes of the human body, in intricate, acrobatic movement that will delight and astonish on Friday, May 10, at the Sandler Center in Virginia Beach.

### **Vocal Music**

Following the Festival’s February recital by Renée Fleming, opera lovers can look forward to a concert by the reigning male stars of opera: **Lawrence Brownlee**, tenor, and **Eric Owens**, bass-baritone. These dynamic vocalists join forces in a program of operatic classics and spirituals on Sunday, March 3 at the historic Attucks Theatre, where the echoes of history complement their performance.

**Cantus** takes the Norfolk Academy stage on Tuesday, April 30. This eight-man a capella vocal ensemble is known for their trademark warm sound and innovative programming and have been hailed by the *Washington Post* for their “expressive power.”

A band of extraordinary chemistry and exquisite musicianship, **I’m With Her** features multi-Grammy winners Sara Watkins, Sarah Jarosz and Aoife O’Donovan. *Variety* calls their mesmerizing sound “Bliss...stunning female harmony singing and virtuosity.” Don’t miss this chance to hear three amazing musicians inspire each other to new heights in this concert!

### **Shakespeare Celebration**

The Virginia Arts Festival has always been known for its inspired collaborations with regional arts organizations. One of the highlights of the Festival’s coming season will be a special project co-presented with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra: **Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra** will have its East Coast premiere on May 17 at the Ferguson Center and May 18 at Chrysler Hall. This extraordinary production, originally produced by Shakespeare’s Globe in London, will feature costumed actors on stage with the orchestra, as JoAnn Falletta conducts a sensuous, beautiful score by French composer Florent Schmitt. The production has only been performed twice – once in London and once at the Hollywood Bowl – and offers both theater and music lovers a rare opportunity for enchantment. “Four stars! There was a superb synchronicity between actors and orchestra, with every emotional shift carefully underscored. Antony and Cleopatra loved and fought while Schmitt’s music at its most extravagant surged round them. Fascinating, every second of it” (*The Guardian*, London).

The Festival will present a week of performances in Zeiders American Dream Theater in Virginia Beach for the building’s inaugural season. **Reduced Shakespeare Company** will perform *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)* [revised] Tuesday – Sunday, May 7-12. The company is a three-man comedy troupe presenting an irreverent, fast-paced romp through all 37 of Shakespeare’s plays in 97 maniacal minutes. It’s a long-running hit for all ages - as explained by the *Today Show*, “If you like Shakespeare, you’ll like this show. If you hate Shakespeare, you’ll love this show!”

The Festival's Shakespeare celebration will continue with the first U.S. performances of **The HandleBards**, a quirky British troupe that travels the countryside on bikes, hauling the props and costumes for their hilarious renditions of Shakespeare's classics. Stay tuned for May 2019 performance dates and locations!

### **Chamber and Classical Music**

In October 2018, the Virginia Arts Festival announced the new Connie & Marc Jacobson Chamber Music Series Director, Russian-American Van Cliburn Gold Medalist **Olga Kern**. Not only has she curated a full season of fan favorite Coffee Concerts and chamber music, Ms. Kern will also be featured in performances throughout the season, giving Festival audiences plenty of chances to experience her talent and vivid stage presence. Ms. Kern performs a special solo piano recital on April 16 at the TCC Roper Center and she'll perform with the Dalí Quartet on May 13 in the Robin Hixon Theater. Another notable chamber music concert will feature the Festival debut of the Jupiter String Quartet, performing Monday, April 29 in the Robin Hixon Theater. Discover "an ensemble of eloquent intensity" that has become "one of the mainstays of the American chamber-music scene" (*The New Yorker*). The Jupiter String Quartet is co-presented with The Feldman Chamber Music Society.

Olga Kern has assembled an extraordinary five-concert series of the Festival's popular "Coffee Concerts," which offer audiences the chance to hear great performers in intimate spaces and to mingle with artists and fellow fans after the performance. The full Coffee Concerts series lineup can be found at [vafest.org](http://vafest.org).

There's more classical music virtuosity to experience! The innovative program **Transfigured Nights** is the brainchild of acclaimed cellist Alisa Weilerstein and a group of world-class musicians: pianist Inon Barnatan, violinist Sergey Khachatryan, and percussionist Colin Currie. They will perform works by Beethoven, Shostakovich and Schoenberg in an entirely new way as these virtuoso artists explore rarely heard transcriptions, created either by the composers themselves, friends of the composers, or admirer. This a must-hear experience for music lovers will be presented on May 8 at the TCC Roper Performing Arts Center in Norfolk.

### **Jazz & Cabaret**

Legendary musicians Béla Fleck and Chick Corea join forces for a duet of banjo and piano. The Grammy-winning duo will combine Fleck and Corea's most recognizable tunes with the music from their Latin Grammy-winning album *The Enchantment* and their extraordinary live set *Two*. With a mix of jazz and pop standards, from jazz, bluegrass, rock, flamenco and gospel, this will be a casual, intimate evening with two icons on May 11 at the Sandler Center.

Singer, actor, playwright, author, and irresistibly dynamic performer **Storm Large** first shot to fame as a finalist on the CBS show *Rock Star: Supernova*, and her fans have followed her around the world, from clubs to concert halls. Returning to the Festival this year on April 13 at Norfolk's Granby Theater, fans can revel in her extraordinary performance. "Part angelic, part gut-wrenching rock growls and soul-shaking soul" (*AdelaideNow*) *Adult content; children under 13 not admitted.*

The grandson of jazz trumpet legend Doc Cheatham, trumpeter **Theo Croker** has earned the attention of top musicians including Wynton Marsalis, Roy Hargrove and more. In a sprawling, genre-bending journey through bop, soul, funk, R&B, and beyond, this groundbreaking artist makes his Virginia Arts Festival debut on May 9 in the Zeiders American Dream Studio Theater.

### **Returning Favorites**

A hit of last year's Virginia Arts Festival, the **Music Maker Blues Revue** brings storied blues players back to the stage, giving eager audiences a rare opportunity to hear pioneers of the blues, artists who have shared the stage with such greats as Ray Charles, B.B. King, and many others. Music Maker Blues Revue takes the stage at Roger Brown's in Portsmouth on May 2.

***At the Illusionist's Table*** returns May 6 – 17 for a two week run at Byrd and Baldwin. Acclaimed illusionist Scott Silven hosts intimate dinners interwoven with illusion, mentalism and storytelling. Tickets are extremely limited; these dinners accommodate just 20 people at each performance. Discover why *The New York Times* said "Wow. Wow. Wow."

Outdoor events return including the 17<sup>th</sup> annual **PANFest**, May 11 and 12 in Virginia Beach, a festival of Caribbean music on the oceanfront showcasing steelpan virtuosos and up and coming U.S. and international steel bands. And be sure to save the date for the 18<sup>th</sup> annual **Virginia Beer Festival**, offering craft brews from throughout Virginia, the region, and the world on Saturday, May 18, at Norfolk's Town Point Park, co-produced with Norfolk Festevents.

### **2019 Virginia International Tattoo**

For 22 years, fans have flocked to Norfolk from around the world to experience the largest spectacle of music and might in the United States. In the tradition of the world's great "Tattoos" in Edinburgh and Basel, the Virginia International Tattoo is an awe-inspiring celebration of inspirational military music, majestic pipes and drums, show stopping drill team maneuvers, colorful dancers, and much more. Audiences are encouraged to come early for the "Tattoo Hullabaloo" on Scope Plaza and other free pre-show events.

Every year's Tattoo is different. In 2019, there will be an extraordinary cast of hundreds of performers from around the world, titled **Courage & Commitment: A Salute to Women in the Military**, April 25 – 28 at Scope Arena.

Just one hundred years ago, women were allowed to serve in uniform for the first time. More than 30,000 volunteered during the First World War. Today, one sixth of all Active-Duty service members are women and these 230,000+ women serve in every branch in virtually every capacity. Generation after generation of women have shown not only the courage to protect the nation in times of war, but the commitment to change the nation for the better from within. In signature Tattoo style, their stories will be told.

A full calendar of the 2019 Virginia Arts Festival season is available at [www.vafest.org](http://www.vafest.org).

Tickets for all events can be purchased online at [www.vafest.org](http://www.vafest.org), by phone at 757-282-2822 or by visiting the Virginia Arts Festival box office located at 440 Bank Street in Norfolk between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday-Friday.

### **About the Virginia Arts Festival**

Since 1997, the **Virginia Arts Festival** has transformed the cultural scene in southeastern Virginia, presenting great performers from around the world to local audiences and making this historic, recreation-rich region a cultural destination for visitors from across the United States and around the world. The Festival has presented numerous U.S. and regional premieres, and regularly commissions new works of music, dance, and theater from some of today's most influential composers,

choreographers and playwrights. The Festival's arts education programs reach tens of thousands of area schoolchildren each year through student matinees, in-school performances, artists' residencies, master classes and demonstrations.

**About American Evolution, 2019 Commemoration**

Virginia Arts Festival is proud to partner with **American Evolution™**, an initiative of the Commonwealth of Virginia commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of key historical events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 that continue to influence America today. Through a series of signature events and education programs of national and international significance, the American Evolution™ initiative is inspiring local, national, and international engagement in the themes of democracy, diversity, and opportunity and building awareness of Virginia's role in the creation of the United States and Virginia's leadership in education, tourism, and economic development over the past 400 years. The Virginia Arts Festival partnership with American Evolution™ began in 2017 and continues through 2019.

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