

## Virginia Arts Festival Announces 24<sup>th</sup> Season

*Dozens of spring performances of music, dance, theater and more, in venues throughout Coastal Virginia*

Virginia Arts Festival will light up stages throughout Hampton Roads in spring 2020, bringing acclaimed artists from around the world. “It’s a season of joy,” said the Festival’s Perry Artistic Director Rob Cross. “From our season-long celebration of the masterworks of Beethoven to brilliant new ballet to virtuosic performances by masters of jazz, folk and world music, you’ll find experiences that quicken your pulse, soothe your soul, and spark passionate discussion.”

### Dance Series

One of the most brilliant ballet companies in the world, the **Hong Kong Ballet** makes its Virginia Arts Festival debut April 17-19, performing its exuberantly creative production of **ALICE (in wonderland) with Virginia Symphony Orchestra**. Ingeniously staged and choreographed by the company’s artistic director Septime Webre, with eye-popping costumes by Liz Vandal of Cirque du Soleil, this vibrant spectacle is a treat for all ages. A destination for dance lovers each spring, the Virginia Arts Festival will also present the electrifying, Memphis-based **Collage Dance Collective** April 21 and the hilarious parodies of the tutu-clad, all-male **Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo** April 29.

### Beethoven Celebration

The Festival joins the worldwide celebration of the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven this spring, presenting performances throughout the region that feature some of classical music’s most acclaimed artists. A highlight of the celebration will be a **Virginia Symphony Orchestra** performance of Beethoven’s towering **Ninth Symphony**, with its soaring “Ode to Joy,” and Beethoven’s **Emperor Piano Concerto**, performed by Van Cliburn Gold Medalist **Olga Kern**. Marking her final appearance as Music Director of the VSO, **JoAnn Falletta** conducts the Orchestra, Chorus and soloists in an unforgettable celebration. Patrons can choose to hear this program in Newport News May 15, Norfolk May 16 or Virginia Beach May 17. With live video projected from on-stage screens, you’ll see every bit of the action as you listen to this magnificent music.

### Chamber Music

More Beethoven masterworks await music lovers throughout the spring, curated by the Festival’s Connie & Marc Jacobson Director of Chamber Music, Olga Kern. In intimate concerts featuring virtuoso musicians from around the world, the Festival’s Chamber Music series offers opportunities to hear the legendary **Brentano Quartet**, Italy’s **Quartetto Adorno**, violinist **Alexandre da Costa** and **Olga Kern** herself.

### Film, Theater, and Visual Art

An array of truly “beyond category” performances mark the Virginia Arts Festival’s foray into these uniquely visual art forms in 2020. In a rare treat for music and history lovers,

the Festival and Sandler Center Foundation present a bravura performance of music from ***Victory at Sea***, the landmark 1950s television series recounting the United States World War II naval victories. Featuring music from the stirring score written for the series by the legendary Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, curated and conducted by one of the most sought-after music directors on Broadway today, **Rob Fisher**, and performed by the **Virginia Symphony Orchestra**, this spectacular evening of music May 31 will also feature beloved show tunes of the 1940s and '50s, performed by award-winning Broadway star Laura Osnes.

Audience involvement is key in the ***Sing-A-Long-A Sound of Music*** April 25, when fans can sing along with Julie Andrews and the von Trapp kids in a screening of the beloved film—and costumes (nuns, goat herders, baronesses, anyone?) are encouraged! You'll not only see this beloved movie in magnificent Technicolor and glorious Cinemascope, it's a major audience participation event with subtitles on screen showing the lyrics for all the songs. A host leads the audience in this interactive, inclusive, celebratory, uplifting and irresistible evening.

Virginia Arts Festival has a history of inspired collaboration and unique performances that offer revelatory rediscovery of rarely heard works. This season, music and poetry lovers can experience **William Walton's *Façade***, a groundbreaking 1923 composition that incorporated the poems of Edith Sitwell. Conducted by JoAnn Falletta and featuring a company of gifted musicians and "reciters," *Façade* will be performed April 9 in the new Joan and Macon Brock Theatre, Susan S. Goode Fine and Performing Arts Center at Virginia Wesleyan University.

A new work, **The Black Mozart** which premiered at Tanglewood in 2019, tells "a slice of the wild historical story of composer and activist Chevalier de Saint-Georges, an 18th-century black aristocratic composer who...became a pioneer in nearly every field he touched" (*Bay State Banner*). Born in Guadalupe, he immigrated to France and became Marie Antoinette's personal music teacher and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's roommate, a darling of French society, a sought-after violinist, master fencer, soldier, and composer of some of the most beautiful and popular music of the era. Lost to history after the French Revolution, this amazing historical figure is brought to life in this unique performance that combines actors and musicians May 7 at the Attucks Theatre.

From the award-winning, nationally recognized Norfolk State University Theatre Department comes the riveting new production of Charles Fuller's Pulitzer Prize-winning ***A Soldier's Play***, a murder mystery set in a Louisiana Army base that lays bare the raw emotions of racism. The original New York production by the Negro Ensemble Company launched the careers of Denzel Washington and Samuel L. Jackson and got rave reviews. Acclaimed NSU Theatre Director Anthony Stockard has assembled a cast of NSU alumni and guest artists for an unforgettable four performances, May 28 – 31.

One of the most unique presentations of the 2020 Virginia Arts Festival will be **Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel: The Exhibition**, which uses state of the art technology to reproduce Michelangelo's frescoes in their original sizes for visitors to explore up close; the exhibit will be displayed in Norfolk's MacArthur Center May 7-31.

### **2020 Virginia International Tattoo**

A centerpiece of the Festival each season, the Virginia International Tattoo presents more than 1,000 performers from around the world in a magnificent spectacle of music, patriotism, and international friendship, drawing more than 25,000 fans who travel to Norfolk to see this great show every year. Inspired by the traditions of the world's great "Tattoos" in Europe, 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. This season's Tattoo is April 30 – May 3 and promises to be one of the most moving ever, marking the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II and honoring the courage and sacrifice of the **Greatest Generation**. With stirring music, historic photos and video, tributes from U.S. military bands, and special appearances by veterans, the 2020 Tattoo will remember and celebrate the men and women who changed the course of history, not only for the United States but for the world.

### **Vocal Music**

There is no more marvelous instrument than the human voice, and opportunities to celebrate the gift of vocal music abound this season. **The Kingdom Choir**, the ensemble that stole the show at Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding, makes its Festival debut in a roof-raising performance May 4. Rounding out the Festival's vocal music series will be the elegant stylings of South African cabaret star **Vuyo Sotashe** April 28, the wry and heart-rending songs of Grammy-winning singer-songwriter **Shawn Colvin** May 6, and the sublime harmonies of the female Americana trio **Red Molly** May 29.

### **Music for All Tastes**

Each year, Virginia Arts Festival brings a spectacular mix of musical styles to stages throughout the region. On April 23, audiences will hear the astonishing virtuosity of the **Zakir Hussain Trio**, in a spellbinding evening of Indian music from three master artists: Hussain on tabla, Jayanthi Kumaresh, the "Jimi Hendrix of the veena," and violinist Kala Ramnath. May 9, the popular public radio show **Live From Here**, hosted by master multi-instrumentalist **Chris Thile**, will visit Chrysler Hall for a live airing of the show. **Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra** and Grammy Award- and Pulitzer Prize-winning jazz legend **Wynton Marsalis** swing into Virginia Beach on May 20. May 21, the Americana duo **Mandolin Orange** returns to the Festival after participating in the Festival's 2019 Williamsburg Live lineup. One of the most Grammy Awarded musicians in history, **Béla Fleck** reunites with the **Flecktones** May 30 as part of their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary tour. And the Festival's signature summer event, **Williamsburg Live**, will return to the heart of Colonial Williamsburg, June 26-27; the slate of artists will be announced soon.

**Performance Calendar and Tickets**

A **full calendar** of the 2020 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.

**Media Contact:**

Alli Pereira

757-282-2804

[apereira@vafest.org](mailto:apereira@vafest.org)