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VAF PRESS CONTACT:

Alli Focke

afocke@vafest.org

757-282-2804



ROBERT W. CROSS
PERRY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Virginia Arts Festival Announces Its 22nd Season

2018 highlights include Bernstein at 100 Tributes, Classic Ballet and Contemporary Dance, A Mozart Celebration, and more

Norfolk, VA – Mark your calendar for masterworks from every art form in the Virginia Arts Festival’s 22nd season. The Festival’s 2018 performances will feature celebrations of the genius of Leonard Bernstein and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, an array of dazzling ballet and contemporary dance, lively theater, and music across many genres, from classical to jazz to pop.

Leonard Bernstein at 100

The Virginia Arts Festival joins the worldwide celebration of the Leonard Bernstein centennial for a spectacular opening weekend! Friday, April 13 at the Ferguson Center for the Arts in Newport News, and Saturday, April 14 at Chrysler Hall in Norfolk, the Virginia Symphony Orchestra is joined by the Virginia Chorale and Todd Rosenlieb Dance in performances of some of Bernstein’s most exciting works with Bernstein’s daughter Jamie as narrator. The audience is taken on a breathtaking ride through the joyful celebration of the *Chichester Psalms*, the darkly intricate beauty of the *Serenade*, featuring Grammy-nominated violinist Robert McDuffie, the transporting Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story*, and the knife-edge jazz of *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs*, written for Benny Goodman and performed here by award-winning clarinetist Jon Manasse. Virginia Symphony Orchestra’s Music Director JoAnn Falletta will conduct the celebration; Falletta studied under Bernstein while at Juilliard.

Bernstein on Broadway, Saturday, May 12 at the Sandler Center for the Performing Arts in Virginia Beach, will bring together award-winning Broadway music director Rob Fisher with Broadway stars and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra and Chorale to celebrate Bernstein’s unforgettable musicals including *Candide*, *West Side Story*, *On the Town*, *Wonderful Town*, and more.

Dance Series

Love at first dance! Direct from the United Kingdom, in its only North American appearance this year, the acclaimed **Birmingham Royal Ballet** will perform *Romeo and Juliet* April 20 – 22 at Chrysler Hall. With choreography by Sir Kenneth MacMillan, *Romeo and Juliet* is dance at its most poignant and beautiful, from the balcony scene’s ecstatic pas de deux to the brash swordplay of the feuding noblemen. Adding to the enchantment, the production’s lush sets and costumes evoke a Renaissance court, and the Virginia Symphony Orchestra will perform the hauntingly beautiful Prokofiev score live.

Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater returns with “movement that will move you” (*New York Magazine*) March 2- 4 at Chrysler Hall in Norfolk. An audience favorite, this powerful, graceful company

performs works by contemporary choreographers and ends each performance with *Revelations*, the signature work of the company's founder, Alvin Ailey.

The Festival's dance season continues with the electrifying **Parsons Dance**, May 3 at the Sandler Center. One of the most popular dance companies in country, Parsons Dance prides itself on its crowd-pleasing, accessible works "noted for their wit, split-second shifts in tempo and mood, and sheer exuberance" (*The Washington Post*).

Classical Music

For 21 years, the Virginia Arts Festival has been a destination for chamber music lovers, thanks to the Festival's Director of Chamber Music, André-Michel Schub. Winner of three prestigious competitions for classical piano (the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, the Naumberg International Piano Competition, and the Avery Fisher Recital Award), he is among the most admired pianists in the world. Mr. Schub will be retiring after 2018, and the Festival is dedicating its 22nd chamber music season to him. Mr. Schub, in turn, has chosen to devote his final season to the works of Mozart, and in one of the most unforgettable highlights of the season will perform three Mozart concerti with the Virginia Symphony Orchestra: a "triple" concerto for three pianos, a double concerto for two pianos, and Mozart's final piano concerto, May 11 at the Sandler Center. Pianist Schub will also perform in several of the Festival's evening chamber and morning Coffee Concerts throughout the spring.

Each year, the Festival invites a renowned chamber ensemble to perform in residence, adding school performances and master classes to public appearances. In 2018, the featured ensemble will be the headline-making **Dover Quartet**, whose dazzling performances have placed them on top of critics' must-hear lists; the Quartet will play in the Festival's intimate Robin Hixon Theater, Clay & Jay Barr Education Center, May 14.

Christina and Michelle Naughton have been hailed by the *San Francisco Examiner* for their "stellar musicianship, technical mastery, and awe-inspiring artistry." Twin sisters, the piano duo will perform May 16.

Vocal Music

Singer, songwriter, artist, activist **Rhiannon Giddens**, the Grammy Award winner who was just awarded the prestigious MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant," has been added to the Festival spring 2018 lineup. Giddens, known for her moving performances of songs that reflect the history of the African-American experience, will perform April 18 at Norfolk's Attucks Theatre. In addition to her critically acclaimed albums and concert performances, Giddens appears regularly on cable TV's CMT hit *Nashville* as Hallie Jordan, gospel singer with the voice of an angel.

Preserving history note by note, the **Fisk Jubilee Singers** will perform March 18 at Norfolk's historic Attucks Theatre. This internationally renowned ensemble from Tennessee's Fisk University was awarded the 2008 National Medal of Arts, the nation's highest honor for artists and patrons of the arts. The original Jubilee Singers introduced "slave songs" to the world in 1871 and were instrumental in preserving this unique American musical tradition.

From Britain comes the all-male a cappella singing sensation **Semi-Toned**, April 17 at Norfolk Academy. With their witty musical mash-ups and hilarious choreography, this cheeky group of young men take the audience on a pop music thrill ride, from the seventies to present day.

Raising voices from the 12th century through the 21st, the female a cappella trio **ModernMedieval** will perform on May 10. The program includes chants by Hildegard of Bingen, the medieval Catholic nun whose mystic visions inspired her poetry and music.

Jazz and World

Iconic jazz pianist, composer and bandleader **Chick Corea** joins banjo virtuoso **Béla Fleck** in an evening of high-flying, genre-jumping musical invention, May 20 at Norfolk's Harrison Opera House. With a fan base who will follow them wherever their music takes them, this dynamic duo has a collective 93 Grammy nominations and 36 wins across categories.

Exploring the roots of Celtic music across countries and centuries, renowned early music artist and scholar **Jordi Savall** and his **Hespèrion XXI** ensemble join Spanish bagpiper **Carlos Núñez** May 1.

The vision of Tunisian-born, Paris-raised multi-reed player Yacine Boularès, the vibrant ensemble **Ajoyo** brings a mystic brew blending African tradition, jazz and soul to the Attucks Theatre main stage May 9.

Theater

February 24, the Festival will present the L.A. TheatreWorks production of the critically acclaimed Broadway hit play **The Mountaintop**. On the evening of April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated outside room 306 of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. What happened inside room 306 the night before the killing is a mystery. In *The Mountaintop*, playwright Katori Hall imagines what may have transpired in the overnight hours between the legendary civil rights leader and a hotel maid, creating "a powerful, poetic take on King's legacy" (*Los Angeles Times*).

May 2 brings the spectacular hit **RAIN: A Tribute to the Beatles**, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the release of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, bringing the historic album to life in its entirety, in addition to other Beatles favorites. Co-presented with Seven Venues.

Signature Events

One of the largest and most spectacular Tattoos in the world, **Virginia International Tattoo** brings military bands, pipe and drum corps, dancers, choirs and more together for an awe-inspiring production at Scope Arena, April 26-29. The centerpiece of this year's celebration of patriotism and international friendship is a moving salute to Medal of Honor recipients. From the colorful NATO Fest Parade to the American Pipe Band Championship to the daily pre-show "Tattoo Hulabaloo," the Tattoo weekend will offer nonstop entertainment and inspiration.

Outdoor events return including the 16th 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.

The Festival's **FRINGE** returns to Norfolk's NEON District May 16-20, with one-of-a-kind artists in unique and intimate venues.

The 17th annual **Virginia Beer Festival** offers craft brews from throughout Virginia, the region, and the world, May 19 at Norfolk's Town Point Park.

Virginia Arts Festival is proud to partner with **American Evolution™**, an initiative of the Commonwealth of Virginia commemorating the 400th 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; the Festival's 2018 season American Evolution™ events include Alvin Ailey® American Dance Theater and Birmingham Royal Ballet.

A full calendar of 2018 Virginia Arts Festival season is available at www.vafest.org.

Tickets for all events can be purchased online at 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. ###