



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Toledo Opera Launches Free Citywide Pop-up Performance Series, “Opera Outdoors”

Socially-distanced performances featuring 2020-21 Resident Artists to take place at the Toledo Zoo, Farmers’ Market, public-housing complexes, and more; first performance is September 12

The Toledo Opera announced the launch of Opera Outdoors, a new series of pop-up live performances that will take place at outdoor commercial, recreational, and community hubs across Toledo this fall, beginning September 12.

The series will feature the Opera’s four 2020-21 Resident Artists - chosen from an international pool of more than 150 applicants for a one-year residency in Toledo - performing iconic vocal selections from the classical repertoire, along with musical theater, jazz, and other American standards. Venues include the Toledo Farmers’ Market, the Toledo Zoo, and public-housing complexes.

“Opera Outdoors illustrates our commitment to making rich, engaging arts experiences accessible to all Toledo communities - even while taking the safety precautions necessary to protect public health,” said Toledo Opera Executive Director Suzanne Rorick. “We’re excited to bring the beauty of opera, and the world-class vocal talent of our Resident Artists, to Toledoans where they live, shop, and play.”

The eight pop-up events are the first live, in-person performances of the Toledo Opera’s 62nd season. Performances at the Valentine Theater will resume in February 2021 with Franz Lehár’s *The Merry Widow*, subject to current public-health guidelines.

All Opera Outdoors events are free and open to the public. Face coverings are required, and attendees are asked to maintain a minimum of 6 ft. distance from the performers and from one another. Events may be postponed or cancelled in the event of inclement weather.

Opera Outdoors Schedule

Saturday, September 12: 10:00 AM, Toledo Farmers’ Market (525 Market St)

Saturday, September 19: 11:00 AM, Food for Thought (N. Huron St., between Orange and Cherry)

Thursday, September 24: 4:00 PM, Glendale Terrace Main Building (3200 Glendale Ave)

Wednesday, October 7: 11:00 AM, Toledo Zoo Main Entrance - Senior Discovery Day (2 Hippo Way)

Saturday, October 10: 10:00 AM, Toledo Farmers’ Market

Monday, October 12: 11:00 AM, Toledo Zoo Main Entrance - Lucas County Admission Day

Saturday, October 17: 11:00 AM, Food for Thought

Thursday, October 22: 4:00 PM, McClinton Nunn Homes Community Building (425 Nebraska Ave)

For more information: Contact **Alyssa Greenberg, Community Engagement Director**, at agreenberg@toledoopera.org, or visit <https://www.toledoopera.org/community/opera-outdoors/>.

TOLEDO OPERA RESIDENT ARTISTS: 2020-21 SEASON

Each year, Toledo Opera selects some of the most promising emerging performers from an international pool of 150+ applicants for a one-year residency experience in Toledo. Resident Artists perform in main-

stage productions at the Valentine Theater, at area schools through the Opera On Wheels program, and in other Toledo Opera programs and productions, with a new group of Resident Artists selected each season.

Grace Wipfli (soprano), from Toledo, Ohio, has proven to be an impressive, charming, and promising young soprano. Her performance highlights include Sa femme in Milhaud's *Le Pauvre Matelot*, Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), The Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*), Ann Truelove (*The Rake's Progress*), The Beggar Woman (*Sweeney Todd*), and the Baker's Wife (*Into the Woods*). Most recently, she performed at Carnegie Hall as the Soprano Soloist for Ralph Vaughan William's *Dona Nobis Pacem*, conducted by Dr. Lynda Hasseler. In 2019, she received an Encouragement Award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in the Wisconsin District and was also a finalist for the Northwestern University Concerto/Aria Competition. Ms. Wipfli has completed the Summer Concert Residency with Florentine Opera, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and performed with the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival. She earned her Master of Music at Northwestern University where she studied with Sunny Joy Langton. She completed her undergraduate studies at Capital University while studying with Jacqueline Barlow-Ware. While at Capital, Ms. Wipfli won the 2017 Concerto Competition in Performance and the Richard Miller Award for Fine Singing from the Ohio chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. She is overjoyed to be returning to her hometown as the Soprano Resident Artist for Toledo Opera's 2020-21 season.

Olivia Johnson (mezzo soprano), born in Jacksonville, NC, is a graduate of the University of Michigan, where she earned her Master's degree while studying under Professor George Shirley. After performing the comprimario role of the Girlfriend in Daniel Sonenberg's *The Summer King* at Michigan Opera Theatre in 2018, Ms. Johnson made her second appearance with MOT in the role of La Ciesca (*Gianni Schicchi*) followed by *Buoso's Ghost* by Michael Ching. She performed Mathilde in Opera MODO's innovative re-telling of Poulenc's *Dialogue of Carmelites*. A former member of Michigan Opera Theatre's touring ensemble, Ms. Johnson has performed throughout the Metro Detroit area premiering new and creative works. Ms. Johnson made her soloist appearance with the Rackham Choir in Richard Einhorn's "Voices of Light" at the Detroit Institute of the Arts and her solo debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in their annual Classical Roots Gala. Ms. Johnson was the first-place winner of the 2017 National Vocal Arts Competition for Emerging Artists sponsored by the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club, Inc. She also appeared in the role of Mercédès (*Carmen*) at the Martina Arroyo Foundation, Prelude to Performance. Ms. Johnson attended the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria making two solo appearances with their orchestra.

Andrew Payne (baritone) hails from Waynesboro, Pennsylvania and is a graduate of Northwestern University where he earned a Master's degree in voice and opera studying with W. Stephen Smith. He graduated from Temple University with a B.M. in Voice Performance where he studied with Marcus DeLoach. Past operatic roles include Howard (*Dog Days*), Sam (*Trouble in Tahiti*), Guglielmo (*Così Fan Tutte*), Benoît/Alcindoro (*La bohème*), Johann and Albert understudy (*Werther*), Nick Shadow (*The Rake's Progress*), Frank (*Die Fledermans*), and the Gendarme (*Les Mamelles de Tirésias*). Mr. Payne has also been the baritone soloist in Stacey Garrop's *Terra Nostra*. Recently, he traveled to London and performed in a world premiere of a musical theatre production of *The Mad Hatter* in the West End. This summer Andrew will be attending the Milnes Voice Studio in Savannah, Georgia where he will be playing the role of Leporello (*Don Giovanni*). Andrew recently won first place in Opera Idol hosted by Sherrill Milnes, third place in the NATS Philadelphia Chapter in 2015, and was a recipient of the Middleburg Music Scholarship in 2017. He has performed in masterclasses with Sherrill Milnes, Warren Jones, Anthony Michaels-Moore, and Brenton Ryan. Andrew is very excited and honored to begin his post-grad life and career with a wonderful company that is Toledo Opera.

Emily Morin (pianist) explores her interest in a wide range of solo repertoire and frequently collaborates with vocalists, instrumentalists, and composers. As a participant in the 2018 soundSCAPE Composition and Performance Exchange in Cesena, Italy, she performed as a soloist with a chamber orchestra and in various ensembles. She then returned to soundSCAPE in 2019 as a staff accompanist for the festival's vocal

masterclasses, in addition to chamber music performances. Currently based in Toledo, Ohio, Emily enjoys accompanying students in a variety of educational settings and competitions (most recently, the NATS Great Lakes Region Auditions). Emily completed her Master of Music degrees in Piano Performance and Collaborative Piano at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), studying with Dr. Solungga Liu. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music from Providence College, where she studied with Dr. Sang Woo Kang. While at BGSU, she and Nicholas Kottman were awarded first prize in the Dr. Marjorie Conrad Art Song Competition. After joining Toledo Opera as a Resident Artist in 2019, Emily is thrilled to continue with the company for their 2020-2021 season.

ABOUT TOLEDO OPERA

The Mission of Toledo Opera is to enhance the cultural fabric of the region by creating opera experiences that celebrate, both in the theater and beyond its walls, what is unique to opera: dramatic, passionate stories expressed through glorious music and the powerful voices of classically trained singers.

Having opened its first season in 1959 with Verdi's *Aida* in the 3,500 seat Paramount Theater in downtown Toledo, Toledo Opera continues to produce quality opera each season. Subsequently, the Opera performed in the Toledo Museum of Art's Peristyle Theater and the Stranahan Theater. In October 1999, the Opera opened its fortieth anniversary season with performances in the newly renovated 900-seat Valentine Theatre. That venue has now become its home, with the company's main stage productions, three each year, taking place there. For the past five years, one of the productions has been an American 20th-21st century opera. In April 2018, for the first time in its history, Toledo Opera premiered an opera, Douglas Tappin's *I Dream*. The Toledo Symphony Orchestra plays at the Opera's performances, with the Toledo Opera Chorus and Children's Chorus performing as needed. In 1987, the company began offering educational programs for children and youth which now include An Opera Is a Story for preschoolers, Opera on Wheels for elementary students, and Student Night at the Opera for middle and high school students. In 2018, the Opera put on two, two-week summer Opera Camps, one in collaboration with the Toledo School for the Arts and one at the Marathon Center for the Performing Arts in Findlay.