



ARIZONA OPERA

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ARIZONA OPERA TO PRODUCE “REIMAGINED” 2020/21 SEASON STARTING IN OCTOBER

ARIZONA OPERA’S NEW APPROACH TO THE SEASON WILL PRESENT LIVE, OUTDOOR PERFORMANCES AND INNOVATIVE DIGITAL OFFERINGS, REPLACING ITS PREVIOUSLY PLANNED IN-THEATER PRODUCTIONS. THE SEASON’S FOCUS WILL BE ON CREATIVITY AND CONNECTION, INCLUDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPANY’S FIRST MOTION PICTURE ADAPTATION OF AN OPERA.

Recognizing the current public health challenges due to COVID-19, Arizona Opera announced today that it will be replacing its planned “in-theater” productions for the 2020/21 Season with an array of exciting alternative programs that can be more safely enjoyed by a larger audience. Arizona Opera’s reimagined season will offer live, outdoor, socially distanced performances, combined with a collection of digital offerings intended to expand Arizona Opera’s impact throughout the state and beyond.

Included in these new offerings will be a thrilling film adaptation of *The Copper Queen*, Arizona Opera’s second world premiere commission, by Clint Borzoni and John de los Santos. This will be Arizona Opera’s first foray into sharing the art form more broadly through a streamed, motion picture format.

Arizona Opera’s President and General Director, Joseph Specter, made the announcement about the company’s new season following an extended period of internal discussions among the board and staff, and through significant community feedback. This includes patron polling that reinforced the importance of identifying a new approach for the coming season that balances health concerns with the company’s dedication to fulfilling its mission to serve the community over the coming year.

“Our patrons have clearly expressed that they remain committed to staying connected with Arizona Opera and our art form, but that they are not ready to return to an in-theater setting under current circumstances. The health and safety of our patrons, artists, and staff is of the greatest importance to Arizona Opera. That was, and will always be, first and foremost in our decision making.”

Mr. Specter continued, “We are determined, nevertheless, to continue serving communities throughout our state and beyond through a variety of outdoor and digital offerings that take advantage of the beauty of Arizona during the opera season. The curated group of programs that we are launching next season represents our proactive approach to serving Arizonans, even as we acknowledge today’s unique challenges.”

“My great hope is that once we are on the other side of this pandemic, the positive actions we are taking to stay engaged now will allow Arizona Opera to become an even more impactful organization in years to come. We look forward to safely serving Arizona communities through our novel efforts this season,” he commented.

Arizona Opera Board Chair, Sharon Landis, added, “I want to assure our community that the Arizona Opera Board of Directors stands firmly behind the decision to reimagine our 2020/21 Season. We remain fully committed to sharing our amazing art form with opera lovers as well as newcomers, and with the same quality and passion that our countless supporters have come to expect from Arizona Opera, whether it be indoors, outdoors, or online.”

STUDIO SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Arizona Opera’s 2020/21 Season is currently scheduled to begin on Friday, October 2 in Phoenix and on Sunday, October 4 in Tucson, with outdoor performances by members of Arizona Opera’s prestigious Marion Roose Pullin Opera Studio.*

The inaugural performance in Phoenix will take place at the Arizona Opera Center, and will feature a celebration of the naming of the Shoshana B. and Robert S. Tancer Plaza, announced earlier this year (<https://bit.ly/2ZJQYgw>). Further details of the monthly Studio Spotlight Series in Phoenix and Tucson will be announced in the coming weeks and will include community locations that extend beyond the company’s traditional performance venues.

These performances will feature a variety of musical themes and will take place with appropriate social distancing. The series will also be streamed online for those who would prefer to watch from the comfort of their own homes.

ARIZONA ARIAS

In early 2021*, the company will launch Arizona Arias, a series of outdoor concerts performed by some of today’s leading opera stars, featuring the skillful musicianship of the Arizona Opera Orchestra.

Joseph Specter notes, “During this challenging time, arts organizations across the country are experimenting with creative approaches to engaging both current and new audiences. Our goal in presenting Arizona Arias in unique outdoor settings is to create safe ways for people to enjoy this incredible music that is beloved by so many. Arizona’s natural beauty and temperate winter climate provides the perfect blend for this approach in our reimagined season.”

As with the Studio Spotlight Series, Arizona Arias will be recorded and made available for viewing online.

THE COPPER QUEEN – MOTION PICTURE

In addition to live and streamed performances through the Studio Spotlight Series and Arizona Arias, Arizona Opera is making an ambitious turn toward film by producing a motion picture adaptation of the company’s second world premiere commission, *The Copper Queen*.

This new opera, by composer Clint Borzoni and librettist John de los Santos, has been in development with Arizona Opera since 2015. Originally intended to open the 2020/21 Season as part of the McDougall RED Series, Arizona Opera—along with the opera’s creators and its all-female production team, led by director Crystal Manich—have joined forces with longtime video partner and creative agency Manley Films, to create a feature-length film of the opera.

The intense and compelling storyline of *The Copper Queen* is set in Bisbee, Arizona at the famously haunted Copper Queen Hotel, with parallel dramatic lines set a century apart, in 1910 and 2010. The opera tells a tale of human bondage, furtive romance, secret connections, and, ultimately, redemption, in a powerful tale that brings two determined women together across the generations. The film of *The Copper Queen* will be shot this season and is planned for online release in Spring 2021*.

“Clint and I are so excited to bring the premiere of *The Copper Queen* to opera audiences across the globe in this compelling new vision,” stated John de los Santos, the opera’s librettist.

Clint Borzoni, the composer of *The Copper Queen*, added, “I believe that the intimacy of the work lends itself well to film, since the piece is a dark and rich character study. Through the lyrical score and gripping plot, I’m confident audiences will be pulled into the haunted room along with the characters.”

Jim Manley of Manley Films noted, “We are honored to be working in partnership with Arizona Opera and Clint and John, as well as director Crystal Manich and her team, on this remarkable project. We are dedicated to celebrating this wonderful new work by creating this full-length film—which will live on far beyond its initial premiere—that pays tribute to one of our state’s most iconic locales.”

MORE PLANS ON THE HORIZON

Arizona Opera will announce details of additional programming initiatives in the upcoming weeks. This will include pilot programs currently in development that are linked to the prize-winning entries for the company’s innovative OnPitch Business Challenge, which concluded earlier this year (<https://bit.ly/3eRrtvt>).

The OnPitch Challenge was created by Arizona Opera in association with ASU’s Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts and the W. P. Carey School of Business. Funding for the program was made possible by a \$150,000 Innovation Grant from OPERA America, through the generous support of the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation.

The competition’s purpose is to discover new revenue opportunities for Arizona Opera and the opera field at large. The two winning concepts will deliver opera to audiences in new and innovative ways, including opera-themed comic books and an original serial opera program designed specifically with mobile devices in mind.

The two winning submissions of the OnPitch Challenge are:

Comic Book: *The Opera* – This project will result in the creation of “an opera that can be held in one’s hands.” It is a physical, interactive companion to a live performance that will enhance the transformative power of operatic storytelling and facilitate the reliving of the experience long afterward. Its creator is Alek Shrader, an operatic tenor who rose to fame in The Metropolitan Opera’s documentary, *The Audition*, and who has additionally embarked upon work as an opera stage director.

Cell Phone Soap Opera – This project will focus on rebuilding opera for the mobile phone from the ground up, creating a fusion of art and technology that will reach and move today’s opera fans while increasing the visibility for the art form with new audiences. Its creators are Steve Robinson (executive

producer, former general manager of WFMT), Patrick Zimmerli (composer of jazz and classical music), Mirabelle Ordinaire (librettist and director), Jason Starr (award-winning filmmaker), and Nicholas Ivor Martin (artist relations).

LOOKING FORWARD

Mr. Specter reiterated his commitment to keeping people connected to Arizona Opera during this challenging time. “While we look forward with passion to producing opera in the theater again, our Reimagined 2020/21 Season allows our organization to not only keep our opera family energized and safely connected, but to serve newcomers to our art form more fully, as well,” said Mr. Specter.

INFORMATION FOR 2020/21 SEASON TICKET HOLDERS

The Arizona Opera box office staff will be reaching out soon to all households that currently have tickets for the 2020/21 Season. Patrons will have the opportunity to keep the value of their tickets on account for the 2021/22 Season, a landmark year that will celebrate the company’s 50th Anniversary. Those who do not wish to keep their season tickets on account may also donate the value of their tickets to the organization or explore other options with the box office. The Arizona Opera box office can also be reached by emailing boxoffice@azopera.org.

For further information about this release, please contact Tom Michel, Director of Marketing, Communications & PR at tmichel@azopera.org or 702.533.0075.

**Programming dates subject to change*

ABOUT ARIZONA OPERA

Arizona Opera, entering its 49th season, produces fully-staged operas, concerts, and collaborative programs throughout the state of Arizona each season, and is among only a handful of companies in the U.S. that performs annually in more than one city. Arizona Opera elevates the transformative power of storytelling through music, cultivating community and strengthening a state and people as adventurous and diverse as the place they call home. Since its inaugural year in 1971, Arizona Opera has produced more than 175 fully-staged operas and concerts. The company’s artistic history is rich with a blend of opera’s traditional repertoire featuring baroque, bel canto, and verismo works, turn-of-the-century masterpieces, operettas, and contemporary operas.