

**For Immediate Release: Thursday, May 28, 2020**

All media inquiries please contact Jonathan Eifert: T: 347-741-1913, E: [pr@jonathaneifert.com](mailto:pr@jonathaneifert.com)

All BOF inquiries please contact Lisa Andersen: T: 413-213-6641, E: [landersen@berkshireoperafestival.org](mailto:landersen@berkshireoperafestival.org)



## **Berkshire Opera Festival Announces Changes to its Fifth Anniversary Season in Response to COVID-19**

**GREAT BARRINGTON, MA** — In response to ongoing concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF) is reevaluating and reimagining the programming originally slated for its upcoming 2020 summer season. BOF has approached making these decisions with its usual spirit of resilience and optimism for the future, striving to maintain its high artistic standards for performances and programming in alternative ways that reduce health risks to our performers, staff, and audiences according to the public safety guidelines developed by the State of Massachusetts.

After careful consideration with its Board of Directors, Co-Founders, and Staff, Berkshire Opera Festival has made the decision to cancel its Fifth Anniversary Gala Concert and Celebration scheduled for August 13, 2020 at The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center in Great Barrington, MA. Under the current health and safety guidelines mandated by the State of Massachusetts related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made that it is impossible to proceed with the evening's performance and post-show celebration. Canceling this very social event is the only prudent course of action for the well-being of all patrons and performers, as well as staff members of both Berkshire Opera Festival and The Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center.

BOF will explore alternative ways of connecting and celebrating its Fifth Anniversary with its family of friends and supporters in the weeks and months to come. They wish to extend a special thanks to mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, who was scheduled to be the guest host for the Gala Concert. They also wish to acknowledge the talent, flexibility, and generosity of guest artists Matthew Grills (from 2019's production of *Don Pasquale*), and Marcy Stonikas and Adriana Zabala (from 2017's production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*), who were to perform alongside cast members from BOF's upcoming production of *Don Giovanni*, joined by the Berkshire Opera Festival Orchestra and Chorus.

The Mahaiwe's box office staff will email all current ticket holders to discuss their options, which include donating the value of their ticket in support of BOF or receiving a refund.

In addition to canceling the Gala Concert and Celebration, BOF has reimagined how it will proceed with its mainstage opera, Mozart's *Don Giovanni* - currently scheduled for August 22, 25, and 28 at the Colonial Theatre in Pittsfield, MA. *Don Giovanni* will now be presented in concert as a semi-staged performance, with no sets or costumes, which embraces social-distancing measures for performers and audiences alike. BOF is working carefully with staff and leadership at the Colonial Theatre to develop detailed safety protocols to protect all individuals on- and off-stage that are in alignment with the State of Massachusetts' official Reopening Plan for Phase 3 venues. Any further modifications that might be deemed necessary to either the performance or audience-going experience will be conveyed to patrons well in advance.

BOF Co-Founders Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman look forward to presenting this semi-staged production of *Don Giovanni* with full orchestra and chorus to provide the same high-quality artistic experience that BOF patrons have come to expect.

###

## **ABOUT BERKSHIRE OPERA FESTIVAL**

Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF) is a fully-producing summer festival founded by Jonathon Loy and Brian Garman which presented its first season in 2016. The mission of Berkshire Opera Festival is to entertain and enrich the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds throughout the Berkshire region by providing accessible and affordable performances of a broad range of operas with the highest artistic standards. Each summer, BOF presents musically and dramatically compelling operatic productions, in addition to recitals and other related musical events. Recent productions include Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Strauss's *Ariadne Auf Naxos*, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. [berkshireoperafestival.org](http://berkshireoperafestival.org)