



## WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS OPERATIC BASS SOLOMAN HOWARD WITH 2021 AMBASSADOR OF THE ARTS AWARD



(Washington, D.C.) — Washington Performing Arts announced today that operatic bass and social justice advocate Soloman Howard is the recipient of its 2021 Ambassador of the Arts Award. A native Washingtonian, Howard is one of the most celebrated operatic performers on the world’s stages today and a powerful voice advocating for inclusivity in the fields of opera and the arts.

“It is with great pleasure that we honor Soloman Howard with our Ambassador of the Arts Award,” stated Washington Performing Arts President and CEO Jenny Bilfield. “Soloman has been such an exemplary artist, friend, and inspiration to all of us—especially those who have followed his path from his earliest days as a member of our Children of the Gospel Choir. He has played a key role in many important Washington Performing Arts events in recent years, and he has been a valued thought partner as we have intensified our investment in our Gospel Music Programs. For all these contributions, and for his many achievements on stages and in communities throughout the world, we commend him sincerely and look forward to witnessing the new heights he is sure to reach.”

A member of Washington Performing Arts’s Children of the Gospel Choir in the 1990s, Soloman Howard displayed precocious vocal talent and a striking stage presence that led to his selection for Washington National Opera’s (WNO) prestigious Cafritz Young Artists Program. Since graduating from that program in 2014, he has taken on leading roles in WNO’s productions of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*, Wagner’s *Ring Cycle*, and Philip Glass’s *Appomattox*, for which he received widespread critical acclaim. Howard has also appeared in high-profile performances at The

Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and English National Opera, as well as with leading symphonic ensembles such as the National Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Howard's success as a performer has given him a platform to advocate for both the arts and social issues. This effort was recognized by the Anti-Defamation League in the summer of 2016, who presented Howard with their Making a Difference Award for raising awareness of voting rights through his performances of *Appomattox* and for bringing opera into the larger community.

Howard becomes the ninth recipient of Washington Performing Arts's Ambassador of the Arts Award, which recognizes extraordinary achievement, service, and advocacy in the performing arts by any individual. Past honorees include violinist, educator, and humanitarian Midori (2020); flutist and educator Sir James Galway (2019); educator and historian Lonnie G. Bunch III (2018); mezzo-soprano and educator Denyce Graves (2017); business leader and philanthropist Jacqueline Badger Mars (2016); Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg (2015); pianist, conductor, and educator Leon Fleisher (2014); and soprano Jessye Norman (2013).

Regarding this accolade, Howard remarked "What an honor it is to be named Washington Performing Arts's 2021 Ambassador of the Arts. Washington Performing Arts is special to me for several reasons: it's the organization that gave me the platform that I needed to thrive; I learned and grew from my experiences there; it kept me in an environment that was safe for me to express my diversity as an artist; and it put me on big stages for major moments in history across the world. Those reasons make Washington Performing Arts a part of my heart and legacy—forever."

A short (9-minute) video saluting Soloman Howard as the Washington Performing Arts 2021 Ambassador of the Arts is available for viewing on the [Washington Performing Arts website](#).

## ABOUT SOLOMAN HOWARD

Winner of the Kennedy Center's 2019 Marian Anderson Vocal Award, Soloman Howard is a graduate of Washington National Opera's Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program and garners high praise from the press for his vivid performances on the great opera and concert stages of the world. Soloman Howard's voice is described as "sonorous" by *The New York Times*, "superhuman" by *The Denver Post*, and "a triumph" by *The Guardian*.

Soloman Howard joins San Francisco Opera in the 2021-22 season for no less than three productions: *Tosca*, *Fidelio*, and *Don Giovanni*. He appears with English National Opera in the role of The Commander in Poul Ruder's *The Handmaid's Tale* in a new production directed by the Artistic Director Annilese Miskimmon; bows as Colline in *La bohème* at the Teatro Real in a production by Richard Jones conducted by Nicola Luisotti; and reprises the title role of *Approaching Ali*, by composer D.J. Sparr and librettists Mark Campbell and Davis Miller, in a site-specific boxing venue with Las Vegas Opera. Concert appearances of the season include Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Music Director Fabio Luisi and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra as well as with

Jakub Hruška leading The Philharmonia and an all-Verdi Gala Concert at San Francisco Opera under the baton of Music Director Eun Sun Kim.

Performances of 2019-20 included debuts at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the company's new production by Francesca Zambello of *Luisa Miller* conducted by Music Director Enrique Mazzola, as well as at English National Opera in the same title in a new production by Barbora Horáková Joly conducted by Alexander Joel, and Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* in a return engagement with The Metropolitan Opera.

Highlights of the recent past include Jacopo Fiesco in a new production of *Simon Boccanegra* at the Opéra national de Bordeaux conducted by Paul Daniel, Timur in *Turandot* at San Francisco Opera for his debut led by Nicola Luisotti; Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo* at Los Angeles Opera under the baton of Music Director James Conlon; Il Re in *Aida* for a debut at the Teatro Real; and Santa Fe Opera performances as Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* conducted by John Nelson and Colline in *La bohème* conducted by Jader Bignamini. He also achieved great success with the roles of Somnus and Cadmus during an international tour of *Semele* with Harry Bicket leading The English Concert.

For the Washington National Opera, Soloman Howard has bowed as Fafner in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* directed by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Philippe Auguin as well as in leading roles in *The Magic Flute*, *Show Boat*, *Approaching Ali*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Nabucco*. He was heralded for the roles of Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the world premiere of the revised edition of *Appomattox* composed by Philip Glass in a production by Tazwell Thompson, and in the title role of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* written by Jeanine Tesori and J.D. McClatchy.

On the concert stage, he has given performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Music Director Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic on a European tour and with Christian Arming and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra on tour in Asia. He has joined Harry Christophers and the Handel & Haydn Society for Mozart's *Requiem*, Kent Tritle and the Oratorio Society of New York in performances of Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* at Carnegie Hall, and with Christoph Eschenbach and the National Symphony Orchestra in a concert presentation of Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*.

The Anti-Defamation League presented Soloman Howard with their "Making a Difference Award" in the summer of 2016 for raising awareness of voting rights through his performances of *Appomattox* at the Kennedy Center; and for bringing opera into the larger community.

Soloman Howard is a proud graduate of the Manhattan School of Music and of Morgan State University.

## **ABOUT WASHINGTON PERFORMING ARTS**

One of the most established and honored performing arts institutions in America, Washington Performing Arts has engaged for more than half a century with artists, audiences, students, and civic life. The city is truly our stage: for decades, in venues ranging from concert halls and clubs to public parks, we have presented a tremendous range of artists and art forms, from the most

distinguished symphony orchestras to both renowned and emerging artists in classical music, gospel music, jazz, and other rich traditions from around the world. We also have an ever-expanding artistic and educational presence on the internet, envisioning ongoing opportunities for online connection and community.

Washington Performing Arts deeply values its partnerships with local organizations and other arts institutions. Through events online and in myriad performance venues and neighborhoods, we engage international visiting artists in community programs and introduce local artists to wider audiences. We place a premium on establishing artists as a continuing presence in the lives of both young people and adults through residencies and education programs.

Our achievements have been recognized with a National Medal of Arts and with three Mayor's Arts Awards from the DC Government. We have now embarked upon our second half-century, ever inspired by the motto of our founder, Patrick Hayes: "Everybody in, nobody out."

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