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CONTACT
Amanda Sweet
(347) 564-3371
amanda@bucklesweet.com

**Washington Performing Arts Presents
Operatic Bass Soloman Howard with
2021 Ambassador of the Arts Award at
Legacy Society Celebration**

The award ceremony was previously postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic

WASHINGTON— In a special award ceremony during a Legacy Society Celebration at the residence of Spanish Ambassador His Excellency Santiago Cabana on December 12, Washington Performing Arts officially presented operatic bass and social justice advocate Soloman Howard with its 2021 Ambassador of the Arts Award. The Washington Performing Arts Ambassador of the Arts Award is an annual award established in 2013 to recognize extraordinary achievement, service, and advocacy in the performing arts. The presentation to Howard was postponed for a couple of years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The event featured musical performances by tenor Walter Pierce Pearson IV, a member of our Children of the Gospel Choir, and pianist Dr. Lester Green, as well as a surprise performance by Howard’s wife Ailyn Pérez who sang “Nana” by Manuel de Falla, and “Del cabello más sutil” by Fernando Obradors.

“It is with great pleasure that we finally 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, including Marian Anderson’s 75th Anniversary Celebration, and 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.”

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.”

Howard joined the Washington Performing Arts Children of the Gospel Choir (COTG) in the 1990s and 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. He credited the Children of the Gospel Choir for introducing him to classical repertoire, and brought him to his very first overseas travel to participate in the opening of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. To receive his award at the Spanish Ambassador’s residence on the exact date 30 years later when Children of the Gospel Choir performed its very first performance in the Kennedy Center was truly meaningful and came full circle.

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. He was recognized by the Anti-Defamation League’s Making a Difference Award in summer 2016, for raising awareness for voting rights through his performances of *Appomattox* and for bringing opera into the larger community.

The Washington Performing Arts Ambassador of the Arts Award recognizes extraordinary achievement, service, and advocacy in the performing arts by any individual. Howard joins fellow honorees Washington Performing Arts President Emeritus Douglas H. Wheeler (2022); 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).

[View and download photos of the Legacy Society Celebration and Ambassador of the Arts Award presentation here.](#)

ABOUT SOLOMAN HOWARD

A recent graduate of Washington National Opera’s Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program, a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Soloman Howard 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's 2018-19 season features returns to the Metropolitan Opera as The King in *Aida* conducted by Nicola Luisotti; to Los Angeles Opera as the Frate in *Don Carlo* under the baton of James Conlon; Santa Fe Opera as Colline in *La bohème* conducted by Jader Bignamini; and to Washington National Opera to reprise the title role he created for the company in *The Lion, The Unicorn, and Me* by Jeanine Tesori and J.D. McClatchy. He makes a Canadian operatic debut on the stage of Opéra de Montréal as Fafner in *Das Rheingold* under the baton of Michael Christie. Soloman Howard brings the roles of Somnus and Cadmus into his repertoire in an international tour of Semele with Harry Bicket leading *The English Concert* and makes a debut with the Handel & Haydn Society in performances of Mozart's *Requiem* conducted by Music Director Harry Christophers.

Last season international opera house debuts were celebrated on three continents: at San Francisco Opera in *Turandot* conducted by Music Director Nicola Luisotti; at the Teatro Real in *Aida*; and at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Chile in *Don Giovanni*. Other notable opera performances included *Aida* at the Washington National Opera, *Rigoletto* at North Carolina Opera, and *Madama Butterfly* at Santa Fe Opera. In concert, Soloman Howard gave his first performances of Hunding in *Die Walküre* at the Miami Music Festival; he also sang Beethoven's Ninth Symphony both with Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic on a European tour and with Christian Arming and the Vienna Chamber Orchestra on tour in Asia.

Highlights of the recent past include performances of *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera; the role of Jacopo Fiesco in a new production of Simon Boccanegra at the Opéra national de Bordeaux conducted by Paul Daniel; *Don Giovanni* at Santa Fe Opera conducted by John Nelson; *La traviata* at the Los Angeles Opera under the baton of Music Director James Conlon; *The Magic Flute* and *Macbeth* at the Glimmerglass Festival; and the title role of *Approaching Ali* at North Carolina Opera and the Washington National Opera. For the Washington National Opera, Soloman Howard bowed as Fafner in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* directed by Artistic Director Francesca Zambello and conducted by Music Director Philippe Auguin; as well as in leading roles of *The Magic Flute*, *Show Boat*, *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.

On the concert stage, he has been featured in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Gustavo Dudamel conducting the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra in debut appearances on many of Europe's most famous stages. These include El Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, Elbphilharmonie in Hamburg; the Musikverein in Vienna as well as in Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* at Carnegie Hall with Kent Tritle and the Oratorio Society of New York; Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* – opposite Renée Fleming – with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Christoph Eschenbach; Handel's *Messiah*; Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*; and the Fauré *Requiem* with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.



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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 champions the arts as a unifying force and 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, jazz, international genres, and more. 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.

Washington Performing Arts 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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