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**The Dallas Opera Hart Institute for Women Conductors goes virtual
for 2021; seven Conducting Fellows announced**

DALLAS, TX, SEPTEMBER 16, 2020 – **The Dallas Opera** has announced that its acclaimed **Linda and Mitch Hart Institute for Women Conductors**, scheduled for February 8-19, 2021, will conduct the prestigious two-week residency virtually because of the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

TDO's Hart Institute, launched in 2015, is the only program of its kind in the world and seeks to address the extreme gender imbalance of leadership on the podium in opera companies. Now in its sixth year, more than 500 women conductors from 40 nations have been trained, advised, and supported by this extraordinary initiative. Seven new Conducting Fellows have been chosen for 2021.

Normally, the residency includes considerable time rehearsing with both singers and The Dallas Opera Orchestra, culminating in the much-anticipated Showcase Concert. Because COVID-19 restrictions make this impossible for the 2021 program, Fellows will be invited back to Dallas to participate in the 2022 residency.

The 2021 schedule of masterclasses and presentations, still in the planning stage, will take place virtually as participants are unable to travel to Dallas because of the pandemic. While many of the sessions will be closed to all but Hart Fellows, some will be made available to a worldwide audience via various digital platforms.

“An international audience for the Hart Institute gives this program the potential for incredible reach, sustainability, and growth,” explains Ian Derrer, The Dallas Opera’s Kern Wildenthal general director and CEO.

“Musical training and masterclasses at the highest international level, as well as mentorship in how to navigate the industry, including making the connections vital to successful careers, are all part of the curriculum,” Derrer explains. “The goal is to help women conductors advance their careers and find employment in their chosen field.”

The seven women selected as Conducting Fellows for the 2021 Dallas Opera Hart Institute are:

- **Yeo Ryeong Ahn** (South Korea)
- **Christine Brandes** (USA)
- **Michelle Di Russo** (Argentina)
- **Barbara Dragan** (Poland)
- **Chelsea Gallo** (USA)
- **Elinor Rufeizen** (Israel)
- **Susannah Wapshott** (UK)

Each year, the program also accepts a limited number of Americans seeking careers in arts management at a senior administrative level. The administrators selected as 2021 Hart Institute Fellows are **Jessica Gonzalez, Leah Johns, Yvette Loynaz, and Megan Thompson.**

“Highly accomplished women from all over the world apply for Fellowships,” says TDO Director of Artistic Administration David Lomeli, who is instrumental in administering the program and selecting participants. “It’s very, very exciting to see, and I think the professional level of those chosen for the institute class of 2021 is among the highest we’ve ever had.”

“Our industry now actively searches out women conductors who have completed the Hart Institute residency,” Lomeli explains, “with alumnae receiving guest-conducting engagements at major companies around the world, including The Dallas Opera, Welsh National Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Hawaii Opera Theater, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony, Deutsches Symfonie-Orchester Berlin, and more.”

The 2021 Hart Institute faculty includes renowned Italian conductor Carlo Montanaro, who will serve as a Master Teacher, along with French-American conductor Elizabeth Askren, a 2016 Hart Institute alumna, who will act as both Master Teacher and Faculty Liaison.

Other esteemed faculty members for the virtual workshops and sessions next spring include Ian Derrer; TDO’s Mrs. Eugene McDermott Music Director Emmanuel Villaume; the Martha R. and Preston A. Peak Principal Guest Conductor Nicole Paiement; Joel Ethan Fried, artistic director of the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra; Serge Dorny, the incoming head of the Bavarian State Opera; Hart Institute alumna Lidiya Yankovskaya, music director of Chicago Opera Theater; Ana De Archuleta, the president and CEO of ADA Artist Management; and Mariana Fonseca Medina, managing director of digital customer experience at American Airlines.

This season's 2020/2021 Hart Institute for Women Conductors Showcase Concert, featuring alumnae conductors from 2020 and earlier is scheduled to take place on Friday, February 19, 2021, pending COVID-19 restrictions.

For additional information about The Dallas Opera Hart Institute for Women Conductors, visit <https://dallasopera.org/community/artist-development/hart-institute/>

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## **THE DALLAS OPERA HART INSTITUTE – 2021 CONDUCTING FELLOWS**

**YEO RYEONG AHN (South Korea)** most recently appeared as a finalist in the Gustav Mahler competition in Bamberg. She received her Master's Degree in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Illinois under the guidance of Donald Schleicher, and her Bachelor's Degree in Conducting from the Korea National University of Arts. As the recipient (in Arts) of a Fulbright Scholarship sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Ms. Ahn has appeared in music festivals and masterclasses across the globe. These include engagements conducting the Bamberger Symphoniker, Croatian Radiotelevision Symphony Orchestra, Südwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra, Danubia Orchestra Óbuda, Pierre Monteux Summer Music Festival, Järvi Conducting Academy at Pärnu Music Festival, the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, and Gyeonggi Philharmonic Orchestra. Her mentors include Miguel Harth-Bedoya, Peter Eötvös, and Paavo Järvi among others. Yeo Ryeong Ahn actively seeks to work with orchestras all around the world, in order to build connections that will enhance the development of the classical music industry in Korea.

**CHRISTINE BRANDES (USA)** is a conductor who is also acclaimed as a singer of international renown. As a conductor, Ms. Brandes has led Haydn's *Armida* and Rameau's *Acante et Céphise* for Victory Hall Opera (Charlottesville) and Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* for West Edge Opera (Berkeley). The soprano has also performed at many of the world's most distinguished festivals and concert venues. She has sung principal roles with the following opera companies: San Francisco, Seattle, Washington National, Houston Grand, Minnesota, New York City Opera,

Philadelphia, Montreal, and Portland (among others), and has worked with conductors including Charles Mackerras, Christopher Hogwood, Jane Glover, Patrick Summers, Bernard Labadie, Gary Thor Wedow, and George Manahan. Ms. Brandes has also performed as a soloist with major orchestras including The Cleveland Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Houston Symphony, and the Detroit Symphony among others, working with major conductors including Sir Simon Rattle, Pierre Boulez, and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

**MICHELLE DI RUSSO (Argentina)** is a recipient of the 2020 American Austrian Foundation/Faber Young Conductors Fellowship and will join the Chicago Sinfonietta's "Project Inclusion" for the orchestra's 2020/2021 season. She recently graduated with a Doctoral Degree in Orchestral Conducting from Arizona State University where she served as assistant conductor for the ASU Symphony Orchestra and Opera Lyric Theatre. Dedicated to the music of our time, Ms. Di Russo, in 2019, participated as a Conducting Fellow in the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, Cortona Sessions for New Music in Italy, and with the United States Army Band "Pershing's Own." She has served as assistant conductor for the Phoenix Youth Symphony and as cover conductor for The Phoenix Symphony, Arizona Musicfest, Silicon Valley Symphony, and Charleston Symphony. Michelle Di Russo holds a Master of Music in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Kentucky and a degree in Orchestral Conducting from the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina.

**BARBARA DRAGAN (Poland)** was born into a family of scientists and engineers, and while studying both the violin and oboe, also excelled in advanced mathematics and physics. She is currently studying with Prof. Steven Sloane and Harry Curtis at the Universität der Künste Berlin (International Conducting Academy). Prior to her studies in Berlin, she was a student at the Frédéric Chopin University of Music in Warsaw. Ms. Dragan has taken part in many masterclasses, including those led by Colin Metters, Jorma Panula, Sian Edwards, and Antony Hermus. She is an award recipient of the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship (TACF) and Germany's DAAD Scholarship. Barbara Dragan has conducted several professional orchestras, including the Magdeburgische Philharmonie, Kammerakademie Potsdam, Bochumer Symphoniker, Polish Radio Orchestra, Sinfonietta Cracovia, Vienna Festival Orchestra Wien,

Lithuanian State Symphony Orchestra, Brandenburgisches Staatsorchester Frankfurt, Beethoven's Academy Orchestra, Zagreb Chamber Orchestra and the Frédéric Chopin University of Music Symphony Orchestra.

**CHELSEA GALLO (USA)** is an American conductor living in Detroit, Michigan. She made her debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra during the 2019-20 season, where she has also been engaged as the orchestra's Cover Conductor, assisting visiting conductors and presenting pre-concert lectures. Additionally, Ms. Gallo is the music director of the Detroit Community Orchestra and a member of the conducting faculty for the various training programs of the Wu Family Academy. Recently, she was a winner of the Turn the Spotlight Fellowship created to mentor exceptional women and people of color, and was music director of the University of Michigan Life Sciences Orchestra from 2017- 2019. She has guest conducted with the Slovak Sinfonietta, Hartford Opera, and Lithuania State Symphony, among others. While pursuing her conducting degree in Vienna, Austria, Ms. Gallo was the music director of the Cosmos Chamber Orchestra, an ensemble dedicated to uniting scientific and artistic communities, which has worked with organizations including NASA and the National Institute of Aerospace (NIA). The orchestra's recording for the Orion EFT-1 Mission was launched from Kennedy and sent into space. The orchestra was also the first recorded artistic ensemble for the Hubble Space Telescope 25th Anniversary Celebrations.

**ELINOR RUFEIZEN (Israel)** is a conductor and clarinetist, who recently graduated from The Juilliard School with a Master's Degree in Orchestral Conducting, studying with mentors Alan Gilbert and David Robertson. In connection with her work at Juilliard, she been seen in performance at Alice Tully Hall, Merkin Concert Hall, Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, Severance Hall and Cité de la Musique in Paris. Ms. Rufeizen has worked and performed with musicians including Emanuel Ax, Daniil Trifonov, Susan Graham, and composers Jörg Widmann, Shulamit Ran, Steven Stucky, Steven Mackey, and Andrew Norman. Her 2019/2020 engagements included debuts conducting The Juilliard Orchestra, New York's Metropolis Ensemble, and the St. Louis Symphony Youth Orchestra. Ms. Rufeizen was chosen as a semi-finalist at the Siemens Hallé International Conductors Competition 2020 and was a finalist for a position as assistant conductor for the Dallas Symphony and the St. Louis Symphony. Ms. Rufeizen has served as an

assistant conductor for John Adams, Barbara Hannigan, and Marin Alsop. She has participated in masterclasses with Gianandrea Noseda and Matthias Pintscher and was invited to participate at Tanglewood Music Festival as a Conducting Fellow. She has conducted the Juilliard Orchestra, Haifa Symphony Orchestra, Hagalil Orchestra, and Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, among others. Elinor Rufeizen is a recipient of the Bruno Walter Memorial Scholarship and the Charles Schiff Conducting Award. She studied at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris and Cleveland Institute of Music.

**SUSANNAH WAPSHOTT (UK)** read Music at Manchester University, and was subsequently awarded scholarships to the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Since 2008, she has been a member of the music staff at Scottish Opera, where she has worked on more than 50 productions. Ms. Wapshott was assistant conductor for the company's productions of *Nixon in China*, *Katya Kabanova*, *Greek*, *The Trial*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, and *Macbeth*, and was music director/pianist for Scottish Opera's acclaimed small-scale tours of *Carmen*, *La traviata*, *Rodelinda*, and *Macbeth*. Ms. Wapshott is currently the Scottish Opera's associate chorus master, recently guiding the chorus work for Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* at the Adelaide Festival 2020. She won a conducting award from the United Kingdom's GEMMA Classical Music Trust in 2017 and conducted Scotland's Grampian Youth Orchestra summer residential course in 2019. She is also music director of Scotland's Helensburgh Oratorio Choir.

#### **HART INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN CONDUCTORS SPONSORS**

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## ABOUT THE DALLAS OPERA

One of the leading opera companies in the country, The Dallas Opera has an extraordinary legacy of world-class productions and thrilling premieres featuring the greatest operatic artists of our time. Inaugurated in 1957 with a concert featuring the incomparable Maria Callas, TDO is known for the notable U.S. debuts of a host of legendary artists including Plácido Domingo, Dame Joan Sutherland, Jon Vickers, Franco Zeffirelli, and Sir David McVicar. The company has long been an industry leader and innovator through groundbreaking initiatives including the Hart Institute for Women Conductors, TDO Network, free public simulcasts, acclaimed art song recitals, the national vocal competition, special concerts, and outstanding family and award-winning education programs. TDO's home is the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House, a jewel in the Dallas Arts District. As one of the largest performing arts employers in North Texas, TDO is proudly committed to diversity, onstage and off, and is a major contributor to the economic vitality and international cultural reputation of this region.

## SEASON SPONSOR

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