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Image by Ashley Florence

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Victory Hall Opera is thrilled to present the American Premiere of
Jean-Philippe Rameau's opera *Sympathy* (1751)
(Original title: *Acante et Céphise ou La Sympathie*)
Performed in French with English supertitles

Venue: The Haven, 112 Market Street, Charlottesville VA, 22902

Dates: October 28, November 1 and 3

Time: 7:30pm

Tickets: \$12 (Student), \$40 (General Admission), \$75 Premium

Website: www.victoryhallopera.org/sympathy

Conducted by one of America's foremost performers of early music, **Christine Brandes**, and directed by VHO's Artistic Director **Miriam Gordon-Stewart**, *Sympathy* tells the story of two lovers whose relationship is put to the test. Our characters turn to self-help gurus, to best-selling theories and to public protest to try and stay together. But will they find their bliss?

In this reimagining of a Baroque masterpiece, never before performed in the United States, Victory Hall Opera continues its trademark theatrical exploration by pairing opera with hiphop dance in a contemporary mashup. In collaboration with **Resident Ensemble "Early Music Access Project"** led by Charlottesville's David McCormick (formerly of Three Notch'd Road), and hiphop choreographer **Maria Daniel**, VHO will showcase the beauty of Baroque music in an innovative and thought-provoking way.

Joining VHO for this production are internationally-admired artists **Rachelle Durkin** (Soprano) as Céphise and **Ted Schmitz** (Tenor) as Acante, with **Jorelle Williams** (Baritone) as Le Génie. Also starring VHO's **Brenda Patterson** (Mezzo-soprano) as The Grand Priestess.

THE ARTISTS:

Rachelle Durkin (Céphise): New York-based Australian-born lyric coloratura soprano Rachelle Durkin is a regular Principal Artist at the Metropolitan Opera, starring as Lisa (*La Sonnambula*), Clorinda (*Cenerentola*), First Handmaiden (*Sly*), Miss Schlesen (*Satyagraha*), Masha (*Pique Dame*), Frasquita (*Carmen*), Elvira (*L'Italiana in Algeri*) and First Flower Maiden (*Parsifal*). Her appearance as Norina (*Don Pasquale*) at the MET won her a thunderous standing ovation. Rachelle has performed regularly with Opera Australia in roles including Violetta (*La Traviata*) and Adina (*L'elisir d'amore*). She has recently also starred with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Sydney Philharmonia, Hawaii Opera Theatre, West Australian Opera, and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Ted Schmitz (Acante): Berlin-based American tenor Ted Schmitz, known for his witty and versatile stage presence, appears internationally in a wide range of operatic roles, specializing in the music of Benjamin Britten. Highlights include his work with Seattle Opera, Opera Bellas Artes Mexico City, Nico and the Navigators, Bregenzer Festspiele, Aldeburgh Festival, Glyndebourne and The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. His upcoming schedule includes performances at BOZAR, Brussels; Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Staatstheater Oldenburg; Staatstheater Braunschweig; Konzerthaus Berlin; Berlin Radialsystem, Arsenal de Metz, Kampnagel in Hamburg, Opera Nîmes and Theatre d'Antibes.

Jorelle Williams (Génie): Baritone Jorelle Williams has been hailed by *The Washington Post* for his "liquid singing" and "plummy baritone". This season, Mr. Williams appears with the Juneau Symphony Orchestra and as a Soldier in Aucoin's *Crossing* with the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In addition, he will premiere new works by Libby Larsen and Daren Hagen in New York City. Jorelle made his European opera debut at the Budapesti Nyári Fesztival, followed by debuts at Seattle Opera and Atlanta Opera. He appeared with Urban Arias in the World Premiere of *Independence Eve* and performed as soloist with Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra for Marsalis' *Abyssinian Mass*. Mr. Williams has performed and recorded World Premieres by Wynton Marsalis, Lauryn Hill, Erykah Badu and David Lang (with Beth Morrison Projects) and is on the 2017 Grammy-nominated recording of Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain* with the Santa Fe Opera.

Miriam Gordon-Stewart (Director): Australian soprano Miriam Gordon-Stewart has gained recognition across four continents for her powerful instrument and dramatic vulnerability, specializing in the repertoire of Wagner and Strauss. Described in the French press as "a genuine singer-actress", she has performed over 40 leading roles at major opera houses including the Sydney Opera House, Hamburg State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Châtelet (Paris), Korean National Opera and the Bayreuth Festival. She has also performed in concert with the Dresden Philharmonic, the Gulbenkian Orchestra, Lisbon and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Her production of Rameau's *Sympathy* for Victory Hall Opera will be her directing debut.

Christine Brandes (Conductor): Soprano and conductor Christine Brandes has one of the most prestigious performing careers of her generation. Highlights of Ms. Brandes' career include William Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge* at Washington National Opera, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Händel's *Giulio Cesare* at Seattle Opera, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Händel's *Ariodante* at Houston Grand Opera and San Diego Opera, and Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* at the Los Angeles Opera. Ms. Brandes has performed *Le nozze di Figaro* with New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Pacific, and with the opera companies of Minnesota, Montréal, Philadelphia, and Québec. She has recorded with EMI, BMG/Conifer Classics, Dorian, Harmonia Mundi USA, Virgin Classics, and Koch International.