GRAMMY AND MACARTHUR “GENIUS GRANT” WINNER RHIANNON GIDDENS CURATES AND PERFORMS IN THE FOUR-DAY MINI-FESTIVAL REDEFINING AMERICAN MUSIC, MAY 22–25, WITH THE BOSTON POPS AND CONDUCTOR KEITH LOCKHART

GIDDENS PRESENTS HER SIGNATURE BLEND OF FOLK, BLUES, JAZZ, AND COUNTRY MUSIC ON MAY 22 AND 23 WITH HER BAND; ON MAY 24 AND 25, VOCALIST DARIUS DE HAAS AND PIANIST LARA DOWNES JOIN GIDDENS, LOCKHART, AND THE POPS FOR “RHIANNON GIDDENS AND FRIENDS REDISCOVER THE INCREDIBLE BLACK COMPOSER”

FOR THE MAY 22 PROGRAM, PERFORMERS SHARE THE STAGE WITH WINNERS OF THE FIDELITY INVESTMENTS YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION

Click here for complete details of the 2019 Spring Pops season, May 8–June 15; For downloadable photos and artist bios, click here; for press tickets, email ecotten@bso.org or call 617-638-9287

THE 2019 BOSTON POPS SEASON IS SPONSORED BY FIDELITY INVESTMENTS

Singer, violinist, and banjo player Rhiannon Giddens, who made her highly acclaimed Boston Pops debut during the 2018 Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular, returns with her band for a rare weeklong Pops residency, Redefining American Music. For the first two evenings, Giddens leads a genre-busting evening of music from her critically acclaimed albums, fusing influences from roots, jazz, blues, country, gospel, and Celtic music (5/22 & 23). The next two nights, she curates a program that spotlights overlooked African American musicians (5/24 & 25). Broadway vocalist Darius de Haas and pianist Lara Downes join Giddens, the Boston Pops, and Boston Pops conductor Keith Lockhart who will preside over all four evenings.
“When we were introduced to Rhiannon Giddens at the 2018 Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular, we were blown away by her amazing and wide-ranging talent,” says Lockhart. “Now this Grammy and MacArthur ‘Genius Grant’ winner makes her Symphony Hall debut in a major way—presenting a four-day mini-festival. It is truly a dream come true for me and the Pops to dedicate this amount of time to an artist we so deeply admire, and whose gifts are so abundant.”

The co-founder of Grammy-winning string band Carolina Chocolate Drops, Giddens is herself a Grammy-nominated solo artist with a recurring role on the TV show Nashville, and she hosts the Metropolitan Opera’s Aria Code podcast. “One of my passions is ignoring the artificial boundaries of American music—to emphasize that the great thing about our music is that it is made up of so many different cultural influences,” said Giddens in the spring 2019 issue of Symphony magazine. “I have recently had the good fortune of performing more and more with wonderful orchestras like the Pops; and I am reminded what an incredible experience it is. … What a wall of sound that washes over you—I am enchanted anew every time, and I never tire of it.”

Of special note are the concerts on May 24 and 25 that will shine a light on artists who have been largely ignored or forgotten, particularly African American composers. Giddens curates the program which includes music by Scott Joplin, Billy Strayhorn, Eubie Blake (the “Boston Pops March” that was written in 1979 as a gift for conductor Arthur Fiedler but never before played by the Pops), Florence Price (her seldom-performed Piano Concerto), Hazel Scott, and more. Giddens will be joined by vocalist Darius de Haas (Broadway’s Shuffle Along) and pianist Lara Downes, whose playing has been described by The New York Times as “luscious, moody and dreamy.”

“We’ll be performing Billy Strayhorn, who has been hidden behind Duke Ellington; we will celebrate Florence Price, who was very well known in her day as a pioneering black composer but fell into obscurity,” says Giddens.

While nodding to the past, the mini-festival looks ahead with performances on the May 22 concert by the 2019 winners of the Fidelity Investments Young Artists Competition. Now in its 11th year, the competition provides talented Massachusetts high school students the opportunity to perform with the Boston Pops. This year’s winners include cellist Haley Kwoun (The Winsor School, Boston), pianist Alessandra Mariano (Phillips Academy, Andover), and singers Amanda Mena (St. Mary’s School, Lynn) and Aignea Venuto (Austin Preparatory School, Reading).

Tickets for all Boston Pops spring season concerts are available for purchase at 888-266-1200 and www.bostonpops.org.
PROGRAM DETAILS FOR REDDEFINING AMERICAN MUSIC

An Evening with Rhiannon Giddens
Keith Lockhart, conductor
Rhiannon Giddens, special guest
Wednesday, May 22, 8 p.m.
Thursday, May 23, 8 p.m.

After her electric performance on the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular last year, Grammy and 2017 MacArthur “Genius Grant” winner Rhiannon Giddens collaborates with the Pops in an eclectic variety of folk, blues, country, hot string jazz, and Caribbean music. She performs music from her critically praised albums, including songs from her new recording there is no Other, which releases on May 3. Giddens is joined by members of her band, Dominic Billet (drums), Hubby Jenkins (banjo, guitar, bones), and Jason Sypher (bass).

For the performance on May 22, the singer, violinist, and banjo player will share the stage with winners of the Fidelity Investments Young Artists Competition. Now in its 11th year, the Fidelity Investments Young Artists Competition provides talented Massachusetts high school students the opportunity to perform with the Boston Pops. This year’s winners include cellist Haley Kwoun (The Winsor School, Boston), pianist Alessandra Mariano (Phillips Academy, Andover), and singers Amanda Mena (St. Mary’s School, Lynn) and Aignea Venuto (Austin Preparatory School, Reading).

Rhiannon Giddens and Friends Rediscover the Incredible Black Composer
Keith Lockhart, conductor
Rhiannon Giddens, special guest
Darius de Haas, vocalist
Lara Downes, pianist
Former NASA astronaut Dr. Mike Massimino, narrator (May 25)
Friday, May 24, 8 p.m.
Saturday, May 25, 8 p.m.

On May 24 and 25, Rhiannon Giddens curates a dynamic concert highlighting the great black composers who have been hiding in plain sight in every genre of music. The program explores the works of composers Scott Joplin; Billy Strayhorn, the genius behind Duke Ellington who wrote “Take the A-Train” and “Day Dream”; and Eubie Blake, composer of the groundbreaking Broadway musical Shuffle Along. Among the works to be heard at these concerts is the “Boston Pops March” that Blake wrote specifically for Arthur Fiedler but was never played by the Pops because Fiedler passed away before it had a chance to be performed. (A transcribed version of the work was later premiered by the United States Army Band.) The program will also remember Florence Price, the first African American woman to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra, and Hazel Scott, the jazz and piano prodigy who became a Hollywood, Broadway, and television star. Giddens will be joined by vocalist Darius de Haas (Broadway’s Shuffle Along) and pianist Lara Downes.

The May 25 program includes From the Earth to the Moon and Beyond, a new work by Pulitzer Prize-nominated composer James Beckel celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing. Former NASA astronaut Dr. Mike Massimino narrates this multimedia piece, which includes visuals by Brannon Fells.
and Beckel that focus on the wonders of space and the Moon, views of Earth from space, and pictures that exemplify humans’ desire for exploration and reaching the unknown.

BOSTON POPS SPRING SEASON OVERVIEW
Opening Night of the 2019 Boston Pops spring season—Wednesday, May 8—heralds the much-anticipated Boston Pops return of Bernadette Peters, legendary star of stage and screen, and is the first of ten eclectic programs that Keith Lockhart leads from the Symphony Hall stage. The upcoming season, which runs through June 15, also boasts an impressive lineup of Boston Pops debuts, including special appearances by actress and comedian Jane Lynch, travel guru Rick Steves, and Grammy and MacArthur “Genius Grant” winner Rhiannon Giddens who curates and performs in an electrifying four-concert survey of her own music and that of overlooked African American composers (5/22-25). These special debuts take place alongside concerts showcasing returning popular artists and classic Boston Pops programming, including appearances by Arlo Guthrie (5/15 & 16), Leslie Odom, Jr. (6/5 & 6), Cirque de la Symphonie (6/8), a screening of Star Wars: A New Hope accompanied by the Pops (5/10, 11, & 14), and the return of the Boston Pops’ Gospel Night spectacular featuring gospel legend Dottie Peoples (6/15).

In addition to the family-friendly Cirque de la Symphonie program and John Williams Film Night Tributes (5/29 & 30), families with young children can attend Once Upon a Time…, which takes listeners on a variety of odysseys; both Saturday matinees (5/25 and 6/1) include selections by musical storytellers, as well as The Composer is Dead, music by Nathaniel Stookey with text by Lemony Snicket, a contemporary whodunit that has quickly become a children’s classic. The performance on June 1 is a Boston Pops first: a sensory-friendly concert designed for patrons on the autism spectrum or with sensory sensitivities. For this modified program, Symphony Hall will be a welcoming space offering lower volume and lighting levels, relaxed house rules, minimal crowds to allow for movement, available noise-reduction headphones, designated quiet room and support spaces, modified food concessions, and staff and credentialed autism therapist volunteers trained to be responsive to families’ needs.

The 134th Boston Pops season—encompassing a wide spectrum of concerts that showcase a remarkable breadth and versatility of musical genres for which “America’s Orchestra” is universally recognized—takes place in the festive atmosphere of world-famous Symphony Hall, where patrons can sit at cabaret-style tables and order food and drink with family and friends during performances. Tickets to the 2019 Boston Pops season are available at 888-266-1200 or www.bostonpops.org.

TICKET AND SPONSORSHIP INFORMATION
Tickets for the 2019 Boston Pops season at Symphony Hall, priced from $30 to $126, are on sale at www.bostonpops.org or 888-266-1200. All performances start at 8 p.m., except for the matinee performances of Star Wars: A New Hope on Saturday, May 11, and Tuesday, May 14; Once Upon a Time… on Saturday, May 25, and Saturday, June 1; and Cirque de la Symphonie on Saturday, June 8. The May 11 & 25 and June 8 concerts include a 50% ticket discount for children ages 17 and younger. Groups of 20 or more receive 15% off regular ticket prices and waived handling fees. Please call the Group Sales Office at 800-933-4255 for these details.

In general, tickets may be purchased online at www.bostonpops.org or by phone through SymphonyCharge at 617-266-1200 or 888-266-1200, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. (with a $6.50 handling fee for each ticket ordered online or by phone). Tickets may also be purchased in person at the Symphony Hall box office, open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Saturday when there is a concert at Symphony
Hall. Most major credit cards and cash are accepted at the box office. For group sales of 25 or more, please call 617-638-9345 or 800-933-4255.

The Boston Symphony has a dedicated line for disabled patrons who would like to purchase tickets to BSO, Boston Pops, or Tanglewood concerts, or who need information about disability services at Symphony Hall or Tanglewood. This line can be reached by dialing 617-638-9431. For access via TDD/TTY, please call 617-638-9289. Patrons with disabilities can access Symphony Hall through the Cohen Wing on Huntington Avenue or through the Massachusetts Avenue entrance.

Ticket packages to Presidents at Pops, the BSO’s exclusive spring corporate gala on Thursday, May 9, start at $5,500 and include floor and balcony tickets; the pre-concert cocktail reception; gourmet boxed dinners; the Keith Lockhart-led concert featuring special guest Bernadette Peters; and a sponsor page in the evening’s commemorative program book. Lead Sponsorships are available from $15,000 to $75,000 and include premium seating, a black-and-white or full-color sponsor pages, recognition at the event and throughout the Pops season, and may include sponsorship of children at Days in the Arts at Tanglewood (DARTS), the BSO’s summer arts immersion camp in the Berkshires, and membership in the BSO Business Partner. For more information about Presidents at Pops, contact Mary Thomson at mthomson@bso.org or 617-638-9278.

SPONSORSHIP
Opening Night at Pops and the entire 2019 Boston Pops season are sponsored by Fidelity Investments. The Jane Lynch Sings the American Songbook concerts are sponsored by Arbella Insurance Foundation. The June 6 program is sponsored by Fairmont Copley Plaza, Official Hotel of the Boston Pops. Commonwealth Worldwide Executive Transportation is the Official Chauffeured Transportation Provider of the Boston Pops. American Airlines is the Official Airline of the Boston Pops.

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