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MEZZO-SOPRANO JOYCE DIDONATO LAUNCHES “SING FOR TODAY” PROJECT IN COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITY MUSICAL SOCIETY AND PRINCETON UNIVERSITY CONCERTS

In a series of short videos, the opera star uses song as a lens through which to process, navigate, and respond to current events and global concerns. The first, newly-released segment is inspired by long voter lines across the country and patriotism in this current moment. DiDonato sings “This Land is Your Land” and converses with Hamilton producer Jeffrey Seller and student members of Poll Hero.

ANN ARBOR, MI (Friday, October 30) – The University Musical Society (UMS) and Princeton University Concerts have released the first installment of a new digital initiative conceived by multiple Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano **Joyce DiDonato** as part of UMS’s Digital Artist Residency. “**Sing for Today**” features DiDonato responding to current events and global concerns through the lens of song and conversation. The first episode, available for free viewing at ums.org/singfortoday and princetonuniversityconcerts.org, taps into the energy of the upcoming general election. In response to images of long early-voter lines across the country, DiDonato sings “This Land is Your Land,” accompanied by guitarist **Àlex Garrobé**, in tribute to the passionate voters. She then frames the song in conversation with *Hamilton* lead producer **Jeffrey Seller** and with students **Kai Tsurumaki** (Princeton Class of 2023) and **Saika Islam** (University of Michigan Class of 2021) — members of the **Poll Hero Project**, dedicated to recruiting young people across the country to be poll workers.

Future episodes of “Sing For Today” will feature DiDonato singing and in dialogue with people from a variety of different backgrounds, calling on great songs to help make sense of the profound events of the present day. The first episode, and all future episodes, will be available for free viewing at ums.org/singfortoday and princetonuniversityconcerts.org. Joyce DiDonato appears by kind permission of Warner Classics/Erato.

ABOUT JOYCE DIDONATO

In all her endeavors, both on and off the stage, Joyce DiDonato engages audiences through her energy, imagination, and commitment to her art form. Through these qualities, and with a constantly questing spirit, she has nurtured the vocal, musical and dramatic talents that have taken her to the pinnacle of her profession as a performer. Equally, they serve her as an eloquent and formidable advocate for the transformative power of the arts as she takes music far beyond the world's great stages — to educational institutions, refugee camps, and maximum-security prisons. “Music heals,” she has said, “and it can fire people up with purpose and courage to change the world.” The winner of multiple Grammys and the 2018 Olivier Award, Kansas-born Joyce DiDonato is, in the words of the *New Yorker*, “perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation,” her voice having been described by *The Times* as “nothing less than 24-carat gold.” For all its beauty and agility, its true impact lies in Joyce’s capacity to illuminate character and meaning through nuances of color and phrasing and her unfailingly communicative way with the text. DiDonato is part of UMS’s Digital Artist Residency program in the 2020/21 season, alongside Wendell Pierce, Cleo Parker Robinson, Tunde Olaniran, Tarek Yamani and the Spektral Quartet, and Brian Lobel and Gweneth-Ann Rand.

ABOUT ÀLEX GARROBÉ

Alex Garrobe is currently professor of guitar and chamber music at the Catalan Music College. He has performed in more than 40 countries in some of the most prestigious concert halls, including the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, the Radio France Auditorium in Paris, the Auditorio Nacional, Madrid, the Palau de la Musica Catalana, Barcelona, and the Lutosławski Auditorium in Warsaw. He has made recordings for the Harmonia Mundi, Opera Tres and Columna Musica labels. His many collaborations as a soloist with orchestra include the premieres of *Mare Nostrum Concerto* by Salvador Brotons, *...di un soffio d'aura* by Agustin Charles and *Concierto de Petrer* by Simone Iannarelli, among others.

ABOUT JEFFREY SELLER

Jeffrey Seller is the winner of four Tony Awards for Best Musical: *Rent* (1996), *Avenue Q* (2004), *In the Heights* (2008) and *Hamilton* (2016). He has also produced and/or developed *De La Guarda* (1998), Andrew Lippa’s *The Wild Party* (2000), Baz Luhrmann’s production of *Puccini’s La Bohème* (2002), *High Fidelity* (2006), the Broadway revival of *West Side Story* (2009) and Sting’s *The Last Ship* (2014) among others. Seller, along with former business partner Kevin McCollum, created the first ever Broadway lottery for *Rent*, which for over 20 years has been a popular way to see Broadway shows (often in the

first two rows) at an affordable price. He is the only producer to have produced two Pulitzer Prize-winning musicals, for *Rent* and *Hamilton*. Along with opening multiple *Hamilton* companies across North America and London, Jeffrey was the executive producer of the NBC drama *Rise* and developed a new musical based on the life and music of Cher. Jeffrey grew up in Oak Park, Michigan and is a proud graduate of the University of Michigan.

ABOUT THE POLL HERO PROJECT

The Poll Hero Project is recruiting thousands of college and high school students to be paid poll workers for the 2020 election. The initiative was founded by a group of Princeton University students, Denver East High School students, and a University of Chicago Booth School of Business graduate, all of whom care deeply about democracy and non-partisanship. For more information, visit pollhero.org.

ABOUT UMS

A recipient of the 2014 National Medal of Arts, UMS (also known as the University Musical Society) contributes to a vibrant cultural community by connecting audiences with performing artists from around the world in uncommon and engaging experiences. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS is an independent non-profit organization affiliated with the University of Michigan. During the coronavirus pandemic, UMS has continued to connect audiences and artists through digital presentations and a robust Digital Artist Residency series, giving audiences a window into the creative process through six different projects by Wendell Pierce, Tarek Yamani and the Spektral Quartet, Tunde Olaniran, Cleo Parker Robinson, Brian Lobel and Gweneth Ann Rand, and Joyce DiDonato. All digital presentations are being presented free-of-charge to enable access to audiences everywhere, supporting UMS's commitment to bold artistic leadership, engaged learning through the arts, and access and inclusiveness. Matthew VanBesien became the organization's seventh president in July 2017.

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