

April 7, 2009

For immediate release

All-time Popular Opera Hit Comedy Closes Calgary Opera season

Calgary, AB – Established as one of the most beloved operas of all time, Calgary Opera is proud to present Gioachino Rossini's – ***The Barber of Seville*** – with evening performances on **April 25, 29 and May 1** and a special hold-over matinee on **May 3** at the **Jubilee Auditorium**. Tickets available through Calgary Opera box office at (403) 262-7286 or online at www.calgaryopera.com.

"The *Barber of Seville* is one of the most popular operas ever written. Its music is engaging from the first chord in the overture until the final note has been sung at the end of the evening," says Stage Director **Robert Herriot**. "Filled with some of the most familiar tunes in opera, this work is a comic masterpiece - the perfect opera for all ages and for those who think opera is only about helmets with horns and the perfect way to usher in spring, with a light, bouyant and rollicking good time."

"Rossini really created something unique when he composed *The Barber of Seville*. It truly was the pop-music of its day and the melodies within have stood the test of time," says Conductor **Robert Tweten**. "The music is full of sparkle and humour, which is a real delight to perform as well as watch. It is amazing to think how popular it still is after nearly 200 years."

With its instantly recognizable music, Rossini's classic has become one of the most performed operas in the world. Based on the first chapter of Beaumarchais' comedy trilogy, **The Barber of Seville** follows the antics of a factotum Figaro as he seeks to fatten his purse by assisting Count Almaviva to court his ladylove, Rosina. Through a series of outrageous situations, Figaro accomplishes his goal and foils the schemes of Dr. Bartolo, Rosina's ward and keeper.

In the role of the creatively conniving Figaro is Baritone **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson**, who was last with Calgary Opera for *Romeo and Juliet* (2003). Also starring alongside him is Tenor **Frédéric Antoun** as Count Almaviva, Buffo Bass **Peter Strummer** as Dr. Bartolo, Mezzo-Soprano **Krisztina Szabó** as Rosina, Bass-Baritone **Phillip Cokorinos** as Don Basilio, Soprano **Cheryl Hickman** as Berta and Bass **Gene Wu** as Fiorello.

Calgary Opera acknowledges the support of Production Sponsor **Talisman Energy**, Chorus Sponsor **Petro-Canada** and Media Sponsor The **Calgary Herald**.

The Barber of Seville is sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Leading up to *The Barber of Seville*, Calgary Opera invites the public to a series of educational, engaging and eclectic events as part of the community symposium.

Click here to download singer biographies as well as more on the community symposium.

For further information, please contact: Alex Bonyun, Calgary Opera
403-802-3403, or abonyun@calgaryopera.com.

**Give it a taste, have a look-in or
bring your singing talent out of the shower!**

Calgary, AB – In conjunction with our final production of the year, *The Barber of Seville*, a **Community Symposium**, based on the theme “Opera 101” runs from **April 17 – 26** at the Arrata Opera Centre. Tickets for most of the five Community Symposium events are free and can be booked through Calgary Opera box office at (403) 262-7286 or online at www.boxoffice.calgaryopera.com.

The featured event of the 2009 Community Symposium is ***So You Think You Can Sing Opera?*** This event invites anyone who has dreamt of singing on the stage to compete in an engaging and challenging competition in front of a live audience at the Arrata Opera Centre. The preliminary round is on **April 20th** with the final round and selection of the winner on **April 24th**. The finalist will be awarded the opportunity to progress his or her singing career with a position in the Calgary Opera chorus for one production in the 2009-2010 season as well as participation in select classes with Calgary Opera Emerging Artists. Hosted by the indomitable **Cory Mack**, and featuring celebrity judges **Dennis Garnhum**, Theatre Calgary; **Kelly Robinson**, The Banff Centre and pre-eminent voice teacher **Dawn Johnson**, this event is a must-see. Applications are available online, or to be part of our live audience, contact the Calgary Opera box office.

If singing on stage isn't for you, the ***Opera Look-in*** gives you the chance to tour the behind-the-scenes of Calgary Opera's *The Barber of Seville*. See the stage like the singers do, and learn some of what goes into making the curtain rise on a Calgary Opera performance. The Look-in returns by popular demand after a 7-year hiatus. This event takes place **April 26th** at the **Jubilee Auditorium**.

For those who are looking for a lighter spin on the world of opera, ***Opera Quiz Night*** on **April 22nd** may be right for you. Hosted by **Jock Osler**, with panelists **Jill Belland**, CityTV; **Cory Mack**, Comedian; and the **Honourable Lindsay Blackett**, Minister of Culture and Community Spirit, this evening promises to be anything but dull.

And finally, ***A Taste of the Opera*** on **April 17th** offers a presentation by journalist **Kenneth Delong** on opera in popular media including everything from Bugs Bunny to *James Bond: Quantum of Solace*. Tickets for this event are \$15, and include a reception with munchies following the presentation.

Calgary Opera acknowledges the support of Community Outreach sponsor **EnCana** and Media Sponsor **Swerve**. *The Barber of Seville* is sponsored by **Talisman Energy**.

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403-802-3403, or abonyun@calgaryopera.com.

Biographies

(singers listed in order of appearance)

Robert Tweten

Conductor

(Canada)

Conductor Robert Tweten has been described as leading with “verve and precision,” his pacing as flawless,” and having a “musicality and near symbiotic accord with singers which always impresses.” Most recently the Canadian native returned to Canada to conduct Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* for Opera Ontario and *Tosca* for Vancouver Opera, and covered *La Traviata* for Lyric Opera of Chicago. For the Santa Fe Opera, where he serves as Head of Music Staff, Mr. Tweten has conducted *Don Giovanni*, *Kátyá*, *Kabanova*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Ermione*, as well as their 50th Anniversary Concert in 2006. As a frequent Guest Conductor with the Santa Fe Symphony he has led them in orchestral concerts as well as in Handel’s *Messiah* and Mozart’s *Requiem*. Mr. Tweten recently conducted *The Merry Widow* at Opera Southwest, where he served as Principal Conductor and has also led productions of *Falstaff* and *La Traviata*.

Robert Herriot

Stage Director

(Canada)

Canadian Stage Director Robert Herriot began his career in opera on the stage, singing such roles as Tom Rakewell in *The Rake’s Progress* and Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. In 2001 he turned his attention to stage direction and began assisting directors across North America on productions of *The Rake’s Progress* and *The Magic Flute* for Vancouver Opera/Lyric Opera of Kansas City, *Tosca*, *Don Pasquale* and *The Flying Dutchman* for San Diego Opera, *Roméo et Juliette* for Calgary Opera, *The Marriage of Figaro* at The Banff Centre. In 2003 Mr. Herriot directed his first production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Manitoba Opera and has since directed productions of *Turtle Wakes* for the Calgary Opera school tour in 2005, *Carmen* for Arizona Opera, *La Bohème* for Manitoba Opera, and in the spring of 2006, *La Traviata* for Opera Ontario.

Bass Gene Wu

Fiorello, An Officer

(Canada)

Calgary Baritone Gene Wu, an inaugural member of the Calgary Opera Emerging Artist Development Program has been seen on stages across Canada. Recent appearances include Music Master/ Harlequin (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and Figaro (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), both with the Toronto Summer Music Festival, Marullo (*Rigoletto*) with Calgary Opera and the Speaker (*The Magic Flute*) with Vancouver Opera. Other career highlights include the touring production of the children’s opera *Naomi’s Road* with Vancouver Opera; the Canadian premiere of *Dead Man Walking* with Calgary Opera; Emilio Picariello in *Filumena* and the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, both for The Banff Centre.

Tenor Frédéric Antoun

Almaviva

(Canada)

The young French-Canadian Lyric Tenor Frédéric Antoun is swiftly becoming a much sought-after performer in North America and Europe. Following his performances as Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and at Spoleto Festival USA, Opera News praised his “warmly expressive instrument ... and ardent delivery,” while the St. Louis Post-Dispatch observed that “Frédéric Antoun’s Romeo had heartthrob looks and easy athleticism, matched with a clear, unforced tenor with ringing high notes and a sincerity of character.” The Globe and Mail hails him as “the next great Canadian tenor on the world stage.”

Baritone **Aaron St. Clair Nicholson** **Figaro**

(Canada)

Baritone Aaron St. Clair Nicholson has established himself as an artist of the first rank, winning praise for his superb vocal gifts and the dramatic integrity he brings to his performances. Writing in the San Francisco Chronicle, Joshua Kosman singled him out, noting that "...as Ford, baritone Aaron St. Clair Nicholson gave a virtuosic display of vigorous full-throated singing and all out physical comedy." 2006-2007 was a banner year for the young baritone. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Schaunard in *La Bohème* conducted by Domingo and followed those performances with Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* in December conducted by Levine. Further MET duties included his assignment as cover artist for the baritone lead, Clyde Griffiths, in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*. He returned to Florida Grand Opera as Figaro in *Il Barbiere de Siviglia* and starred again as the wily barber in a new production of the Rossini masterpiece for Glimmerglass Opera.

Mezzo-Soprano **Krisztina Szabó** **Rosina**

(Canada)

Canadian Mezzo-Soprano Krisztina Szabó has become a highly sought-after artist in both North America and Europe. The Chicago Tribune recently exclaimed, for her performances of Ottavia in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, "Krisztina Szabó stole every scene with her powerful, mahogany voice and deeply poignant immersion in the empress' plight." She made her Lincoln Center debut as Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* at the Mostly Mozart Festival where she was praised in the New York Times for being "clear, strong, stately and an endearingly vulnerable Dorabella." Krisztina Szabó's 2007-08 season is highlighted by performances of new roles: Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Stadttheater Biographies listed in order of appearance Calgary Opera 2008/2009 33 Klagenfurt in Austria, and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* in her fourth production with Chicago Opera Theater. She will also appear with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra as soloist in Mozart's *Mass in C Minor*, L'Orchestre Symphonique de Québec in Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, the San Antonio Symphony for a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, and the Talisker Players in Toronto for an evening of chamber music.

Buffo Bass **Peter Strummer** **Dr. Bartolo**

(Canada)

One of North America's foremost character bass-baritones, Peter Strummer has earned a reputation for endowing his buffo characterizations with further depth and humanity. Mr. Strummer was invited by Maestro James Levine to make his operatic debut as Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. He made his MET debut as Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Dansker in *Billy Budd*. Most recently he performed Sacristan in *Tosca* with New York City Opera, Cleveland Opera and Seattle Opera, Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the Atlanta Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* with Atlanta Opera, and Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Carolina.

Soprano **Cheryl Hickman** **Berta**

(Canada)

Cheryl Hickman is poised to take her place among the outstanding Sopranos of her generation. Described by the Globe and Mail as "a superb young soprano, with the superb authority and glorious free, steady sound of a young Eileen Farrell," Ms. Hickman is in demand on both the opera and concert stage. Ms Hickman has performed with the New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Vancouver Opera and L'Opéra Français de New York. A frequent performer with Calgary Opera, she was last seen in 2006 as Clorinda in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

Bass-Baritone **Philip Cokorinos**
(Canada)

Don Basilio

Bass-Baritone Philip Cokorinos has performed in over 30 productions in several seasons at the Metropolitan Opera. Most notable performances include Masetto in a “Live from the MET” telecast of *Don Giovanni*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, the world premiere of John Corigliano’s highly successful *The Ghosts of Versailles*, as well as the MET premieres of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *War & Peace*, *The Gambler*, and *Sly*. He has performed with such companies as New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Atlanta Opera, Kentucky Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Edmonton Opera, Utah Symphony & Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, the Coro Lirico, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, Chautauqua Opera, Central City Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, among many others.