

NEWS RELEASE

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Release Date: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
8 January 2008

Opera New Jersey Presents Verdi's *Rigoletto* Throughout the State

PRINCETON, NJ – **Opera New Jersey**, New Jersey's premier opera company, will launch its 2008 season with concert-staged performances of **Verdi's *Rigoletto*** at three different renowned venues in New Jersey in February. The performances will be held on February 1 at Community Theatre at Mayo Center for the Performing Arts (Morristown), February 8 at the McCarter Theatre Center (Princeton) and February 10 at the State Theatre (New Brunswick).

Community Theatre is a new performance venue for Opera New Jersey; in 2007 the company performed Puccini's *Turandot* at McCarter Theatre and State Theatre. "We are thrilled to take our company to Community Theatre," says Lisa Altman, Executive Director of Opera New Jersey. "We are focused on truly becoming the state representative for opera and, in expanding our reach to the northern section of New Jersey by partnering with the Community Theatre, we are making that goal a reality."



Noted stage director and Opera New Jersey regular **Michael Scarola** (New York City Opera, Utah Opera, Dallas Opera, Indianapolis Opera) will create an inventive concert-staged version of the Verdi work to highlight the spectacular talents of the international cast. Opera New Jersey audiences will be familiar with the concert-staged format, having seen it first in February 2006 with Verdi's *Falstaff* and again in March 2007 with Puccini's *Turandot*. In a semi-staged production, the orchestra performs behind the fully-costumed cast onstage. The singers will also utilize props and evocative set elements as they tell the tragic story of the hunch-backed jester, his beautiful daughter and the curse – *La maledizione* – that destroys them both. From Gilda's tender "Caro nome" to the Duke's swaggering "La donna è mobile" and the celebrated quartet, *Rigoletto* offers music of unsurpassed lyricism and depth.

John Keenan (The Metropolitan Opera, Kirov Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera), will conduct all three performances of *Rigoletto*.

The stellar cast includes **Richard Zeller** (The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, New York City Opera, Live from Lincoln Center, Opera de Bordeaux) in the title role, **John Osborn** (The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Berlin State Opera, Opéra National de Paris) as the Duke of Mantua and **Eglise Gutiérrez** (Opera Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall, L'Opéra de Montreal, Santa Fe Opera, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Seattle Opera) as Gilda.

Rigoletto will be performed in Italian with English surtitles projected above the stage.

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Opera New Jersey News Release, Continued
Opera New Jersey Presents Verdi's *Rigoletto* Throughout the State

Rehearsals for *Rigoletto* will take place in January at Meadow Lakes Senior Living Community in East Windsor as part of Opera New Jersey's partnership with the PHS Senior Living Foundation. The singers will live and rehearse on site, which will promote a great deal of interaction between the residents and the performers. The residents may observe all rehearsals, join informal *Opera Talks* with the artists as well as observe members of the Opera New Jersey Young Artist Program in a masterclass session with the *Rigoletto* guest artists.

Performance Information

Friday, February 1, 2008 at 8pm

Community Theatre at Mayo Center for the Performing Arts (Morristown, NJ)

Information: (609) 799-7700 or www.opera-nj.org

Tickets (\$35-\$70): (973) 539-8008 or www.mayoarts.org

Friday, February 8, 2008 at 7:30pm

McCarter Theatre Center (Princeton, NJ)

Information: (609) 799-7700 or www.opera-nj.org

Tickets (\$39-\$90): (609) 258-2787 or www.mccarter.org

A post-performance reception with the artists is available for an additional \$25.

Sunday, February 10, 2008 at 3pm

State Theatre (New Brunswick, NJ)

Information: (609) 799-7700 or www.opera-nj.org

Tickets (\$35-\$90): (732) 246-7469 or www.statetheatrenj.org

A post-performance reception with the artists is available for an additional \$25.

Cast

Rigoletto: Richard Zeller

The Duke of Mantua: John Osborn

Gilda: Eglise Gutiérrez

Sparafucile: Kevin Langan

Maddalena: Jeniece Golbourne

Count Monterone: Ben Wager

Giovanna: Erin Holland

Conductor: John Keenan

Director: Michael Scarola

Costume Designer: Patricia A. Hibbert

Photo: John Osborn (center) as the Duke of Mantua in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Photo courtesy of Des Moines Metro Opera.

Further photos, interviews with the artists and press passes to the performances are available upon request. Contact Patricia Kiernan Johnson at (609) 799-7700 x104 or at pjohnson@opera-nj.org.

About Opera New Jersey

Opera New Jersey (OperaNJ, formerly New Jersey Opera Theater) is earning national recognition as a leader among regional opera companies, providing high quality opera performances, exceptional educational offerings and related activities. OperaNJ seeks to stimulate, promote and satisfy interest in opera, build a strong and diverse audience base for the art form and foster the development of emerging artists. **Opera New Jersey** recently received its second straight prestigious Citation of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts (NJSCA). The Citation is NJSCA's highest honor and recognizes arts organizations that "exhibit the highest standards of excellence in artistry, operations, governance, public benefit and fulfillment of areas of Council priority." OperaNJ received its first citation in 2006, during their first year of eligibility.

This season is made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

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