

NEWS RELEASE

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Opera New Jersey Announces Artists for Stellar 2008 Summer Season!

PRINCETON, NJ – Following up on the tremendous success of the star-studded production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* in February, **Opera New Jersey** prepares to present their sensational **2008 Summer Season** featuring some of the most sought-after emerging opera singers on the stage today.

The season includes 5 performances of **Verdi's** timeless *La traviata*, 4 performances of **Rossini's** charming *La Cenerentola* (*Cinderella*) and 4 performances of **Lehár's** sparkling *The Merry Widow*. All operas will be performed on the intimate Berlind stage of Princeton's famed McCarter Theatre.

One of Verdi's greatest operas, the heartbreaking tragedy *La traviata* centers on the beautiful Parisian courtesan, Violetta, who finds true love with the young and ardent Alfredo. But when Alfredo's father attempts to save his family from social scandal by parting the lovers, their relationship must come to a tragic end. Some of the most passionate and romantic arias ever written – including "Sempre libera," "De miei bollenti spiriti" and "Parigi, o cara" – were composed for this classic opera. Singing Violetta for the first time will be soprano **Elizabeth Caballero**, whose young career already includes performances with The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera and the Opera Orchestra of New York. Of her performance in Puccini's *La bohème* at New York City Opera, *The New York Times* said "...Elizabeth Caballero provided the evening's most show-stopping performance with her second-act 'Quando men vo,' offering a thrilling balance of pearly tone, exacting technique and brazen physicality." The dashing tenor **Ryan MacPherson**, who has sung with New York City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Opéra National de Paris and Opera Memphis, sings the role of Violetta's young lover, Alfredo.



In Rossini's sublime comedy *La Cenerentola*, Cinderella's wicked step-father and step-sisters attempt to prevent her from living happily-ever-after with her prince charming – unsuccessfully, of course! This performance of dazzling vocal fireworks wrapped in a joyous fairytale ending is an event not to be missed. Mezzo-soprano **Leah Wool** sings the title role and has also performed with The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera and Santa Fe Opera, to critical acclaim. Ms. Wool is familiar with Cinderella, having sung the title role in Massenet's version of the story, *Cendrillon*, with Central City Opera. Ramiro, Cinderella's prince, will be sung by tenor **Javier Abreu**, who has previously sung the role with Wolf Trap Opera. *The Washington Times* wrote of that performance: "Mr. Abreu startles with a tenor that alternates thunder with moments of great delicacy laced with deft touches of vocal athleticism."

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Lehár's *The Merry Widow*, perhaps the greatest of all operettas, tells the delightful story of Hanna, an outrageously rich and clever widow, who is on the hunt for a new husband. However, when she remarries, her tiny country will be left bankrupt. Amidst lavish parties, lovers' trysts and political parts, Hanna must convince a certain gentleman that marrying her will bring him love and save their country's finances as well! If you loved Opera New Jersey's production of *The Pirates of Penzance* in 2007, then you'll want to return for *The Merry Widow* because the Frederic (**Benjamin Bunsold**) and Mabel (**Alison Trainer**) from *Pirates* are here reunited as Camille and Valencienne. In addition to Opera New Jersey, soprano Alison Trainer has sung with New York City Opera, Annapolis Opera, Cleveland Opera and Central City Opera. Tenor Benjamin Bunsold has been heard recently with Opera Delaware, Shreveport Opera and Fort Worth Opera.

"The fantastic thing about Opera New Jersey's season at the Berlind Theatre is that our patrons have the opportunity to see these high caliber artists in a uniquely intimate venue close to home – artists who are already onstage at the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera," says Scott Altman, General Artistic Director of Opera New Jersey. "It's not an opportunity that comes along every day."

Ticket Information: Ticket prices for the three Summer Season operas at McCarter Theatre Center's Berlind Theatre are \$59, \$65 and \$90 and may be purchased through the McCarter Theatre Ticket Office:

91 University Place
Princeton, NJ 08540
Ticket Office: (609) 258-2787
Subscriptions: (609) 258-5050
Group Sales: (609) 258-6526
www.mccarter.org

Further information on all 2008 Summer Season events can be found at www.Opera-NJ.org.

Opera New Jersey – Summer Season 2008 – Opera Schedule

La traviata, by Verdi

*Friday, July 11 at 8pm
*Sunday, July 13 at 2pm
Thursday, July 17 at 7:30pm
Saturday, July 19 at 8pm
*Saturday, July 26 at 1pm

La Cenerentola (Cinderella), by Rossini

*Saturday, July 12 at 8pm
*Saturday, July 19 at 1pm
Friday, July 25 at 8pm
*Sunday, July 27 at 2pm

The Merry Widow, by Lehár

*Friday, July 18 at 8pm
*Sunday, July 20 at 2pm
Thursday, July 24 at 7:30pm
Saturday, July 26 at 8pm

*Free lecture 1 hour before curtain on these performance days

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Photo: Elizabeth Caballero as Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème*, courtesy of Florida Grand Opera, photo by Tommy Chung

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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