



MERCURY OPERA ROCHESTER PRESENTS

GIUSEPPE VERDI'S

LA TRAVIATA

JANUARY 15 & 17, 2010
KODAK HALL at EASTMAN THEATRE



presents

Giuseppe Verdi's

LA TRAVIATA

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Benton Hess

Artistic Director & Conductor

David Bartholomew

Stage Director

With the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra

Set Design by Robert Little

Lighting Design by Nic Minetor

Costume Design by Tri-Cities Opera Costume Shop

Makeup & Hair Design by Elsen Associates, Inc.

Set & Costumes Courtesy of Tri-Cities Opera Company, Inc.



There will be two intermissions.

SETTING

Paris, around 1850

SYNOPSIS

Act I – The drawing room of Violetta Valery in Paris

Violetta Valery, a famed courtesan, is having a party at her Paris home to celebrate her recovery from an illness. Gastone, a count, tells Violetta that his friend, the young nobleman Alfredo Germont loves her and that while she was ill Alfredo came to her house every day. Alfredo joins them, admitting the truth of Gastone's remarks. The Baron, Violetta's current lover, waits nearby to escort her to the salon where the Baron is asked to give a toast. He refuses, and the crowd turns to Alfredo who obliges, accompanied by Violetta and the chorus of guests. Feeling dizzy, Violetta rests as her guests move to the next room to dance. Alfredo expresses his concern for her fragile health and declares his love for her. As he leaves she gives him a camellia flower, telling him to return it when it has wilted. She promises to meet him the next day. After the guests leave, Violetta wonders if Alfredo could actually be the one in her life, but concludes that she needs her freedom. From off stage, Alfredo's voice is heard singing about love as he walks down the street.

~ 15-Minute Intermission ~

Act II, Scene I – A country home and garden near Paris

Three months later, Alfredo and Violetta are living together in the country and are in love. Alfredo sings of their happy life together. Annina, the maid, arrives from Paris, and tells Alfredo that she went there to sell Violetta's possessions to support their country lifestyle. Alfredo is shocked to learn this and leaves for Paris immediately to settle matters himself. Violetta returns home and receives an invitation from her friend, Flora, to a party in Paris that evening. Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, demands that she break off her relationship with his son because it has threatened his daughter's engagement. She responds that she cannot because she loves him so much. With growing remorse, she finally agrees. Violetta is writing a farewell letter to Alfredo when he enters. She asks her servant to give her letter to Alfredo after she has left for Paris. As Alfredo reads it, Giorgio returns and attempts to comfort his son. Alfredo suspects the Baron is behind his separation with Violetta.

~ Pause ~

Act II, Scene 2 – The mansion of Flora Bervoix in Paris

At the party, the Marquis tells Flora that Violetta and Alfredo have separated. Violetta arrives with Baron Douphol. Alfredo, at the gambling table, loudly proclaims that he will take Violetta home with him. The Baron joins him in gambling. Alfredo wins a large sum of money; Flora announces that supper is ready. Fearing the Baron will challenge him to a duel, Violetta asks Alfredo to leave. Alfredo demands that she admit that she loves the Baron. He humiliates and denounces Violetta in front of the guests, and then throws his winnings at her feet. In search of his son, Giorgio enters the hall and denounces his son's behavior. Flora and the ladies attempt to persuade Violetta to leave the dining room, but Violetta turns to Alfredo and professes her love for him.

~ 15-Minute Intermission ~

Act III – The bedroom of Violetta's apartment in Paris

Dr. Grenvil tells Annina that Violetta will not live long; her tuberculosis has worsened. Alone in her room, Violetta reads a letter from Alfredo's father telling her that the Baron was only wounded in his duel with Alfredo; that he has informed Alfredo of the sacrifice she has made for him and his sister; and that he is sending his son to see her as quickly as possible to ask for her forgiveness. Violetta voices that it is too late. Annina rushes in the room to tell Violetta of Alfredo's arrival. The lovers are reunited and Alfredo suggests that they leave Paris. But it is too late: she knows her time is up. Alfredo's father enters with the doctor, regretting what he has done. Violetta dies in Alfredo's arms.

CAST

Violetta Valery , a courtesan	Olga Makarina
Alfredo Germont , Violetta's lover	Dinyar Vania
Giorgio Germont , Alfredo's Father	Scott Bearden
Dr. Grenvil , Violetta's Physician	John Davies
Flora Vervoix , Violetta's friend	Dina El
Baron Douphol , rival of Alfredo	JJ Hudson
Gastone , Viscount of Letorieres	Robert Strauss
Marquis d'Obigny , a nobleman	Michael Roddy
Annina , Violetta's maid	Kimberly Upcraft-Russ
Giuseppe , servant to Violetta	Nicholas Gerling
Commissioner	Zachary Ligas
Servant to Flora	Alexander Turpin

Chorus – Friends of Violetta & Flora, Matadors, & Gypsies

Sheila Sullivan Buck, Jorgeandrés Camargo, Holly Corcoran, Kathy Damann, Max Denler, Danielle Falco Frink, Patricia Fussell, Nicholas Gerling, Jeffrey Greene, Lindsay Holmes, Jason Holmes, Robert Holmes, Helana Koch, Zachary Ligas, Aaron Lundy, Mary Menzie, Lyndon Meyer, Julia Natoli, David O'Donnell, Charles Palella, Christian Palmer, Becki Boyanski Place, Lori Romaniw, Lisa Rosenbauer, Dennis Rosenbaum, Laura Mayes Schweibacher, Holley Shafer, Catherine Siniscalco, Kerri Lynn Slominski, Laura Szymanowicz, Michael Thering, Alexander Turpin, Lynn Zicari

Supernumeraries – Servants

Daniel Boutwell, Ryan Gerling, Stephanie Kawzenuk, Sarah Trybulski

ARTISTIC & PRODUCTION STAFF

Artistic Director & Conductor	Benton Hess
Stage Director	David Bartholomew
Stage Manager	John Lipe
Production Manager /Technical Director	Seamus McMurtrie
Set Designer	Robert Little
Lighting Designer	Nic Minetor
Costume Designer	Tri-Cities Opera Costume Shop
Costume Coordinator	Nellica Rave
Wig & Make-up Design	Molly Weinreb, Elsen Associates, Inc
Assistant Conductor & Pianist	Richard Masters
Props Manager	Lynn Zicari
Assistant Chorusmaster	Jason Holmes
Assistant Director	Lindsay Chassé
Assistant Stage Manager	Rebecca Pickett
Assistant Lighting Designer	Dan O'Donnell
Chorus Accompanist	Lyndon Meyer
Set & Costumes Courtesy of	Tri-Cities Opera Company, Inc.
Wigs Courtesy of	Elsen Associates
Hair Dressers	Sue Harrison & Danielle Letourneau
Costume Assistant	Claudette Hercules
Surttitle Translation	Cori Ellison
Surtitles Courtesy of	New York City Opera
Surttitle Operator	Mary Beth Lowery
Ticket Service	RPO Box Office, Kate Wahl – Patron Relations Mgr.
House Manager & Ushers	David Meyer & Gerry Maar

ROCHESTER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA



Christopher Seaman, *Music Director*
Jeff Tyzik, *Principal Pops Conductor*
Michael Buttermann, *Principal Conductor for Education and Outreach*
The Louise & Henry Epstein Family Chair, Funded in perpetuity

Violin I

Juliana Athayde, *Concertmaster*
The Caroline W. Gannett & Clayla Ward Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Wilfredo Degláns, *Associate Concertmaster*
Shannon Nance, *Assistant Concertmaster*
Perrin Yang
Tigran Vardanyan
Ellen Rathjen
Janice Macisak
William Hunt
Sabina Slepceki
Kenneth Langley
Lise Stoddard
Joanna Owen
An-Chi OuYang
Margaret Leenhouts

Violin II

David Brickman, *Principal*
Daryl Perlo, *Asst. Principal*
Patricia Sunwoo
John Sullivan
Lara Sipols
Nancy Hunt
Boris Zapesochny
Liana Koteva Kirvan
Jeremy Hill
Ainur Zabenova
Fang-yu Liu
Heidi Brodwin
Lee Wilkins

Viola

Melissa Matson, *Principal*
Michael Larco, *Asst. Principal*
Marc Anderson
Elizabeth Seka
Olita Povero
Michail Verba
Linda Kirkwood
Lisa Steltenpohl
David Hult
Samantha Rodriguez

Cello

Stefan Reuss, *Principal*
The Clara and Edwin Strassenburgh Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Kathleen Murphy Kemp, *Assistant Principal*
Lars Kirvan
Christopher Haritatos
Mary Ann Wukovitz
Benjamin Krug
Yu-Wen Wang
Ingrid Bock
Melissa Burton Anderson

Bass

Colin Corner, *Principal*

The Anne Hayden McQuay Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Michael Griffin, *Asst. Principal*
Jack Stauber
Robert Zimmerman
Gaelen McCormick
Jeff Campbell +
Eric Polenik

Flute

Rebecca Gilbert, *Principal*
The Charlotte Whitney Allen Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Joanna Bassett
Jan Angus +
Diane Smith

Piccolo

Joanna Bassett
Jan Angus +

Oboe

Erik Behr, *Principal*
The Dr. Jacques M. Lipson Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Anna Steltenpohl
Anna Petersen Stearns *
John Upton
Priscilla Brown

English Horn

Anna Steltenpohl

Clarinet

Kenneth Grant, + *Principal*
The Robert J. Strassenburgh Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Robert DiLutis
Min Na Lee
Ramon Ricker + *
Andrew Brown
Alice Meyer

E-flat Clarinet

Robert DiLutis *
Min Na Lee

Bass Clarinet

Ramon Ricker + *
Andrew Brown

Bassoon

Abraham Weiss, *Principal*
Charles Bailey
Martha Sholl

Contra-Bassoon

Charles Bailey

Horn

W. Peter Kurau, + *Principal*
The Cricket and Frank Luellen Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Elizabeth Porter, *Asst. Principal*
Jennifer Burch
David Angus

Stephanie Blaha *
Patrick Walle

Trumpet

Douglas Prosser, + *Principal*
The Elaine P. Wilson Chair
Wesley Nance
Herbert Smith
Paul Shewan

Trombone

Mark Kellogg, + *Principal*
The Austin E. Hildebrandt Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Mark Salatino *
Lisa Albrecht
Andrew Chappell

Tuba

W. Craig Sutherland, *Principal*

Timpani

Charles Ross, *Principal*
The Harold and Joan Feinbloom Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Jim Tiller, *Asst. Principal*

Percussion

Jim Tiller, *Principal*
Brian Stotz
John McNeill
Robert Patterson
Jillian Pritchard

Harp

Grace Wong, *Principal*
The Eileen Malone Chair, A Tribute by Mr. and Mrs. Harcourt M. Sylvester, Funded in perpetuity
Barbara Dechario

Keyboards

Joseph Werner, *Principal*
The Lois P. Lines Chair, Funded in perpetuity
Cary Ratcliff

Personnel Manager

Joseph Werner

Principal Librarian

Kim Hartquist

Stage Manager

Curtis Bradley

Asst. Stage Manager

Dave Miller

Artistic Operations

Krishna Thiagarajan
Chris Beyer

* On Leave

+ Full time faculty at the Eastman School of Music

PROGRAM NOTES

Any doubts that Giuseppe Verdi would inherit the mantle bequeathed by the bel canto greats, Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti, were erased by *La Traviata*. Verdi had already written several operas; they were lovely, and some had even enjoyed considerable success. But they were all constructed using the old-style formulas invented by Rossini and further refined and developed by Donizetti. At the time of the writing of *La Traviata*, Verdi began to break free, creating a score so full of passion and honesty of declamation, that it prepared the way for all the great operas which were to follow, *Aida*, *La forza del destino*, *Don Carlo*, and ultimately *Otello*, and *Falstaff*.

In all of opera, there are few soprano roles that come close in difficulty to that of *La Traviata*'s Violetta. Part of that is because in Act I, the role begins in the old style. She's a bel canto singer with coloratura roulades and flights of fioratura that sail all the way up to high D flat, the role's highest written note. But as Violetta's life changes in the second act, so does her music. Now that she, herself, has settled down, she's no longer a coloratura; she's a full-blown lyric soprano. Many sopranos who might consider singing this role because they can sing the first act aria, "Sempre libera," are quickly dissuaded by the dramatic lowness of the first scene of Act II. The second scene of Act II becomes even heavier, with very dramatic outbursts and the necessity for the diva to soar above a large chorus and thick orchestration. Then, Maestro Verdi plays a cruel trick in Act III, when he requires Violetta to pull her voice back to gossamer transparency in the heart-breakingly poignant aria, "Addio del passato." This is no easy feat for a soprano who has been sing dramatically for the past hour and a half. These are just a few of the vocal difficulties of a role whose acting exigencies have challenged some of the greatest actresses of the theater and film.

Verdi gives similarly difficult assignments to the tenor and baritone. Alfredo needs to be a tenor with a sweetness of both voice and demeanor that belies the high born French gentleman that he is. Yet, in the second scene of Act II, he has a meltdown equal in passionate outburst to that of Don José in the last act of *Carmen*. *Traviata*'s baritone, Germont, is as formidable as any dramatic baritone role in the canon. It looks innocent enough on the page, but the tessitura (the basic place in the voice where any role lies) is punishingly high. Many lyric baritones who are successful singing other difficult roles won't go near Germont.

One of my favorite tasks as Artistic Director of an opera company is to assemble a group of people I think are suitable to fill the roles in the work at hand. Casting isn't so easy in *La Traviata*. I've known Olga Makarina for more than twenty years; she is a great bel canto soprano who has had triumphs in major opera houses world-wide. It has been a fantasy of mine to do *Traviata* with her for a long time.

Dinyar Vania, who sang the stunning Cavaradossi in our *Tosca* last year, brings an uncommon and very attractive strength to Alfredo.

I first worked with baritone, Scott Bearden, two years ago when I was musical director for a big Verdi gala concert in Tel Aviv, Israel. I resolved then that I would bring him to Rochester as soon as I could.

With these three remarkable artists we have a *Traviata* dream team.

Benton Hess
Artistic Director and Conductor

BIOGRAPHIES



Benton Hess, Artistic Director/Conductor

After training at the New England Conservatory as a pianist, Benton Hess served as assistant conductor for several regional opera companies before taking the podium himself in 1970 for a Boston production of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, replacing conductor James Levine on a week's notice. Since then he has conducted hundreds of performances for dozens of opera companies in America, Europe, and the Middle East. Local audiences will remember his work with the Opera Theatre of Rochester from the middle 1970s through the 1980s. Hess has presided over many world and important regional operatic premieres and has assisted numerous composers in presenting their works: David Amram, Carlisle Floyd, Lee Hoiby, Karel Husa, Libby Larsen, Daniel Pinkham, Greg Sandow, and Conrad Susa, to name but a few. He has also served on the faculties of several prestigious institutions: Boston University, Boston Conservatory, the New England Conservatory, Mannes College of Music in New York City, the Hartt School of Music, Rutgers University, and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro among them. Since 2001 Maestro Hess has been Distinguished Professor of Voice and Musical Director of Eastman Opera Theatre. As one of New York City's most respected and sought-after vocal coaches, his clientele reads like a "Who's Who" in opera, from Nicolai Gedda and Eleanor Steber at the ends of their careers to Renée Fleming at the beginning of hers. Benton Hess appears regularly as conductor, pianist/accompanist, and master class clinician throughout the United States and abroad. Besides his responsibilities at Eastman and with Mercury Opera, Hess is Artistic Director of "Si parla, si canta," an Italian language program for young singers and coach/accompanists in Urbana, Italy, and conductor for the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv, Israel. Maestro Hess has conducted Mercury Opera Rochester's productions of *Tosca*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Don Giovanni*, *Norma*, and *Madama Butterfly* in the Company's previous seasons.



David Bartholomew, Stage Director

A native Texan, David Bartholomew received a Masters Degree in piano performance from Boston's New England Conservatory and concertised extensively in the New England area in both solo recital and chamber music. Following graduate study in opera production, he was awarded the prestigious Frank Huntington Beebe Foundation grant for a full year of study in Europe, after which he accepted a position as chairman of opera studies at the Boston Conservatory. He began his professional career directing productions of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* at Harvard University and *Hansel and Gretel* for San Francisco Opera's Western Opera Theater. In addition to Boston Conservatory, Mr. Bartholomew has served as head of opera studies at The New England Conservatory and the University of Nebraska at Lincoln as well as guest stage director at Boston University, University of Colorado, and the University of Puget Sound. He has directed for various professional companies around the country including Affiliate Artists Opera Company, Boston Lyric Opera, Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts in Vienna, Virginia, Mobile Opera, Eugene Opera, Colorado Music Theater Festival, and Nevada Opera. Productions include *The Rake's Progress*, *The Magic Flute*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Balcony*, *Paradiso Choruses*, *Wozzeck*, *Jonny spielt auf*, *A Month in the Country*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Werther*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Carmen* and world premiere performances of *Medea* by Rockefeller Competition winner Ray Luke, Thomas Pasatieri's *Signor Deluso*, and *The Pied Piper of Hameln* by Carol Sams. Mr. Bartholomew is the Principal Guest Stage Director with the Fargo-Moorhead Opera and was Principal Stage Director and Artistic Director for Tacoma Opera from 1993 to 2004. He is currently Artistic Director for Opera Southwest in Albuquerque, NM. This production marks Mr. Bartholomew's second production with Mercury Opera Rochester, after his debut with the company directing last season's *Tosca*.



Scott Bearden, *Giorgio Germont*

Baritone Scott Bearden is the First Prize winner as well as the Audience Prize winner in the 2008 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, after having also received the Audience Prize in 2007. Also in 2007, Mr. Bearden was the First Prize winner of the 2nd Chester Ludgin American Verdi Baritone Competition in front of a jury including Placido Domingo, Mignon Dunn and Maestro Julius Rudel. Mr. Bearden continues to impress audiences and critics with his vivid portrayals of many of the heavier baritone roles from the Italian repertoire. In 2009, Mr. Bearden appeared as Iago in a concert performance of Verdi's *Otello* with the Oakland /East Bay Symphony and as Tonio in Knoxville Opera's production of *I Pagliacci*. In 2008, he was seen in the title role of Verdi's *Rigoletto* in San Jose, as Amonasro in Verdi's *Aida* with Cedar Rapids Opera Theater, as Conte di Luna in *Il Trovatore* at Festival Opera, and as Scarpia in *Tosca* with Opera Theatre of Connecticut. Other past engagements include leading roles in *Falstaff*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Three Penny Opera*, *La Bohème*, *Così fan tutte*, *Il Tabarro*, *L'Elisir d'amore*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Manon*, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Mississippi Opera, Tanglewood Music Festival, West Bay Opera, Midland Symphony, Sanibel Music Festival, IVAI in Tel Aviv, and Opera San Jose. Upcoming engagements include a debut at the prestigious Caramoor Bel Canto Festival, a concert at the Sanibel Island Music Festival and *La Traviata* with both Fremont Opera and Toledo Opera. Mr. Bearden can be heard on Vox Classics Recordings. He earned a Bachelor of Music degree from Central Michigan University and a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music. He and his wife and puppy reside in New York City.



John Davies, *Dr. Grenvil*

John Davies returns to Rochester in a singing role in *La Traviata*, after being Stage Director for Mercury Opera's recent production of *The Three Little Pigs* earlier this season and *The Barber of Seville* last season, and his performances as the Sacristan & Jailer in last season's *Tosca* and as Leporello in the company's *Don Giovanni*. A distinguished American bass-baritone, Mr. Davies has performed with opera companies across the country, including the Metropolitan Opera Company, San Francisco Opera and the opera companies of Boston, Philadelphia, Salt Lake City, Atlanta, St. Louis, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Phoenix and Anchorage. He has also performed in concert as bass-baritone soloist with the symphony orchestras of Boston, San Francisco, St. Louis, Detroit, San Antonio, Indianapolis, Chattanooga and Syracuse. A father of six children, Mr. Davies takes an active interest in performing arts for young people, spending part of each year writing, narrating and hosting educational programs for opera companies, symphony orchestras and children's museums across the United States, and has written several popular opera librettos for young people including *The Three Little Pigs*, *Jack & the Beanstalk*, and *The Night Harry Stopped Smoking*. More than 60 opera companies, universities, and symphony orchestras have presented the operas he has written for young audiences.



Dina El, *Flora Bervoix*

The daughter of two professional musicians, Dina El was born in Belarus and raised in New York City. She is an opera lover from a very early age and began studying voice in high school. Dina fell in love with performing after singing the role of Praskovia in her high school's production of *The Merry Widow*, and continues studying voice at the Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music. She is a regular performer with the conservatory's opera workshop program and is a resident artist at the Dicapo opera theater. She is making her professional debut with Mercury Opera Rochester in this unique opportunity to sing with her mother, Olga Makarina (*Violetta*).

Nicholas Gerling, *Giuseppe*

Tenor Nicholas Gerling is a senior at Nazareth College and is very excited to be appearing as Giuseppe in this production. At Nazareth, Gerling has performed in many scenes productions as well as his latest roles as Robert in *Hin und Zurück* and Le petit vieillard (*The Old Man*) in *L'enfant et les Sortilège*. He has also participated in the Mercury Opera chorus of *Don Giovanni*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Tosca*, as well as playing the role of Strepchon in a concert performance of *Iolanthe*. This

spring, he will perform the role of Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Gerling attended the pre-apprenticeship program "Opera in the Ozarks" in summer 2009, where he performed the role of Beppe in *Pagliacci* and the title role in *Albert Herring*. He has also participated in the language intensive program 'Si parla, si canta,' run by Maestro Benton Hess.



JJ Hudson, Baron Douphol

Bass-baritone JJ Hudson returns to the Mercury Opera stage after directing last season's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and the company's inaugural performance of *L'Amico Fritz* in 2005. Hudson has performed numerous opera/lyric theater roles with various opera and concert organizations throughout the country, including Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Olin Blicht (*Susannah*), Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Sweeney Todd (*Sweeney Todd*), Giorgio (*Passion*), Shaunard and Colline (*La Bohème*), Grenvil and Douphol (*La Traviata*), Guglielmo (*Così fan tutte*), and Selim (*Il Turco in Italia*). He has appeared with Eastman Opera Theater, Rochester Opera Factory, Tacoma Opera, Buffalo Opera Unlimited, Music by the Lake, and the Centro Studi Opera Festival in Italy. Hudson has studied voice with Carol Webber, John Muriello, and Gordon Ohlsson. As a stage director, he directed the workshop premier of operetta scholar, Richard Traubner's new edition of Henri Christine's *Phi-Phi* with the Eastman Opera Workshop. Hudson has also acted as an assistant director to several renowned directors including Ron Luchsinger at Opera North (NH), and Steven Daigle at the Eastman School of Music. Hudson is currently on the faculties of SUNY-Oswego and Nazareth College. Before relocating to the Central New York area, Hudson taught on the faculties of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Concord University (WV).

Zachary Ligas, Commissioner

Zach Ligas, baritone, is a music education major at Nazareth College, where he studies with Dr. Robert Strauss. He has been involved in various musical theater and opera performances at Nazareth including *Cabaret*, *Where's Charley*, and the Opera Workshop in Robert Ward's *Roman Fever* as the Waiter, and Menotti's *The Telephone* as Ben, and will be appearing this spring in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* as Guglielmo. Mr. Ligas performed in the chorus of Mercury Opera's *Don Giovanni* and *Tosca* in addition to playing the Page in last year's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. He also appeared as the Lord Chancellor in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Iolanthe* in Mercury Opera's concert performance. Mr. Ligas is a past third place finisher in the Eastern Region NATS competition and a second place winner in the Fingerlakes Region NATS Vocal Competition. Upcoming engagements include a performance of Haydn's *Creation* in April with the Syracuse Chorale.



Olga Makarina, Violetta Valery

Soprano Olga Makarina has sung in opera houses and symphony halls throughout the world to great acclaim. She has performed at the Metropolitan Opera as Imogene in *Il Pirata*, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Princess Eudoxie in *La Juive*, Elettra in *Idomeneo* and the title role in Stravinsky's *Le Rossignol*; at the NYC Opera she performed Lucia, Gilda, Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* and Olympia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. Ms. Makarina has also performed as Violetta in *La Traviata* with the Kirov Opera, Cagliari, Italy and Mexico; Marguerite de Valois in *Les Huguenots* and Marfa in *The Tsar's Bride* at Carnegie Hall, Elvira in *I Puritani* and the title role in *Norma* at the Palm Beach Opera, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Carmina Burana* with the Minnesota Orchestra, Desdemona in *Otello* in Mexico and Macau, Amina in *La Sonnambula* at the Rome Opera, Mimi in *La Bohème* in Buenos Aires and in Mexico City, Ilija in *Idomeneo* at Mostly Mozart Festival, and US premiere of Respighi's *La bella dormiente nel bosco* at the Spoleto Festival USA and at Lincoln Center Festival. Additional roles include as Lyudmila in Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*, Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Micaela in *Carmen*, and Fire in Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. A graduate of the Mannes School of Music, she also has her Masters in piano and voice from the St Petersburg Conservatory. She has won a number of important prizes and awards including the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, the Musicians Emergency Fund and the Liederkrantz Competition, and has several recordings on the Romeo Records label. Ms. Makarina is pleased to be making her Mercury Opera Rochester debut alongside her daughter, Dina El.



Michael Roddy, Marquis d'Obigny

Michael Roddy, baritone, made his professional debut with Mercury Opera in last season's *Tosca*. A recent graduate of Nazareth College, Mr. Roddy has performed many operatic, dramatic, and musical theater roles including Geronimo (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*), The Judge (*Trial By Jury*), Major General Stanley (*Pirates of Penzance*), The Narrator and Mysterious Man (*Into the Woods*), John (selected scenes of *John & Jen*), John Proctor (Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*), and The Monsieur in the New York State premier of Benton Hess' opera *Felice*. Some of his other performances include bass soloist

for Bach Cantatas 11 and 109, the Saint-Saëns *Christmas Oratorio*, Pergolesi's *Magnificat*, Handel's *Messiah*, Mozart's *Solemn Vespers*, and Stravinsky's *Mass*. In addition to his singing, Mr. Roddy is an accomplished bagpiper, and recently gave the premiere of a piece he composed for uilleann pipes, bagpipes, and orchestra at a concert with the Mohawk Valley Choral Society. This spring, Mr. Roddy will conduct the Mohawk Valley Choral Society and Orchestra in a concert entitled "Songs of Faith."



Robert Strauss, Gastone

Robert Strauss has been seen with Mercury Opera as Pedrillo (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Mr. Splinters (*The Tender Land*), and as Spoletta in *Tosca*. Praised for his comic timing, he has also sung Kaspar (*Amahl*) and Federico in *L'amico Fritz*, the latter with the Centro Studi Italiani Opera Festival. Strauss is equally as comfortable on the musical theatre stage, having portrayed Jack Point (*The Yeoman of the Guard*), Tony (*West Side Story*), Archibald Craven (*The Secret Garden*) and most recently Simeon/Butler in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. As a recitalist, he is praised

for his attention to musical and textual nuance, as demonstrated in the programs *The Recital that Dare Not Speak Its Name* and *Seasons in Song* with pianist Benton Hess, and *Inner Voices*, for mezzo-soprano and tenor. The revues *Finding a Way Back* and *Ready at Last*, featuring selections from the contemporary musical theatre repertoire, also demonstrate his artistry and versatility. Behind the production table, he served as assistant stage director for Mercury's production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He directed the inaugural production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for Mercury, area productions of *Seussical*, *the Musical*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and the NY premiere of *Felice* by Benton Hess. His next production is *Così fan tutte* this February at Nazareth College. Dr. Strauss teaches at Nazareth College, having been on the faculties at SUNY Fredonia and the University at Buffalo. He is Artistic Director of the Rochester Gay Men's Chorus.

Alexander Turpin, Flora's Servant

Alexander Turpin, tenor, is excited to be making his operatic debut with Mercury Opera Rochester. A native of Albany, he now studies with Dr. Robert McIver at the Eastman School of Music, where he is a sophomore majoring in both voice performance and music education. This summer he was a participant of the Italian music and language program "Si parla, si canta" in Urbania, Italy, under the direction of Benton Hess.



Kimberly Upcraft-Russ, Annina

Soprano Kimberly Upcraft-Russ is a versatile artist, equally at home with the music of Handel as with the music of the late 20th century. While in Rochester, she has performed leading roles with the Eastman Opera Theatre, including Mrs. Grose in *The Turn of the Screw* and Angelica in *Suor Angelica* and was also a featured soloist with the Eastman Philharmonia in performances of Strauss' "Vier Letzte Lieder" under the baton of Mendi Rodan. Other operatic portrayals include such varied roles as Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. In fall 2008, Ms. Upcraft-Russ was featured as Berta in

Mercury Opera of Rochester's production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. She also appeared as the soprano soloist with the Nazareth College Choirs and Orchestra in Vaughan Williams *Sea Symphony*. In 2010, Ms. Upcraft-Russ will be featured as Fiordiligi in Nazareth College Opera production of *Così fan tutte* and as a recitalist in concerts celebrating the Schumann year. Upcraft-Russ performed as the soprano soloist for performances of Verdi's *Requiem* at Nazareth College with the Rochester

Philharmonic, Murray Sidlin conducting. Other oratorio appearances have included performances of Schubert's *Mass in G Major*, Beethoven's *Symphony #9* with the SUNY Geneseo Orchestra and Chorus, Saints-Saens' *Christmas Oratorio*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Requiem* of both Faure and Durufle. Upcraft-Russ is currently an adjunct professor of voice at Nazareth College, having previously been on the faculties of SUNY Fredonia and the Eastman Community Music School.



Dinyar Vania, Alfredo

Dinyar Vania is rapidly emerging as one of the America's most exciting new talents, whose attributes include a rich lyric voice of astonishing power and beauty. He has performed as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at New York City Opera, Opera Roanoke, Knoxville Opera and Madison Opera, Meleagros in Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata* at New York City Opera, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Syracuse Opera, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Dallas Opera, Nevada Opera Theatre and Sacramento Opera, and Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre. He made his debut with Opera Delaware in a Gala Concert followed by his first Alfredo in *La Traviata* at Opera Cleveland, then again with Metro Lyric Opera under the baton of Anton Coppola. He was a featured soloist in the New York City Opera in the Parks concert series. At the prestigious International Vocal Arts Academy in Tel Aviv, he performed excerpts from *Lucia di Lammermoor* under the baton of Maestro Paul Nadler and the New Israeli Chamber Orchestra. Mr. Vania celebrated his Carnegie Hall debut as tenor soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony #9*, as part of a Pakistani Earthquake Relief Concert, and sang the same part with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed holiday concerts with the Naples Philharmonic, Verdi Concerts with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's *Symphony #9* with the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra, and Verdi *Requiem* with Dayton Symphony Orchestra. The beauty of Mr. Vania's voice has garnered him the Artist of the Year Award from Syracuse Opera, First Place in the Giulio Gari International Vocal Competition, Second Place in the Licia Albanese-Puccini Competition, and semi-finalist in Plácido Domingo's Operalia in Madrid. Mr. Vania returns to Rochester after his debut with the company as Cavaradossi in *Tosca* last January.

John Lipe, Stage Manager

John Lipe is a stage manager from Carbondale, Illinois. He has been a director or assistant director for Opera Omaha, Utah Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Central City, Palm Beach Opera, Pittsburgh Opera Center at Duquesne, Sarasota Opera, and Indianapolis Opera. He has stage managed performances with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Toledo Opera, Opera Festival of New Jersey, Opera Birmingham, Tampa Opera, and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Recent work has included *Porgy and Bess*, *Rigoletto*, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Wozzeck*, and Carlyle Floyd's latest opera *Cold Sassy Tree*.

Richard Masters, Assistant Conductor & Pianist

Praised by critics as "extraordinary" (The DCist), Richard Masters is an avid recitalist, chamber musician and orchestral pianist. Recent performances include collaborations with soprano Hanan Alattar under the aegis of the Marilyn Horne Foundation, Juilliard String Quartet violinist Earl Carlyss, NYU professor of voice Jane Olian, and performances in Virginia and Washington, DC of Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw* under the baton of Lorin Maazel. In 2007, he performed works of Brahms at an awards ceremony honoring Maestro Maazel at the National Arts Club in NYC. With violinist Emily Ondracek, Mr. Masters has performed rare works by Busoni, Enescu and Kreisler. Other performances include solo recitals in New York and Colorado, as well as chamber and vocal performances on the East Coast and in Northern Italy. In 2008, Mr. Masters served as coach for the world premiere of Lee Hoiby's *This is the Rill Speaking* with performances at SUNY Purchase and Symphony Space in NYC. In December 2008, he conducted performances of Jake Heggie's new opera *For a Look or a Touch* and Francis Poulenc's *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* at the Eastman School of Music, where he is completing his doctorate. In the fall of 2009, Mr. Masters was music director for Mercury Opera's *The Three Little Pigs*, a children's opera featuring music of Mozart arranged by John Davies. Mr. Masters currently is working on a biography of the American pianist George Copeland.

Nic Minetor, Lighting Design

Nic Minetor is a full-time lighting designer/director for theatre, film and TV. For Mercury Opera Rochester, he has designed *L'Amico Fritz*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Elixir of Love*, *Norma*, *Showboat*, *The Tender*

Land, The Barber of Seville, Don Giovanni, La Boheme and Tosca. At Eastman Opera Theatre he has been resident designer for more than 40 productions, including *The Secret Garden, Candide, La Boheme, The Medium, The Consul, Postcards from Morocco, Dialogue of the Carmelites, The Mother of Us All, Suor Angelica, The Breasts of Tiresias, The Rape of Lucretia, Falstaff, Passion, The Marriage of Figaro, Turn of the Screw, Patience, Transformations, Albert Herring, L'Elisir D'amore, A Waterbird Talk, Così Fan Tutte, Xerxes, Sweeney Todd, She Loves Me, The Coronation of Popea, Trouble in Tahiti, La Rondine, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Suzannah, Tartuffe, and The Turk in Italy.* Designs for Opera Theatre of Rochester include *The Marriage of Figaro, Rigoletto, Il Trovatore, Faust, Hansel and Gretel, and Otello.* For Geva Theatre Center he has designed the lighting for Agatha Christie's *Black Coffee, The Mystery of Irma Vep, I'm Not Rappaport, Every Good Boy Deserves Favor,* and six years of *A Christmas Carol.* He lit the Smithsonian Institution-sponsored film of Beckett's *End Game.* As a photographer, Nic has illustrated more than a dozen books on America's national parks and historic cities for *The Globe Pequot Press.*

Nellica Rave, Costume Coordinator

Nellica Rave is pleased to be joining Mercury Opera for her 10th production. Nellica is originally from Washington State, and has her MFA in Costume Design from UMass Amherst. She has been designing in the Rochester area for five years, and her favorite projects include *Don Giovanni* for Mercury Opera, *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* for Eastman Opera and *Our Faust* at Rochester Institute of Technology. Nellica lives in Sterling, NY with her husband David Huff and 3-year old daughter Ramonda, and the family is proud to announce their newest addition, Louisa Alice, born 10-26-09. Nellica's costume design work can be seen this spring in the One Acts at NTID and in *Pirates of Penzance* at Roberts Wesleyan College.

Molly Weinreb for Elsen Associates, *Hair and Makeup Design*

Molly Weinreb represents Elsen Associates, Inc., resident hair and makeup designers for numerous opera companies in North America, including Connecticut Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, New Jersey Opera, Opera Boston, Opera Ontario, Syracuse Opera, Tampa Opera, Washington National Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera. Broadway productions include *The Merchant of Venice, Jelly's Last Jam, Two Trains Running, Angels in America, The Wild Party, and Caroline, or Change.* Off-Broadway productions include *Twelfth Night* (NYSF Central Park), *Sondheim Celebration* (Kennedy Center), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tanglewood), and *Oedipus Plays* (Athens Festival). Educational affiliations include Eastman School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Yale University, and Carnegie Mellon University. For more information visit www.elsenassociates.com.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I'd like to reflect on some of our accomplishments in Mercury Opera Rochester's first five years:

- Critical acclaim for all of our productions
- Nearly sold out for our 1st season's *Madama Butterfly*
- Last season's *Tosca* proclaimed "the best yet"
- Huge success with our high school education program *Opera Connection!* comparing *La Boheme* and *Rent*
- Reaching new audience members with children's productions, free outreach performances, and new collaborations
- Increasing numbers of students at every production
- Standing room only at our adult education programs and lectures
- Winning the OperaBuffs "Organization of the Year" award for 2009
- Incredible start to our elementary education program with *The Three Little Pigs* last fall.

Everyone knows that these have been difficult financial times, even more so for arts organizations that rely solely on donations and discretionary spending for our very existence. Yet it has been in this climate that Mercury Opera has turned a corner. The Board of Directors has made a renewed commitment of time, energy and money to help ensure that top quality opera thrives in our community and to introduce more newcomers to our beautiful art form.

Opera is all about passion – extravagant love, patriotism, jealousy, and rage. Those of us involved in opera on the other side of the curtain are able to sustain our passion for the beautiful music and the drama during weeks of long rehearsals and late nights. We hope that our passion and love of opera are well evident in our performances for you, and that our enthusiasm, enjoyment, and professionalism are contagious and inspirational! We need YOU to be passionate about supporting our endeavors to create a magical theatrical experience. Your ticket price covers about half of the cost of a production. Please help us make up the difference by donating generously. Thank you for joining us at the opera and for your continuing support!

Kristen Kessler, Executive Director



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Bon Appétite! (Lee Hoiby) and *Coffee Cantata* (J.S. Bach)
Friday, April 16 at 8 PM and Sunday, April 18 at 2 PM
Hochstein Performance Hall

Recital of Arias from the Book *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett,
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