

FLORIDA GRAND Opera

NEWS RELEASE

8390 NW 25th Street ♦ Miami, FL 33122 ♦ T: 305-854-1643 ♦ F: 305-856-1042 ♦ www.fgo.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Cohn Dutcher Associates
Lois Cohn, lcohn@cohndutcher.com, 917.339.7187
Dan Dutcher, ddutcher@cohndutcher.com, 917.339.7157
George Berry, gberry@cohndutcher.com, 917.339.7189

Florida Grand Opera
announces the 2007-08 Season in the
Sanford and Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House at
Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in Miami

Season opens with a New Production of
Mozart's *Così fan tutte*
November 17, 2007

**Season highlights include Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles (The Pearl Fishers)*
and Handel's *Julius Caesar***

**Debuts include
Grammy Award-winning soprano Ana Maria Martinez,
countertenor John Gaston**

New York, NY – Florida Grand Opera (FGO) will launch its 2007-2008 season on November 17, 2007, at 7:00 p.m. with a new production of *Così fan tutte* by Mozart, which features Grammy Award-winning soprano Ana Maria Martinez as Fiordiligi in her FGO debut. Florida Grand Opera will also present Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles (The Pearl Fishers)* and, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Puccini's birth, two of his favorites: *Tosca*, with the title role shared by renowned sopranos Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs and Angela Brown, and *La bohème*, featuring the young Cuban soprano Elizabeth Caballero as Mimì and critically acclaimed American tenor James Valenti as Rodolfo. The season will conclude with a revival of FGO's outstanding 2000 production of Handel's Baroque opera, *Julius Caesar*, featuring American soprano Leah Partridge as Cleopatra and countertenor John Gaston, making his FGO debut, in the title role.

Così fan tutte is one of the renowned collaborative works of Mozart and librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. Soprano **Ana Maria Martinez** will sing the role of Fiordiligi, which she has performed at the Salzburg Festival and with the Santa Fe Opera. A native of Puerto Rico, Ms. Martinez's career spans opera houses including the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; Paris Opéra Bastille; Deutsche Oper Berlin; Vienna State Opera; The Metropolitan Opera; Los Angeles Opera; and Santa Fe Opera, among others.

Rinat Shaham will return to FGO as Dorabella. The Israeli-born mezzo-soprano has received accolades for her operatic and concert performances internationally. This season, Ms. Shaham returns to The Glyndebourne Festival as Dorabella, a role she has previously sung for the Berlin State Opera.

She has also performed with Vancouver Opera, l'Opéra de Montréal, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Opera Pacific, and New York City Opera, among others.

FGO's new production of *Così fan tutte* features costumes designed by **Catherine Zuber** and sets by **Riccardo Hernandez**, who is making his FGO debut.

Les pêcheurs de perles (The Pearl Fishers) by Bizet is a tale of tightly woven friendship, loyalty and forbidden love. This opera transports the audience to the shores of Ceylon where a passionate love triangle unfolds in visual and dramatic spectacle. From the San Diego Opera production, FGO will reunite the original production team of designer **Zandra Rhodes** and director **Andrew Sinclair**.

Soprano **Maureen O'Flynn** returns to FGO, in the role of Leïla. Recent engagements have included Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* at The Metropolitan Opera, Amina in *La sonnambula* at the Opera de la Coruña and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Santander Festival in Spain, *I puritani* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, *La traviata* for The Metropolitan Opera and Opera Company of Philadelphia, Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with Opera Omaha, and Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* with Minnesota Opera.

American tenor **William Burden** will join the cast to sing the role of Nadir. Mr. Burden has won an outstanding reputation in a wide-ranging repertoire throughout Europe and North America. Recent engagements include Lindoro in *L'italiana in Algeri* for Seattle Opera, the title role in *Faust* for Houston Grand Opera, the title role in *Candide* for both the Théâtre du Châtelet and La Scala, and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* at Opera Pacific. Mr. Burden returned to The Metropolitan Opera to create the role of Gilbert Griffiths in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*.

With torture, murder, attempted rape and suicide in the plot, *Tosca* is a riveting psychological drama that leads us to one of opera's most stunning conclusions. Puccini's masterwork tells the story of Floria Tosca, a famous diva, who fights to save her lover in a gripping tale of political turmoil and human passion. Sharing the title role are sopranos Angela Brown and Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs.

In Miami, soprano **Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs** will sing the title role (Minnie in 2005 *La fanciulla del West*), with tenor **Roger Honeywell** as her lover, Mario Cavaradossi. Ms. Blancke-Biggs made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Violetta in *La traviata*, and her Washington National Opera debut as Fedora opposite Plácido Domingo. Future engagements include her debut as Aïda in Bilbao, Spain, Elvira in *Ernani* in a concert for the American Opera Theater, Abigaïlle in *Nabucco* for the Teatro Municipal de Santiago, and a return to the Metropolitan Opera for *Suor Angelica*. Performance highlights this season for tenor Roger Honeywell include Rodolfo in *La bohème* for Philadelphia Opera, and the world premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* for both Minnesota Opera and Utah Opera.

Angela Brown made her FGO debut in 2006 in the title role of *Aïda*, with **Arnold Rawls** as her ill-fated lover, Radames. Performance highlights this year for Ms. Brown include the role of Bess in Opera Company of Philadelphia's production of *Porgy and Bess*, and her debut with Opéra National de Paris as Amelia in its production of *Un ballo in maschera*. Recent engagements for Mr. Rawls include Calaf in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's production of *Turandot*, Chief Standing Bear in the world premiere of Anthony Davis' *Wakonda's Dream* for Opera Omaha, and Cavaradossi in a concert for the Bridgeport Symphony under the direction of Gustav Meier.

American bass **David Pittsinger** (Rodolfo in 2007 *La sonnambula*) will join the cast as the Baron Scarpia. Recent engagements include a return to Los Angeles Opera as Comte des Grieux in a new

production of *Manon* opposite Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón conducted by Plácido Domingo, and a return to The Metropolitan Opera as the Speaker in *The Magic Flute* in performances conducted by James Levine. Mr. Pittsinger will finish the season with a return to Santa Fe Opera for Rameau's *Platée*, conducted by Harry Bicket, in the celebrated production by Laurent Pelly.

La bohème, Puccini's most famous and popular opera, is widely known and loved for its glorious arias, duets and ensembles, and intoxicating melodies. Equally recognizable is its story of love, friendship and heartbreak among a group of young Parisian artists living in the Latin Quarter.

Acclaimed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as a "powerful diva in the making," Cuban soprano Elizabeth Caballero will sing the role of Mimì. Last season, Ms. Caballero was awarded The Richard Gold Debut Artist Award from New York City Opera for her debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*. Other significant roles for Ms. Caballero include Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Mimì and Musetta in *La bohème*, and Violetta in *La traviata*. Ms. Caballero made her debut with Milwaukee's Florentine Opera as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and her Metropolitan Opera debut as Musetta in *La bohème* with The Metropolitan Opera in the Parks.

American tenor **James Valenti** returns to FGO (Edgardo in 2005 *Lucia di Lammermoor*) as Rodolfo. Mr. Valenti made his professional debut in 2003 in the same role at age 25 in Rome Opera's Zeffirelli production of the Puccini classic. He has also performed the role at New York City Opera, as well as at Semperoper, Dresden. Other recent engagements have included Alfredo in *La traviata* for La Monnaie de Munt in Brussels and the Hamburg State Opera.

Joining the cast as Musetta is soprano **Jill Gardner**, in her Florida Grand Opera debut. This season Ms. Gardner sings Eurydice in *Orpheus in the Underworld* with Glimmerglass Opera. She also appears as a soloist in concerts with Opera Omaha, performs the role of Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* with Syracuse Opera, and sings Mimì in *La bohème* with Piedmont Opera Theatre. Ms. Gardner has also sung with Binghamton's Tri-Cities Opera in the leading roles of Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, Violetta in *La traviata*, the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*.

A former member of the FGO Young Artist Studio, baritone **Troy Cook** joins the cast as Marcello. Mr. Cook has performed at New York City Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Fort Worth Opera and Glimmerglass Opera, among others.

Julius Caesar is a tale of power and passion, with grand themes of warfare, heroic action, and inner turmoil. Handel's sumptuous score and epic tale defines Baroque Opera repertoire.

Returning to FGO as Cleopatra is American soprano **Leah Partridge**, who originally joined FGO as a member of the Young Artist Studio during the 2002-2003 season. Ms. Partridge has performed several roles for FGO including Violetta in *La traviata*, the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Amina in *La sonnambula*. Ms. Partridge will make her Metropolitan Opera debut this season in its new production of *Peter Grimes*.

Making his FGO debut is young countertenor **John Gaston**, lauded by *The New York Times* for his "velvety tone and a regal serenity" in recent performances as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Other roles include Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the title role in *Orlando*, Tirinto in *Imeneo*, Siroe in *Medarse*, and both Caesar and Ptolemy in *Julius Caesar*. Mr. Gaston, a first-place winner of FGO's Young Patronesses of the Opera Voice Competition, has been engaged by leading opera companies

including The Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Atlanta Opera, New York City Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera, among others.

While FGO produced six operas during its inaugural season at Carnival Center, the Company will resume its tradition of producing five operas for both Miami-Dade and Broward audiences during the 2007-2008 season, ensuring that patrons in both communities enjoy the full Florida Grand Opera season. The previously announced production of *Cyrano*, by David DiChiera and Bernard Uzan, will be performed during the 2008-2009 season.

Ticket Information

Season tickets for **Florida Grand Opera** start at \$48. Single tickets range from \$10 to \$250. For tickets, call 1-800-741-1010 or visit www.fgo.org.

About Florida Grand Opera

Florida Grand Opera was formed in June 1994 by the merger of Greater Miami Opera, founded in 1941, and The Opera Guild Inc., of Fort Lauderdale, founded in 1945. Celebrating its 67th season of continuous performances, Florida Grand Opera stands as one of the oldest performing arts organizations in Florida. In addition to producing standard repertoire, Florida Grand Opera also presents lesser known operas, as well as commissions and produces new operas. Annually, performances are attended by over 110,000 people, and education and outreach programs serve over 50,000 students. FGO offers several highly successful outreach and educational programs, including its internationally-recognized Young Artist Studio. Founded in 1984, the program attracts young singers who train and enhance their professional skills during a 35-week Miami residency.

Florida Grand Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding for this organization is provided, in part, by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau. Additional support is provided by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners. Program support is provided by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council. Florida Grand Opera is a Resident Company of the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts and a member company of OPERA America.

About Ziff Ballet Opera House at Carnival Center

The Ziff Ballet Opera House marks a new era for Florida Grand Opera. Previously based in the Miami-Dade County Auditorium for 55 years of its 65-year existence, Florida Grand Opera's move to the new venue represents the culmination of 20 years of planning and community effort. The Ziff Ballet Opera House will feature a larger stage that can accommodate sets for more than one opera at a time. One production is stage front and a second can be in the wings ready for the next performance.

###

Florida Grand Opera Cast List

*= Debut; ■ = Former Young Artist; ♦Current Young Artist

2007-2008 Season Programs

Così fan tutte by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Sung in Italian with English and Spanish surtitles
*New Production

Carnival Center for the Performing Arts

November 17 at 7 p.m. – Opening Night
November 21, 24, 27, 30 & December 6, 8 at 8 p.m.
December 2 matinee at 2 p.m.

Broward Center for the Performing Arts

December 13, 15 at 8 p.m.

Conductor.....Stewart Robertson
Director.....David Gately
Set Designer.....Riccardo Hernandez*
Costume Designer.....Catherine Zuber
Production.....Florida Grand Opera

Fiordiligi.....Ana Maria Martinez*
Dorabella.....Rinat Shaham
Despina.....Susanne Mentzer*
Ferrando.....Brian Anderson
Guglielmo.....Michael Todd Simpson*
Don Alfonso.....Daniel Mobbs*

Les pêcheurs de perles by Georges Bizet
Sung in French with English and Spanish surtitles

Carnival Center

January 26 at 7 p.m. – Opening Night
January 30 & February 2, 5, 8 at 8 p.m.
February 10 matinee at 2 p.m.

Broward Center for the Performing Arts

February 14, 16 at 8 p.m.

Conductor.....Stewart Robertson
Director.....Andrew Sinclair*
Set & Costume Designer.....Zandra Rhodes*
Lighting Designer.....Kendall Smith
Production.....San Diego Opera

Leïla.....Maureen O’Flynn
Nadir.....William Burden
Zurga.....Lucas Meachem*
Nourabad.....Burak Bilgili

Tosca by Giacomo Puccini
Sung in Italian with English and Spanish surtitles

Carnival Center

February 9 at 7 p.m. – Opening Night
February 13, 15, 19, 21, 23 at 8 p.m.
February 17 matinee at 2 p.m.

Broward Center for the Performing Arts

February 28, 29, & March 1 at 8 p.m.

Conductor.....Stewart Robertson

Director.....TBD
Set Designer.....Andrew Horn
Costume Designer.....Malabar, Inc.
Lighting Designer.....Kendall Smith
Production.....Baltimore Opera

Floria Tosca.....Elizabeth Blancke-Biggs
Floria Tosca.....Angela Brown (February 28, March 1)
Mario Cavaradossi.....Roger Honeywell*
Mario Cavaradossi.....Arnold Rawls (February 28, March 1)
Baron Scarpia.....David Pittsinger

La bohème by Giacomo Puccini

Sung in Italian with English and Spanish surtitles

Carnival Center

April 12 at 7 p.m. – Opening Night
April 15, 17, 19, 23, 25, 29 & May 2 at 8 p.m.
April 27 & May 4 matinees at 2 p.m.

Broward Center for the Performing Arts

May 8, 10 at 8 p.m.

Conductor.....Alberto Veronesi
Conductor.....Douglas Kinney Frost (May 8, 10)
Director.....Nicola Mary Bowie
Set Designer.....Michael Yeargan
Costume Designer.....Zack Brown
Lighting Designer.....Pat Collins
Production.....Florida Grand Opera

Mimi.....Elizabeth Caballero
Rodolfo.....James Valenti
Musetta.....Jill Gardner*
Marcello.....Troy Cook ■
Schaunard.....Corey Crider ♦
Colline.....Tom Corbeil*♦
Benoit/Alcindoro.....Stefan Szkafarowsky

Julius Caesar by George Frideric Handel (*Giulio Cesare in Egitto*)

Sung in Italian with English and Spanish surtitles

Carnival Center

April 26 at 7 p.m. – Opening Night
April 30 & May 3, 6, 9 at 8 p.m.
May 11 matinee at 2 p.m.

Broward Center for the Performing Arts

May 15, 17 at 8 p.m.

Conductor.....Gary Thor Wedow*
Director.....Mark Lamos
Set Designer.....Paul Steinberg
Costume Designer.....Constance Hoffman
Lighting Designer.....Pat Collins
Production.....Florida Grand Opera

Cleopatra.....Leah Partridge ■
Julius Caesar.....John Gaston*
Ptolemy.....Brian Asawa*
Sesto.....Katherine Calcamuggio ◆