



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 21, 2018

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Opera Colorado Announces 2018-19 Season: Verdi's *La Traviata* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in grand, traditional productions at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House

**Plus, a double-bill of Tom Cipullo's *After Life* and *Josephine*
at the new Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art**

**Now in his 10th year of leading the company,
Greg Carpenter to take on new title of General & Artistic Director**

DENVER—Opera Colorado is pleased to announce its 2018-19 season, anchored by two of the most beloved works in the repertoire: Verdi's stunning and heartbreaking *La Traviata* and Mozart's effervescent comedy *The Marriage of Figaro*, both to be performed at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House at the Denver Performing Arts Complex. The season is rounded out by the 2018-19 Scene Change offering: a contemporary double-bill of *After Life* and *Josephine* by composer Tom Cipullo, for which Opera Colorado will transform a gallery of the new Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art into a 100-seat theater.

"The 2018-19 season is particularly exciting in its contrasts," says Opera Colorado General & Artistic Director Greg Carpenter. "Both *La Traviata* and *The Marriage of Figaro* are iconic operas, and both are masterpieces of music and theater. But the former offers us the intensity of tragic passion, while the latter is the height of sophisticated comedy."

"And, of course, there is the delightful contrast of presenting audiences with these grand productions in a 2,000-seat opera house," says Carpenter, "and then also taking the audience into a 100-seat pop-up theater for very intimate works by one of America's most imaginative living composers."

- **The season begins with a traditional production of Verdi's *La Traviata* (November 3, 6, 9, and 11, 2018), conducted by Opera Colorado Music Director Ari Pelto, whose**

“breathtaking wizardry in the pit” (*The Denver Post*) is consistently lauded whether at Opera Colorado or at engagements across the country. **Director Emma Griffin** returns following her directorial debut in the company’s 2016 production of Puccini’s *La Fanciulla del West*.

Overflowing with some of Verdi’s most recognizable and beautiful melodies, *La Traviata* features one of opera’s greatest heroines: the doomed courtesan Violetta, who is willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of true love. Taking on the role for Opera Colorado is acclaimed **soprano Cecilia Violetta López**, who has been praised by *The New York Times* for her “flirtatious charm and intriguingly dusky voice,” and has turned Violetta into her signature performance.

“In *La Traviata*, Verdi created what has become the model of Italian opera,” says Pelto. “And that has to do with this incredible character of Violetta, who is not only one of the strongest, most poignant and most tragic characters in all of opera, but is also very vocally iconic.”

Singing the role of her lover, the naïve Alfredo, is **tenor Eric Barry**, who most recently inspired Opera Colorado audiences as Edgardo in last season’s production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. “It was Barry who delivered the finest singing in this production... His tenor easily filled the hall, never succumbing to unsteadiness at either end of his range,” praised *Opera News* of his performance.

Rounding out the leads as Alfredo’s stern father, Germont, is **baritone Malcolm MacKenzie**. Audiences will recognize MacKenzie’s “confident baritone and dynamic presence” (*Opera News*) from Opera Colorado’s 2016 world premiere of Lori Laitman’s *The Scarlett Letter*, in which he sang the role of Roger Chillingworth, to critical acclaim.

This will be the first Opera Colorado production of *La Traviata* in more than a decade.

- Following *La Traviata*, **Opera Colorado goes to the Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art** and turns one of its galleries into a 100-seat venue for the five-performance **Scene Change** run of **Tom Cipullo’s *After Life and Josephine*** (February 23, 25, 26, 28, and March 1, 2019). Presented as a double bill, the first of these one-act operas imagines artistic giants Pablo Picasso and Gertrude Stein deep in conversation in the hereafter. The second depicts a riveting monologue by jazz-age icon and civil rights activist Josephine Baker.

After Life and Josephine will be **conducted by Andrew Altenbach**, who currently serves as Music Director of Opera at the Boston Conservatory. **Omer Ben Seadia returns to direct** the double bill, following her Opera Colorado debut with last month’s world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me*. Starring in each opera will be singers from the 2018-19 class of **Opera Colorado’s highly respected Young Artists Program**, which each season provides training, coaching, mentorship and performance opportunities for a group of exceptionally talented young performers at the start of their professional careers.

“To me, this is really following success after success,” says Carpenter. “There was such excitement last season for our first Scene Change production, *As One*. And that momentum continued with this season’s sold-out world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for*

Me. Our focus with Scene Change has been on exploring all corners of our community and to introduce new audiences to opera in intimate settings, and that's exactly what we are accomplishing. We couldn't be more thrilled about continuing this new tradition with the 2018-19 double bill."

- **Closing the 2018-19 season is Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*** (May 4, 7, 10, and 12, 2019), also **conducted by Pelto**, and featuring the much-anticipated return of **director Matthew Ozawa**, who earlier this season directed Opera Colorado's critically acclaimed, hit production of *La Bohème*.

The most beloved of all comic operas, *The Marriage of Figaro* finds its wily title character on the day of his wedding to the lovely Susanna. But their household is overseen by the wandering eye of Count Almaviva, who is intent on seducing the bride-to-be—stoking not only the couple's ire, but the frustrations of the long-suffering Countess. What unfolds is hilarious chaos set to a sparkling score.

"For me, *The Marriage of Figaro* is the best opera there is," says Pelto. "It makes you love humanity, because all these characters are flawed but they're all beautiful at the same time. Even the Count, whom I've never considered to be a bad person, but rather just a person who behaves badly. Mozart had an incredible understanding of the human soul, and he expresses that so perfectly, throughout the entirety of *Figaro*."

A true ensemble piece, this production of *The Marriage of Figaro* sees the return of several familiar voices, including world-renowned **bass-baritone Simone Alberghini**, who in 2012 sang Figaro for Opera Colorado but now takes on the role of Count Almaviva. Singing opposite Alberghini as Countess Almaviva is **soprano Ellie Dehn**, who previously performed Donna Anna in Opera Colorado's 2013 *Don Giovanni*, and has been praised as "a revelation" (*Chicago Sun-Times*). **Bass-baritone Ryan Kuster** is Figaro, opposite **soprano Maureen McKay** as Susanna. And **mezzo-soprano Adriana Zabala**, heard last month in Opera Colorado's world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me*, sings the mischievous Cherubino.

"This is always billed as Mozart's greatest opera, and it truly is," says Carpenter. "It's brimming with gorgeous music, both in terms of solo pieces but also with some of the greatest ensembles that Mozart ever wrote. This is Mozart storytelling at its best."

In addition to the 2018-19 season lineup, Opera Colorado is pleased to celebrate **the 10th anniversary of Greg Carpenter's leadership** and announce **his title change from General Director to General & Artistic Director**, as well as a **contract extension of another five years**.

Carpenter has been only the fourth general director in Opera Colorado's 35-year history, and this change in title reflects his guidance of both the artistic and administrative operations of the company over the past decade. (Prior to taking on the role, he served as Opera Colorado's Director of Development from 2004-2007.)

"Over the past ten years, Greg has spearheaded some of the most important initiatives in Opera Colorado's history," says Kevin O'Connor, Chairman of Opera Colorado's Board of Directors.

“That includes setting the tone for the company’s artistic vision and excellence in programming; working to develop our current five-year strategic plan to ensure the company’s long-term financial health; hiring Music Director Ari Pelto to support artistic planning and lead the Opera Colorado Orchestra; and, most recently, moving the company’s offices and rehearsal studio to the beautiful, new Opera Colorado Opera Center in Englewood.”

“For those reasons and many others, the entire Board of Directors feels this change in title is well deserved, and we’re thrilled to know that Greg will continue steering the course for Opera Colorado in the years to come,” adds O’Connor.

For additional information on Carpenter, please visit <http://operacolorado.org/about/general-director>.

Opera Colorado’s 2018-19 season is on sale now, via subscription. To subscribe or renew, visit <http://operacolorado.org> or call the Opera Colorado Box Office at 303.468.2030.

Single ticket on-sale dates will be announced at a later time.

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ABOUT OPERA COLORADO

Opera Colorado celebrates its 35th anniversary during the 2017-2018 season, having served as a cornerstone of Denver’s cultural community since 1981. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, Opera Colorado affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Young Artists Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and by each year reaching more than 38,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. The 2017-2018 season features Puccini’s *La Bohème* and Verdi’s *Falstaff* at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, and the world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me* by composer Gerald Cohen and librettist Deborah Brevoort at the Wolf Theatre at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center at the JCC. For more information, visit www.operacolorado.org.