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Opera Colorado Announces 40th Anniversary Season

**Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Puccini's *Turandot*
in grand, traditional productions at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House**

**A Brand-New Production of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt* Directed by
Chas Rader-Shieber and Designed by Robert Perdziola**

**One-Night-Only Celebration Featuring a Semi-Staged Production of
Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana***

Denver, CO (February 2, 2022)—Opera Colorado announces its 2022-23 Season, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the company's inception in 1983. The celebratory lineup features Verdi's *Rigoletto*, a new production of Korngold's *Die tote Stadt*, and Puccini's *Turandot*. The season opens with a one-night-only concert production of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*. The 40th Anniversary Season is generously sponsored by Marcia & Dick Robinson.

"It has been such a thrill working with Music Director Ari Pelto to plan a celebratory 40th Anniversary Season," says Greg Carpenter, General & Artistic Director. "With classic operas we all love and a rarely performed work, this season represents an artistic vision for our future. We have assembled some of the finest singers, directors, and designers, many of whom will be making their company debuts. The entire season will highlight our exceptional Opera Colorado Chorus and Orchestra. It is a season of grand opera at its finest, one our patrons will long remember."

"Our 2022-23 Season will be a special moment for the artists, crew, and staff of our company—an opportunity to celebrate where we have been and what we have accomplished, as well as look forward to where we intend to go. The season we have planned reflects precisely that mentality, with the combination of masterpieces of the Italian repertoire and the massively exciting challenge of our new *Die tote Stadt*," says Music Director Ari Pelto.

- **The season begins with a classic production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* (November 5, 8, 11, and 13, 2022), conducted by Opera Colorado Music Director Ari Pelto, whose**

“breathtaking wizardry in the pit” (*The Denver Post*) is consistently lauded whether with Opera Colorado or at engagements across the country. **Director Christopher Mattaliano** makes his company debut.

Overflowing with some of Verdi’s most recognizable melodies, *Rigoletto* tells the tragic story of the corrupt Duke of Mantua, his court jester Rigoletto, and Rigoletto’s innocent daughter Gilda. In the title role (and his Opera Colorado debut) is **baritone Stephen Powell**, a “superb, wide-ranging baritone that has an almost insolently free upper register and exceptional dynamic range” (*Opera Magazine*).

Singing the role of his daughter, the naive Gilda, is **soprano Sharleen Joynt**, also making her Opera Colorado debut. “Joynt shines in the role of Gilda...her silvery coloratura soars to impossible heights and her gestures and mannerisms evoke both her character's love for her father and enamored glee towards her suitor” (*Broadway World*).

Rounding out the principal performers as the Duke of Mantua is **tenor Matthew White**, another Opera Colorado debut. White recently made critically-acclaimed debuts with Cincinnati Opera and the Princeton Festival.

Rigoletto was last performed at Opera Colorado in 2014. Costumes for this production come from Sarasota Opera, and sets from New Orleans Opera.

- Following *Rigoletto*, **Opera Colorado presents a new production of Korngold’s *Die tote Stadt*** (February 25, 28, March 3, 5, 2023) with Pelto on the podium. A statement on the story and concept from the director, Chas Rader-Shieber and set and costume designer Robert Perdziola:

At the end of the nineteenth century, the understanding of the human mind begins to open and change. Obsessions, dreams, and desires are becoming interpretable and even understandable. It is in this milieu (late nineteenth century Bruges) that the opera is set; in an artist’s studio that includes all the set dressing and props that are employed in painting commissions. Yet it is a surreal landscape of items that have their own life and sometimes suggest other realms and places.

Paul is a painter of some success, but he is caught in a downward spiral, from which he cannot free himself. His studio has become strange in the accumulation of paintings, sketches, and props that connect him to his dead wife, Marie. Paul’s obsession begins to blur the lines between reality and fantasy. The beautiful dancer Marietta has become the incarnation of Paul’s inability to reconcile the loss of his late wife. Her resemblance to Marie is uncanny and unsettling, and like the creative process itself, is both thrilling and terrifying. The story of *Die tote Stadt* is simple but potent—the artist searches for an end to his obsession, an outcome, a final painting—one that can never really be finished.

All-new sets and costumes will be designed by **Robert Perdziola**, one of today’s most sought-after designers who has also created sets and costumes for American Ballet Theatre, Boston Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Saito Kinen Festival, San Francisco Opera, Opéra Monte Carlo, Garsington

Opera, Opera Australia, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Cincinnati Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Opera Boston, and Glimmerglass Opera.

Tenor Brian Hymel, praised by *The New York Times* for his “unflagging stamina and impetuous abandon,” makes his Opera Colorado debut as the anguished artist Paul. In her company debut, **Sara Gatland** plays the dual roles of Marie, Paul’s late wife, and Marietta, a dancer and Marie’s mysterious doppelganger. *Opera News* calls Ms. Garland “exquisite...[she] retains a thread of silver that graces her sound with an ethereal shimmer.”

Baritone Daniel Belcher, an Opera Colorado favorite and voice teacher for our Artists in Residence, returns as both Frank, an old friend of Paul’s, and Fritz, the Pierrot of Marietta’s troupe. **Betsy Bishop** (Brigitte, Paul’s housekeeper) and **Jonathan Johnson** (Victorin and Gastone) complete the cast.

This will be Opera Colorado’s first production of *Die tote Stadt*, an opera that fell out of sight during World War II and is rarely performed because of the uniquely challenging score and lead roles.

Die tote Stadt is sponsored by an Anonymous Donor in honor of Dr. James K. Todd. The Orchestra for *Die tote Stadt* is sponsored by Kevin O’Connor and Janet Ellen Raasch.

- **Closing our 40th Anniversary Season is Puccini’s larger-than-life *Turandot*** (May 6, 9, 12, and 14, 2023), also **conducted by Pelto**, and featuring the debut of **director Aria Umezawa**.

Opera Colorado plans several community engagement and feedback events around this production, which has come under fire for problematic exemplification of Western projections about Asian culture. “Working on a piece like *Turandot* is not a responsibility I take lightly. As a half-Japanese Canadian who is passionate about opera and wants to make positive cultural contributions through my work, I understand the conflict of Puccini’s orientalist operas. My aim for this production will be to lean into conversations around this work, to listen to the AAPI community, and find a way to lift up their voices through engaging with this piece,” says Umezawa. We will share updates as they become available at operacolorado.org/riddle.

This tour de force tells the story of Princess Turandot, whose heart of ice has created a barrier around her and any potential suitor who comes her way—a barrier that can only be broken by the answers to three impossible riddles. **Soprano Kara Shay Thompson** makes her Opera Colorado debut in the title role. *Broadway World* says, “Kara Shay Thompson as the Princess Turandot is stunning. She has one of the most powerful voices I have ever heard.”

Three acclaimed singers return to Opera Colorado to complete the main cast. **Tenor Jonathan Burton** (Calàf) returns after his appearance as Dick Johnson in *La fanciulla del West* (2016), **soprano Janai Brugger** (Liù) after appearing as Micaëla in *Carmen* (2014), and **bass Harold Wilson** (Timur) after his appearance as Don Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* (2019).

Turandot was last performed at Opera Colorado in 2001. The magnificent set comes to us from Lyric Opera of Chicago, and costumes from Santa Fe Opera.

- To celebrate our 40th Anniversary, we offer a special, one-night-only concert production of Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* on September 10. This semi-staged evening, directed by **David Lefkowich**, features **Catherine Martin** as Santuzza, **Catherine Cook** as Lucia, **Malcolm McKenzie** as Alfio, **Roberto de Biasio** as Turiddu, and former Artist in Residence **Kira Dills-Desurra** as Lola. Music Director Ari Pelto will lead the Opera Colorado Orchestra, taken out of the pit and positioned onstage in the center of the action.

Subscriptions for Opera Colorado's 2022-23 Season are on sale now. To subscribe or renew, visit operacolorado.org or call the Opera Colorado Box Office at 303.468.2030 (press 1).

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

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ABOUT OPERA COLORADO

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community since 1983. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, the company affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Artist in Residence Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and in a typical season, reaching more than 45,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. For more information, visit operacolorado.org.