



For Immediate Release

***Così fan tutte* Opens February 25**

Famed British Director Jonathan Miller Makes His Seattle Opera Debut Polenzani and Maltman Return to Seattle Opera Special One-Day Ticket Sale Celebrates Mozart's Birthday

Seattle—Seattle Opera's new production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* opens February 25. Famed British director Jonathan Miller has been in Seattle for the past month, rehearsing the cast in his version of Mozart's classic *opera buffa* about two men testing the fidelity of their fiancées.

"I had read about Dr. Jonathan Miller's success with his production of *Così* at the Royal Opera Covent Garden," said General Director Speight Jenkins. "The production then came to the Brooklyn Academy of Music, where it played to sold-out houses, and later played at the Lincoln Center Festival, where it again proved wildly popular. By the time Lincoln Center Festival turned up, we had a contract with Dr. Miller to direct the production here. Seattle Opera built the set for Lincoln Center, knowing that after the five performances there were completed, we could bring it back and have the sets here for our performances."

Although Miller's production of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* was presented by Seattle Opera in 2002, this is the first time that Miller has directed an opera for the company. Miller's long career in theater, opera, and television began in the 1960s when he formed Beyond the Fringe with comedians Dudley Moore and Peter Cook. Since then, he has been honored multiple times for his work in the direction of Shakespeare's plays in London's West End and on Broadway, for his direction of operas for many major houses including the Metropolitan Opera and Royal Opera Covent Garden, and for his numerous TV series including a recent BBC series on opera. Also a qualified neurologist and published author, Miller was knighted in 2002 for his accomplishments in the arts.

Casting *Così fan tutte* allowed Jenkins to bring back a number of popular singers to the Seattle Opera stage. American tenor Matthew Polenzani as Ferrando and English baritone Christopher Maltman as Guglielmo are the young men who decide to test the loyalty of their girlfriends. Polenzani made his debut as Count Almaviva in the 2000 production of Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Maltman made his U.S. debut at Seattle Opera as Britten's Billy Budd. American baritone Richard Stilwell sings the role of Don Alfonso, a role that he sang previously at Seattle Opera for the 1992 production of *Così fan tutte*. Polenzani, Maltman, and Stilwell all appear in the Opening Night Cast.

"After the success of Matthew Polenzani as Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* in 2000 and

Christopher Maltman as *Billy Budd* in 2001, I wanted to bring them both back as soon as possible,” said Jenkins. “Just to complete the male contingent, I immediately engaged Richard Stilwell, one of the great interpreters of Don Alfonso in the world today.”

The Opening Night cast also features a pair of Seattle Opera debuts singing the roles of the young men’s fiancées. French-Canadian soprano Alexandra Deshorties sings Fiordiligi, a role that she has performed many times including most recently for a Metropolitan Opera broadcast. English mezzo-soprano Christine Rice makes her U.S. opera debut as Fiordiligi’s sister Dorabella.

“After I first heard Alexandra Deshorties, I engaged her immediately for Fiordiligi. She has since sung the role at the San Francisco Opera and the Metropolitan. About two years ago an English friend told me about Christine Rice. I heard Rice in audition and found her to be an ideal Dorabella,” said Jenkins. “The Canadian mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber, who has often distinguished herself with us, was eager to sing the role of the maid Despina, and the Opening Night cast was completed.”

Jenkins was quick to point out that the Sunday/Friday cast (all roles in *Così fan tutte* are double cast) also contains two popular Seattle Opera singers and some important debuts.

American baritone David Adam Moore, a former Seattle Opera Young Artist, returns to the mainstage as Guglielmo after several appearances in Europe as Mozart’s Don Giovanni (a role he sang in the controversial production directed by Calixto Bieito in Hannover). Also returning to Seattle is Irish soprano Frances Lucey, who sings Despina. Lucey previously appeared at Seattle Opera as Rosalba in last season’s production of Catán’s *Florencia en el Amazonas*.

Making their debuts in the Sunday/Friday cast are American soprano Jessica Jones as Fiordiligi, American tenor Don Frazure as Ferrando, American mezzo-soprano Maria Zifchak as Dorabella, and American bass Valerian Ruminski as Don Alfonso. Jones, who was a member of the young artists program at Houston Grand Opera, has sung Mozart heroines at Houston, Aspen Music Festival, and Wolf Trap Opera, among others. Frazure has appeared in a variety of roles at opera houses throughout the United States and is the Vocal Artist-in-Residence at William Carey College. Zifchak most recently sang Dorabella at the Met. Ruminski’s recent engagements include Timur in Puccini’s *Turandot* at Vancouver Opera.

Long Beach Opera’s general director Andreas Mitisek conducts. Mitisek made his Seattle Opera debut conducting Weber’s *Freischütz* in 1999 and conducted Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin* here in 2002. Originally from Vienna, Mitisek has conducted a number of Mozart productions in Europe and America.

“Conducting in Mozart is sometimes even trickier than in other standard repertory operas,” said Jenkins. “The main reason is that Mozart does not allow for any hiding: what you know, what you are, what you can do is laid out plain for all to hear. I have known Andreas Mitisek for more than ten years and knew his affinity for and frequent success with the composer’s work.”

Special Sale Celebrates Mozart’s 250th Birthday

Seattle Opera will hold a one-day ticket sale for *Così fan tutte* on February 23 in honor of Mozart’s 250th birthday. The sale starts at **2:50 a.m.** and goes until **2:50 p.m.** that day. The discount is **25%** on any full-price ticket to any *Così* performance (excluding Dress Circle seats and previously purchased tickets). The promotion code is 7933, which buyers need to mention in order to take advantage of the offer.

All tickets for *Così fan tutte* are available through the Seattle Opera Ticket Office, 206-389-7676 or 800-426-1619, or in person at 1020 John Street, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tickets can also be purchased online at www.seattleopera.org.

Jonathan Miller at *Così Unabridged*

Director Jonathan Miller will be Seattle Opera's special guest at the *Opera Unabridged* lecture on February 25. This three-hour seminar includes a multimedia presentation designed to inform the audience about the history, music, and themes of Mozart's sardonic look at love. Tickets are \$30 per person and include refreshments. *Opera Unabridged* runs from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in the Nesholm Family Lecture Hall at Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street.

Tickets for the February 25 *Opera Unabridged* are available from the Seattle Opera Ticket Office, 206-389-7676 or 800-426-1619, or in person at 1020 John Street, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at www.seattleopera.org.

Così fan tutte

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte

In Italian with English Captions

Marion Oliver McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer Street

Eight Performances: February 25, 26m, March 1, 4, 5m, 8, 10, and 11, 2006

Approximate Running Time: 3 hours and 17 minutes with one intermission

Evening performances begin at 7:30 p.m., matinees at 2:00 p.m.

Single Ticket Prices: \$43-\$141

Student Rush Tickets: \$20 (available 2 hours before performance at McCaw Hall)

Seattle Opera Ticket Office: 800-426-1619 or 206-389-7676

Order through the Web: www.seattleopera.org

Artists

Fiordiligi: Alexandra Deshorties†/Jessica Jones*†

Dorabella: Christine Rice†/Maria Zifchak*†

Ferrando: Matthew Polenzani/Don Frazure*†

Guglielmo: Christopher Maltman/David Adam Moore*

Despina: Kimberly Barber/Frances Lucey*

Don Alfonso: Richard Stilwell/Valerian Ruminski*†

Conductor: Andreas Mitisek

Director: Jonathan Miller†

Production Designer: Jonathan Miller

Associate Costume Designer: Cynthia Savage

Lighting Designer: Neil Peter Jampolis

English Captions: Jonathan Dean

Sets: Seattle Opera

Costumes: Seattle Opera

†Company Debut

*On February 26m, March 5m, and 10, 2006 only

Production Sponsors: 98.1 Classical KING FM, Nesholm Family Foundation, and PONCHO

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Founded in 1963, Seattle Opera has developed into one of the leading opera companies in the United States. The company, which currently presents five productions a year, is recognized internationally for its theatrically compelling and musically accomplished performances. Seattle Opera's summer presentations, particularly of Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen*, have been acclaimed often and widely as the Pacific Northwest's premier cultural events.

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