

58th / WEXFORD FESTIVAL OPERA / 2009

Press Release

Wexford Festival Opera Opens Wed 21st October 2009

Festival dates: Wed October 21 - Sun November 1, 2009

Wexford Festival Opera ambitiously launches into its 2nd season in the state-of-the-art Wexford Opera House, with a stunning new programme. Combining spectacular operas with dynamic artistic teams, both new and known to Wexford audiences, the 58th Wexford Festival Opera continues its reputation as a unique and rare experience. This year the 2009 Festival will run from Wednesday, October 21st – Sunday, November 1st.

***The Ghosts of Versailles* by John Corigliano**

(Oct 21, 24, 27 & 30) melds together the worlds of Marie Antoinette, the French Revolution and the theatrical world of Beaumarchais' Figaro, in an award-winning opera by the Oscar and Grammy winning composer. ***The Ghosts of Versailles*** will also feature 2 Irish singers. Baritone, Owen Gilhooly, who was part of the 2008 Wexford Festival Production of '*The Mines of Sulphur*' which recently won the Irish Times Theatre Award for 'Best Opera Production', and Mezzo-Soprano, Paula Murrphy, who last appeared with Wexford Festival Opera in 2006, in another Wexford award-winning production, '*Transformations*'. ***The Ghosts of Versailles*** is a co-production with *Opera Theatre of Saint Louis*, the first of, what is hoped to be, an ongoing artistic relationship with the acclaimed American Opera company.

A double bill of *Une éducation manquée* by Emmanuel Chabrier & *La cambiale di matrimonio* by Gioachino Rossini

(Oct 22, 25, 28 & 31) brings comedy to the stage, with a musical score that sparkles with wit, vivacity and melodic spontaneity. They are both directed by Wexford-regular Roberto Recchia, who has directed many times for Wexford Festival Opera: '*Don Gregorio*' in 2006 and '*Suor Angelica*' in 2008, being two of his most critically acclaimed works. The one-acts are described as two enchanting portrayals of the consequences and comedy of innocent young love – in short, the perfect marriage.

Gaetano Donizetti's melodrama, *Maria Padilla*

(Oct 23, 26, 29, & 1st Nov) is a tale of family honour and tragedy. Written as a season opener for La Scala, ***Maria Padilla*** is one of the neglected gems of Donizetti's mature period, showing the composer at his most dramatic. No better to direct this Italian Melodrama than Marco Gandini, protégé of film and opera director, Franco Zeffereilli. Artistic Director, David Agler, takes to his natural home in the orchestra pit to conduct this masterpiece.

Alongside these rarely produced opera gems, are a wealth of other events to choose from, including the ever-popular lunchtime recitals, The Gala Concert and the Prague Chamber Choir Recitals. New additions to the programme this year include a performance by acapella phenomenon, *Anúna* and a piano recital by the winner of AXA Dublin International Piano Competition Winner, **Alexej Gorlatch**.

4 new events for this year's Wexford Festival Opera have also been announced. *Postcard from America*, *Postcard from Italy* and *Postcard from Prague* will be presented in the upstairs gallery at Greenacres, Wexford. Each programme is a musical illustration of the unique styles from these 3 distinct lands, all performed by various Artists from the Festival. The American programme will be presented on two afternoons, Friday, October 23 and Thursday, October 29 at 15:30. The Prague programme will be presented on Friday, October 30, also at 15:30, while the Italian programme will be performed at 9pm in the evening on the Bank Holiday Monday, October 26. Priced at a mere €15, these events are expected to sell-out quickly.

In addition to these ticketed events, the Festival will also host the ever-popular pre-performance opera talks. These informal, but informative talks will commence 1 hour before each performance (excluding opening night) in the more intimate venue of the Jerome Hynes Theatre in the Opera House. Michael Shell, Assistant Director of *'The Ghosts of Versailles'* will present the talk on his production, while long-time Wexford Festival Opera Director Roberto Recchia will give his insights into the Double Bill and *'Maria Padilla'*. These talks are free to the public and will last approximately 30 minutes.

To complete the experience for the enthusiast, there is also a vibrant fringe festival with art exhibitions, traditional music and many other events taking place throughout the festival.

Tickets can be purchased on-line at www.wexfordopera.com or through Wexford Opera House box-office, telephone: Lo-call 1850-4-OPERA or (053) 912 2144. Tickets from €25.

If you do one special thing this year – visit Wexford Festival Opera.

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Highlights of this year's programme include:

THE GHOSTS OF VERSAILLES

John Corigliano (b. 1938)

Grand *opera buffa* in two acts to a libretto by William B. Hoffman based on *La mère coupable* (1792) by Beaumarchais. First performed New York, Metropolitan Opera House, 19 December 1991. Performed in a newly revised version by the composer and produced in co-operation with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Sung in English.

Corigliano's oeuvre is nothing if not eclectic, marrying classical and popular, contemporary issues and age-old musical forms. Who better, then, to be awarded the first commission in a quarter century from New York's Metropolitan Opera? *The Ghosts of Versailles* was commissioned in 1980, completed in 1987 and enthusiastically received at its premiere at the Met four years later, with a cast including Renée Fleming, Teresa Stratas, Gino Quilico and Marilyn Horne.

Corigliano's only opera to date, *The Ghosts of Versailles* spans three worlds: the historical milieu of the French Revolution, the realm of the spirits haunting Versailles, and the theatrical world of the third play in Beaumarchais's 'Figaro' trilogy, from which the opera takes its cast. Beaumarchais himself stars as one of the ghosts who, having fallen in love with Marie Antoinette, attempts to divert the course of history and prevent her execution by writing a new play, *La Mère coupable* – only to be foiled by Figaro, a jaded revolutionary. Through music that parodies operatic conventions, combining pastiche of historical idioms (particularly Mozart and Rossini) with serial techniques and timbral counterpoint, *The Ghosts of Versailles* presents a rich narrative: not only a love story but also a meditation on revolution, love, and the costs of personal and social change.

Performance Dates: Oct 21, 24, 27 & 30 – 8pm

DOUBLE BILL

UNE ÉDUCATION MANQUÉE (A Defective Education)

By Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894)

Operetta in one act to a libretto by Eugène Leterrier

First performed Paris, Cercle de la Presse, 1 May 1879

Sung in French

&

LA CAMBIALE DI MATRIMONIO (The Marriage Contract)

By Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868)

Farsa comica in one act to a libretto by Gaetano Rossi

First performed Venice, Teatro S Moisè, 3 November 1810

Sung in Italian

Une éducation manquée is set in eighteenth-century Paris and tells the story of Gontran, whose education has been remarkably thorough – except in one important arena: having just married his fiancée Hélène, Gontran finds himself unsure of what is supposed to happen next!

The catalyst for the events of *La cambiale di matrimonio* is the blank matrimonial bill of the title, which is sent (unsolicited) to the English merchant, Tobias Mill, by an eccentric Canadian businessman, Mr. Slook. What follows sees Mill try to marry off his daughter against her wishes (of course), a heroic

attempt to prevent the union by her penniless lover, and the arrival of Slook, who increasingly wishes he had just stayed at home as the plot hurtles towards its denouement. Impressively paced and composed with vivid invention, *La cambiale di matrimonio* shows Rossini already developing the virtuosic trademarks of his later masterpieces.

Performance Dates: Oct 22, *25, 28 & 31 – 8pm (* Sunday, Oct 25 – 5pm)

MARIA PADILLA

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

Melodrama in three acts to a libretto by Gaetano Rossi and Donizetti after François Ancelot's play of the same name (1838).

First performed Milan, Teatro alla Scala, 26 December 1841.

A tragic tale of family honour, *Maria Padilla* features the wooing and attempted abduction of its heroine by King Pedro the Cruel of Spain. George Bernard Shaw famously suggested that Italian opera plots are invariably about a soprano and a tenor who want to make love, and a baritone who wants to stop them. But here it is the tenor, Maria's aged father Don Ruiz, who presents the obstacle to the marriage that the baritone Pedro promises Maria. *Maria Padilla* also features some telling examples of Spanish local colour, but is at heart a dark opera with a dramatic climax worthy of *Lucia*. Sung in Italian.

Performance Dates: Oct 23, *26, 29, 8pm, * Nov 1 (*5pm Curtain)

Lunch-time Recitals

St Iberius Church

Performance Dates: 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31 Oct (13:05)

Prague Chamber Choir Recitals

Rowe Street Church

Performance Dates: Monday 26, Oct (11:00) and Saturday, 31, Oct (15:30)

The Gala Concert

Wexford Opera House

Performance Date: Sunday 25 Oct (21:00)

Piano Recital

Winner of AXA Dublin International Piano Competition - Alexej Gorlatch.

Wexford Opera House

Performance Date: Sunday, November 1 (11:00)

Anúna

Rowe Street Church

Performance Date: Saturday 24 Oct (15:30)

Postcard from America

Greenacres 23 October 15:30, 29 October 15:30 Tickets €15

A musical snapshot, featuring American and Canadian Artists of the Festival. This programme profiles the enormous variety of styles which characterize 'American Music' - musical, cabaret, jazz, and spiritual. Featuring repertoire from such celebrated composers as Bernstein, Copland, Gershwin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers and Jerome Kern, in the rich, but relaxed ambiance of the Greenacres Gallery.

Postcard from Italy

Greenacres 26 October 21:00 Tickets €15

An evening of fine classical Italian songs and arias performed by Italian Artists of the Festival. This colourful musical portrait of popular Italian songs includes works from Bellini to Lucio Dalla.

Postcard from Prague

Greenacres 30 October 15:30 Tickets €15

This programme features 2 of the Czech Republic's most famous composers. The afternoon begins with Dvorak's Quintet in A major Opus 81 followed by 'The Diary of One who Vanished' by Leoš Janáček, an intimate 'Chamber Drama' written for tenor, mezzo-soprano, trio of female voices and piano. One of Janáček's most dramatic works which offers an insightful glimpse into his Czech homeland.

Greenacres Bistro and cafe open pre and post performance. Audience are welcome to enjoy their favourite wine during the performance. Unreserved seating.

Tickets for 'Postcard' events are priced at €15 and are available on-line at www.wexfordopera.com or by ringing the box-office at +353 53 912 2144 or lo-call 1-850-4-OPERA. No booking fee applies.

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The Ghosts of Versailles

ROLE

Marie Antoinette
King Louis XVI
Beaumarchais
Figaro
Count Almaviva
Susanna

Cherubino
Suleyman Pasha
Rosina
Léon
Florestine
Patrick Honoré Bégearss

ARTIST

Maria Kanyova
Owen Gilhooly
George van Bergin
Christopher Feigum
Dominic Armstrong
Krisztina Szabo

Paula Murrihy
Bradley Smoak
Kishani Jayasinghe
Sam Read Levine
Kiera Duffy
Mark Panuccio

Samira

Laura Vlasak Nolen

Woman in Hat
Trio of Gossips

Leslie Davis
Megan Radder
Christin Wismann
Candra Savage
Melody Wilson
Catherine O'Rourke
Matthew Young
Jason Ferranti
Juraj Nociar
Michael Shell

Quartet of Singers

The Marquis
Wilhelm (spoken)

Monika Bienick
Nora Brickman
Michael Cooney
Emma Fitzgerald
David Gonsier
Tim O'Donnell
Kylie Joanne Sudds

Dancers

Conductor
Director
Asst. Director
Chorographer
Designer Set
Designer Costume
Designer Video

Michael Christie
James Robinson
Michael Sheil
Sean Curran
Allen Moyer
James Schuette
Wendall Harrington

Une Education manquée

ROLE

ARTIST

Gontran de Boismassif
Helene de la Cerisaie
Maitre Pausanias

Kishani Jayasinghe
Paula Murrihy
Luca Dall'Amico

La Cambiale di Matrimonio

Role

Artist

Tobias Mill
An English Merchant
Fanny,
His daughter
Edward Milfort
Fanny's lover
Slook

Giovanni Bellavia
Pervin Chakar
Giovanni Botta
Vittorio Prato

A Canadian merchant

Nortor

Luca Dall'Amico

Mills' clerk

Clarina,

Annie Gill

Fanny's chambermaid

Conductor

Christopher Franklin

Director

Roberto Recchia

Designer Set

Lorenzo Cutùli

Designer Costume

Claudia Pernigotti

Maria Padilla

ROLE

ARTIST

Donna Maria Padilla (s)

Barbara Quintiliani

Donna Ines Padilla (s)

Ketevan Kemokldize

Don Pedro (bar)

Marco Caria

Don Ruiz di Padilla (t)

Adriana Graziani

Don Ramiro (b)

Vittorio Prato

Francisca (ms)

Annie Gill

Don Luigi (t)

Paulo Paolillo

Don Alfonso di Pardo (b)

Bradley Smoak

Conductor

David Agler

Director

Marco Gandini

Designer Set

Mauro Tinti

Designer Costume

Silvia Aymonino

Prague Choir

6 sopranos: Marie Bartošová, Eva Forejtová, Eva Kolková, Barbora Kubátová, Dagmar Mašková, Jarmila Žilková;

6 altos: Hana Černíková, Dana Dubová, Jana Dvořáková, Vlasta Prudičová, Eva Trundová, Vana Vlasáková;

6 tenors: Tomáš Brádle, Jiří Brozman, Karel Kožušník, Jaroslav Krupička, Jaroslav Slezák, Juri Nociar

6 basses: Jan Bíner, Petr Svoboda, Jan Klicpera, Jan Morávek, Vladimír Vihan, Tomas Bartunek