



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CENTRAL CITY OPERA ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY 2007 FESTIVAL**

***LA TRAVIATA /POET LI BAI-World Premiere/ CINDERELLA/THE SAINT OF BLEECKER STREET***

***2007 Festival Features Four Operas with World Renowned Artists***

\*=Central City Opera Debut

Denver, Colo.— The artists have been selected for Central City Opera's (CCO) historic 2007 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Festival. This monumental year is celebrated with the world premiere of Chinese opera, *Poet Li Bai*, presented in partnership with the Asian Performing Arts of Colorado as a special offering with only six performances. The company's regular 2007 festival season features three new productions, including Verdi's *La Traviata*, Massenet's *Cinderella* and Menotti's *The Saint of Bleecker Street*. Four operas will be presented in one festival for the first time in the history of Central City Opera during the 2007 Festival, which runs **June 30 through Aug. 19** at the Central City Opera House in Central City, CO.

"As we celebrate a landmark anniversary for Central City Opera, we are proud to showcase some of the best artists from around the globe," states **General/Artistic Director Pelham G. Pearce**. "The high caliber of singers, designers and directors we have contracted for 2007 is a testament to how far this company has come in its 75 years and to the direction we are going in the future."

***La Traviata (June 30 – Aug. 12)*** – The 2007 Festival opens with Verdi's popular Italian opera about a young courtesan stricken with consumption and her tumultuous love affair with a nobleman in Paris. This new production commemorates Central City Opera's first festival, which opened to great fanfare on July 23, 1932 starring Lillian Gish in the lead role of the play *Camille*. Both *Camille* and *La Traviata* are based on the novel *La Dame aux Camélias* by French writer Alexandre Dumas fils.' A new production sung in Italian with English supertitles.

### Performing Artists

Known for his interpretations of 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian repertoire, **Martin André\*** makes his Central City Opera debut conducting *La Traviata*. An international performer, he spent many seasons as resident conductor at Welsh National Opera and has the rare distinction of having performed for all of the major British opera companies. Soprano **Jennifer Casey Cabot** returns to CCO as Violetta, after her lauded debut with the company as Alma in Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke* in 2002. Having enjoyed great success in this leading role, Ms. Cabot has performed Violetta with the New York City Opera, Washington Opera, Utah Festival Opera and Opera Festival New Jersey, to name a few. Tenor **Chad Shelton** returns as Violetta's love interest, Alfredo, after performing the role of Don Ottavio in last year's *Don Giovanni*. A former CCO Apprentice Artist, Mr. Shelton has since gone on to make his international debut with the Australian Opera and is slated to make his debut with San Francisco Opera in 2008. Baritone **Grant Youngblood** returns as Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, after his most recent performances with CCO as The Four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. Known for his interpretation of the role, he has performed it with New York City Opera, Orlando Opera, Tulsa Opera, Opera Memphis and Virginia Opera.

### Production Team

Australian director **Justin Way\*** makes his CCO debut as stage director. In addition to his role as Staff Director for Royal Opera Covent Garden, his work has been staged at Opera Australia, Washington National Opera and Chicago Opera Theater. **Peter Harrison**, who most recently created the critically-acclaimed set for *The Coronation of Poppea* (2006), designs the scenery reminiscent of the original *Camille* production that opened the company in 1932. Costume designer for all three productions in 2006, **Alice Marie Kugler Bristow** returns to design this Festival opener.

***Poet Li Bai (July 7 – July 28)*** – The second opera of the 75<sup>th</sup> year will be the world premiere of a piece by one of today's most well-known Chinese composers, **Guo Wenjing**, whose works have been featured at major international festivals and venues in Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Edinburgh, New York, Aspen and London, among others. Co-commissioned with Asian Performing Arts of Colorado (APAC), *Poet Li Bai* tells of an introspective conversation between this Tang Dynasty poet (701-763 AD) and his two companions: his favorite fruit-based alcohol, personified by Wine, and his flights of fancy, personified by Moon. The three characters piece together the life stories, the hopes and fears of a legendary man who loved life with a passion to the very end. Libretto is by **Diana Liao** and **Xu Ying**, who have collaborated on the writing of a number of operatic librettos, including **Tan Dun's *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* which will make its American premiere at Santa Fe Opera this summer.** A special addition to the festival with six performances: July 7, 13, 15, 20, 26 and 28.

### Performing Artists

Dutch conductor **Ed Spanjaard\*** makes his Central City Opera debut conducting the world premiere of *Poet Li Bai*. Mr. Spanjaard has premiered many interesting compositions, including the internationally acclaimed chamber operas of Guo Wenjing's *Wolf Cub Village* and *Night Banquet*. Making his CCO debut in the title role will be Denver University alumnus **Hao Jiang Tian\***, one of today's most sought after basso cantante who is

performing in December at the Metropolitan Opera opposite Plácido Domingo in Tan Dun's world premiere of *The First Emperor*. Having recently performed Pamina in Opera Colorado's *The Magic Flute* and making her debut with the Metropolitan Opera this month in the same role, soprano **Ying Huang\*** will make her CCO debut in the role of Moon. Tenor **Jiang Qihu\***, a leading member of the China Peking Opera Company, will recite Li Bai's poem in the best tradition of Peking opera. Central City Opera will collaborate with the **Chorus of University of Denver's Lamont School of Music\***, directed by **Catherine Sailer\***, for this premiere.

### **Production Team**

This new production will be directed by **Lin Zhaohua.\*** Considered one of the most prominent figures in the history of Chinese drama his work, from Peking opera to modern drama, has been showcased on stages worldwide. Set and costume designer **Yi Liming\*** has created more than 100 productions, ranging from opera to dance to experimental theater. His refreshing ideas have charmed audiences not only in China, but also in New York, Berlin, London, Paris and Rome. Lighting designer **David Martin Jacques** returns for this world premiere production after his most recent appearance with the company lighting *Madama Butterfly* and *Vanessa* in 2005.

**Cinderella (July 14 – Aug. 19)** – French composer Massenet's version of this popular fairytale will be seen for the first time in a new production at Central City Opera this summer. With a libretto by Henri Cain, the opera is based on Charles Perrault's rendition of the rags-to-riches tale complete with the fantasy of the Fairy Godmother, sprites, fairies and the magical glass slipper. Sung in French with English supertitles.

### **Performing Artists**

Central City Opera Music Director **John Baril** conducts *Cinderella* following his success with *Don Giovanni* last summer. Having started his work with the company in 1992, Mr. Baril has conducted over 100 performances during his tenure. He is joined by mezzo-soprano **Leah Wool**, who returns in her role debut as Cinderella, after her highly-touted performances as Erika in *Vanessa* (2005). Ms. Wool made her debut with New York City Opera in *Il Viaggio a Reims* last season and has also recently performed with Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Utah Opera. Colorado native and a former Apprentice Artist with CCO, tenor **Vale Rideout** appears as Prince Charming. Mr. Rideout will also perform this March in Central City Opera's *Opera's Great Hits II* collaboration with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. Soprano **Heather Buck** performs the role of La Fée, the Fairy Godmother. A Central City Opera Studio Artist in 1996, Ms. Buck's recent appearances include her debut with Santa Fe Opera in *The Magic Flute* last summer and *Semele* with Arizona Opera. The role of Pandolfe, Cinderella's father, will be double-cast. **Patrick Carfizzi** will perform the role for performances from July 14 through Aug. 11, returning after his most recent performances as The Doctor in *Vanessa* (2005). Bass-baritone **Philip Cokorinos** will perform the role of Pandolfe on Aug. 14, 17, 19, and made his debut with the company as Leporello in last summer's *Don Giovanni*. Mezzo-soprano **Maria Zifchak\*** will make her company debut as Madame de la Haltière, the stepmother. A frequent performer with the Metropolitan Opera, Ms. Zifchak made several company debuts last season, including in *Così fan tutte* with Seattle Opera and in *Hänsel and Gretel* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

### **Production Team**

**Marc Astafan**, who has worked often with Central City Opera directing both festival productions and collaborations with the CSO, returns to create this new production with set designer **Caleb Wertenbaker**. Frequent collaborators, Astafan and Wertenbaker worked together on last year's *Don Giovanni* at Central City Opera and designed a new production of *Cinderella* for the New England Conservatory in 2005. Costume designer **Sara Jean Tosetti\*** makes her CCO debut with *Cinderella*. Lauded for her "inventive costumes" in the New York Times, young Tosetti's credits include *Manuscript* and *The Exonerated* at Darryl Roth Theatre and several productions for the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival.

**The Saint of Bleeker Street (July 21 – Aug. 18)** – Menotti's contemporary opera set in the 1950s in New York City's Little Italy is the final offering of 2007. A rarely-performed 20<sup>th</sup> century piece originally written for Broadway, it follows a young woman, who is blessed with seeing visions of angels and the ability to perform miracles, along with her disbelieving brother and his deadly love affair. This new production will be performed in English with English supertitles.

### **Performing Artists**

Conductor **Hal France** returns after his most recent performances with the company of *L'Italiana in Algeri* (2003). Mr. France is currently Music Director of the Orlando Philharmonic and has served on the music staffs of the Aspen Music Festival, Glyndebourne Festival and Netherlands Opera, among others. Soprano **Maria Kanyova** returns as Annina, the young woman who sees visions, after performing the title role in *Madama Butterfly* (2005). Recent appearances for Ms. Kanyova include her role debut as Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with Opera Colorado last spring and *La Bohème* with New York City Opera. Annina's brother, Michele, will be sung by tenor **Derek Taylor\***. Last season, Mr. Taylor performed *La Traviata* with Opera Illinois and *La Bohème* with El Paso Opera, as well as concert appearances such as a gala recital for the World Bank to benefit AIDS in Africa. Soprano **Christine Brandes** returns as the newspaper seller, Maria Corona, after her acclaimed debut as Poppea last summer in *The Coronation of Poppea*. Mezzo-soprano **Kirsten Chavez\***, who made her debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the world premiere of *An American Tragedy* last season, makes her CCO debut as Michele's lover, Desideria. Bass-baritone **Philip Cokorinos**, also performing in *Cinderella*, sings the role of the priest, Don Marco. Former Central City Opera Apprentice Artist, **Christina Martos**, appears as Carmela along with 2006 Apprentice Artist **Corinne Wallace** as Assunta.

### **Production Team**

**Catherine Malfitano**, the famed soprano who made her directorial debut with *Madama Butterfly* (2005) at Central City Opera, returns to direct this production. A champion of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century operas, Ms. Malfitano is intimately familiar with *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, having performed the role of Annina early in her career at the Wolf Trap Festival and also at the New York City Opera (NYCO). A live televised performance from NYCO helped to catapult her to fame in America, and brought her to the Met soon thereafter. **Donald Eastman\*** is set

designer. Having recently designed *Turn of the Screw* for Seattle Opera and *Patience* at New York City Opera, Mr. Eastman will design for the first time this year at CCO. **Dona Granata\***, who has designed costumes for numerous films, such as Robert Altman's *Dr. T and the Women*, as well as Broadway theater productions including *Canciones de mi Padre* with Linda Ronstadt, makes her debut as costume designer.

### **Ticket Information**

Subscriptions to see *La Traviata*, *Cinderella* and *The Saint of Bleecker Street* (with exclusive subscriber-only pricing for the world premiere of *Poet Li Bai*) during the 2007 Festival start at just \$107 and go up to \$215. **Single tickets go on sale Jan. 2, 2007** and range from \$43 to \$87. To purchase tickets or for more information, call the Central City Opera Box Office at 303-292-6700; 800-851-8175 or go online to [www.centralcityopera.org](http://www.centralcityopera.org).

### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Book- *Theatre of Dreams***

A commemorative coffee table book, entitled *Theatre of Dreams*, highlighting Central City Opera House Association's glorious 75 year history, including never before seen photos, will be available to the public in the spring of 2007. A limited number will be published. Prices are \$50 plus \$8 handling fee (\$4 handling fee for each additional book ordered from the same address). To reserve a copy of the book, call 303-292-6700 or go to [www.centralcityopera.org](http://www.centralcityopera.org).

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*Celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year in 2007, the Central City Opera House Association is the nation's fifth-oldest opera company, located just 35 miles west of Denver in one of Colorado's official National Landmark Historic Districts. The company continues to pursue its four-part mission to present artistically excellent professional opera; to offer career-entry training to young singers; to produce education and community service programs; and to preserve and maintain the Opera House and 30 other Victorian-era properties. For more information or to purchase tickets to the Central City Opera, visit [www.centralcityopera.org](http://www.centralcityopera.org) or call 303-292-6700.*

## LA TRAVIATA

(\* = Central City Opera debut)

Music by Giuseppe Verdi  
Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Conductor	Martin André*
Director	Justin Way*
Scenic Designer	Peter Harrison
Costume Designer	Alice Marie Kugler Bristow
Lighting Designer	David Martin Jacques
Chorus Master	Christopher Zemliauskas
Associate Conductor	Christopher Zemliauskas
Musical Preparation	Mark Armstrong and Katherine Kozak

### Cast

Violetta Valery  
Flora Bervoix  
Marquis D'Obigny  
Baron Duophol  
Doctor Grenvil  
Gaston, Viscount of Letorieres  
Alfredo Germont  
Annina  
Giorgio Germont  
Giuseppe  
Messenger

### In order of vocal appearance

Jennifer Casey Cabot  
Erica Brookhyser\*  
Craig Price\*  
Kevin Wetzel\*  
Daniel Webb  
Benjamin Hilgert\*  
Chad Shelton  
Leah Serr\*  
Grant Youngblood  
TBA  
TBA

Ensemble

Members of Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Artists Training Program

Performances:

June 30; July 6m, 8m, 11m, 14m, 18m, 21m, 29m;  
Aug. 2, 4, 7, 10, 12m, 16, 2007

Family Performance:

Aug. 7

Family Performance Conductor:

Christopher Zemliauskas







