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Rebekah Chewning 410.625.1600 x 311
Deborah Goetz 410.625.1600 x 312

BALTIMORE OPERA COMPANY PRESENTS
Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani* (*The Puritans*)
November 13, 17, 19, 21, 2004

**WORLD RENOWNED COLORATURA SOPRANO,
ELIZABETH FUTRAL DEBUTS IN THE ROLE OF ELVIRA**

(Baltimore) – The Baltimore Opera Company continues its groundbreaking 2004-05 season with another Baltimore Opera premiere, *I Puritani* (*The Puritans*) by Vincenzo Bellini on **Saturday, November 13 at 8:15, Wednesday, November 17 at 7:30, Friday, November 19 at 8:15, and Sunday, November 21 at 3:00.** Widely praised coloratura soprano, **Elizabeth Futral** makes her debut in the role of Elvira opposite one of the world's most elegant bel canto tenors, **Gregory Kunde.** The opera will be conducted by **Steven White** and directed by **Alessandra Panzavolta.**

Elizabeth Futral, one of today's leading lyric-coloratura sopranos, debuts in the role of Elvira, who is in love with Arturo although their families are fighting on opposite sides of the English Civil War. Miss Futral's vibrant voice and stage personality have thrilled audiences at San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric of Chicago, Metropolitan Opera, Israeli Philharmonic, Florida Grand Opera and Washington Opera. The elegant bel canto tenor, **Gregory Kunde** sings the role of Arturo. He has brought his impeccable phrasing and dramatic intensity to this role in Munich, Deutsche Opera Berlin, San Francisco, Vienna Staatsoper, Teatro Comunale di Bologna and at the Bavarian State Opera. **Giovanni Meoni** (Count di Luna in 2003 *Rigoletto*) and **Mikhail Svetlov** (Ferrando, last seen at the BOC in *Il Trovatore* 2003), return as Riccardo Forto and Giorgio Valton. The opera will be staged by **Alessandra Panzavolta** and **Maestro Steven White** conducts this production from Teatro Comunale di Bologna.

"Please don't think of this as the Thanksgiving opera!" asks BOC General Director Michael Harrison. "*These Puritans* are the fierce combatants of the English Civil War and there are no turkeys or big silver shoe buckles. This opera is a bel canto masterpiece that calls for an extremely demanding, high, delicate form of singing. In fact, the highest note written for a tenor in any opera is in *I Puritani* and, believe me, Gregory Kunde can hit it!"

I Puritani was composed by the man who is most often identified as the soul of bel canto— Vincenzo Bellini. Considered one of the pre-eminent bel canto operas, the composition focuses primarily on the voice and its expressive power featuring sustained high singing requiring stamina, musicianship,

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range and color. The setting is Plymouth, England during the English Civil War and the Puritans are at war with the Cavaliers. The plot is high romance, and the central character is Elvira, whose engagement to Arturo is interrupted when he is branded a traitor for his loyalty to the widowed queen. Elvira's mind breaks but is shocked back to sanity when she hears of Arturo's pending execution. Her grieving "Qiu la Voce" is one of the finest examples of a bel canto style aria.

THE STORY OF THE OPERA– *I Puritani* (The Puritans)

At Plymouth, a Puritan stronghold under siege by Royalist troops, Sir Riccardo Forto laments that his future bride, Elvira, is in love with Lord Arturo Talbo, a Stuart partisan. Despite her current engagement and Arturo's Royalist allegiance, her uncle, Sir Giorgio Valton's concedes to Elvira marrying Arturo. On their wedding day, Arturo learns that Queen Enrichetta is being held prisoner and arranges for her to escape disguised as his bride. When Riccardo exposes the plan, Elvira misinterprets the news as an elopement and descends into madness. Arturo is condemned to death for treason and a manhunt ensues. Giorgio convinces Ricardo to save Arturo after witnessing the depths of Elvira's insanity, and it is finally agreed that Arturo's life will be spared. Meanwhile, Arturo sneaks into Elvira's garden to proclaim his love, but as he is seized by soldiers, he receives word of the war's end and that pardons have been issued to all Royalists. The shock of the news brings Elvira out of her madness, and into Arturo's embrace.

2004-05 SEASON OF GRAND OPERA–

***Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro)** by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

March 12, 16, 18, 20, 2005

Robert Gierlach, Susan Patterson, Sebastian Catana; Daniel Beckwith (c), Bernard Uzan (d).

***Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (The Tales of Hoffmann)** by Jacques Offenbach

April 30, May 4, 6, 8, 2005

Roberto Aronica, Valeria Esposito, Renata Lamanda, Antonia Cifrone; Christian Badea (c,d).

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Pre-Opera Promenade Dinners On the Lyric Grand Tier

Be the guest of General Director, Michael Harrison as a sumptuous repast before each opera. Arrive early, park your car and relax. Dine in the ambiance of an elegant candle lit garden-like setting on the Garden Tier of the Lyric Opera House, overlooking the scenic Mt. Vernon Cultural District. Choose from three gourmet dinner entrees accompanied by wine or an array of brunch specialties with Mimosas, Bellinis or Bloody Marys. Then hear a private "Pre-Opera Lecture" while enjoying dessert. Call 410.625.1600, Ext. 309 for reservations and further details.

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The Baltimore Opera Company is one of the country's oldest continually operating opera companies, presenting full-scale grand operas, featuring internationally renowned singers, conductors and directors. All performances are at the Lyric Opera House, 140 West Mount Royal Avenue, Baltimore with English translations projected above the stage. For ticket information, call the Box Office at 410.727.6000 or visit the website at www.baltimoreopera.com.

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