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MADISON OPERA PRESENTS *THE THREEPENNY OPERA*
COMPANY RETURNS TO MUSICAL THEATER IN THE PLAYHOUSE AT OVERTURE, FEB. 4 – 13, 2011

Madison, Wis. - Madison Opera continues its 50th anniversary season with the company premiere of Kurt Weill's ***The Threepenny Opera*** in The Playhouse at the Overture Center for the Arts, Feb. 4 – 13, 2011. The production is Madison Opera's second venture in the intimate Playhouse and features a stellar cast from across theater and opera.

With music deeply rooted in jazz and Viennese operetta, *The Threepenny Opera* follows the notorious criminal Macheath as he navigates a corrupt world of beggars, thieves and prostitutes in Victorian London. Hailed by *Newsweek* as "the greatest musical of all time," the work contains several numbers that have achieved popularity beyond the stage, including the iconic "Mack the Knife." Madison Opera's production of *The Threepenny Opera* is directed by **Dorothy Danner**, a highly acclaimed stage director of musical theater and opera, with music direction by **John DeMain**, the Artistic Director of Madison Opera.

The Threepenny Opera will showcase American Players Theatre favorites **James DeVita** and **Tracy Michelle Arnold**. Mr. DeVita, an accomplished actor, author and playwright, takes on the role of the infamous Macheath, and Ms. Arnold, described as a "natural charismatic force" by *The Chicago Tribune*, stars as Jenny Diver. In her Madison Opera debut, **Alicia Berneche** reprises her role as Polly Peachum alongside veteran Broadway performer **David Barron** as J.J. Peachum. Madison-based artists **Amy Welk**, **Richard Henslin**, **Liz Cassarino**, and **Edward Marion** complete the cast as Mrs. Peachum, Tiger Brown, Lucy Brown, and the Street Singer respectively.

"In honor of Madison Opera's 50th anniversary, we are revisiting a company tradition of producing musical theater," said General Director Allan Naplan. "To do so with Weill's masterpiece *The Threepenny Opera* and with such experienced and talented performers," he continues, "brings our company into new territory while recognizing our history."

Naplan will offer a behind-the-scenes, multimedia introduction to *The Threepenny Opera* at **Opera Up Close: The Threepenny Preview**, on Sunday, Jan. 30, 1 – 3 p.m. at the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art Lecture Hall (\$20, free with student ID). Free Pre-Opera talks will be offered one hour before performances on Feb. 4, 6, 11, and 13 in the Rotunda Studio at Overture. (There is no Pre-Opera Talk at Saturday evening performances.)

Performances:

Friday, Feb. 4 • 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 5 • 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 6 • 2:30 p.m.
Friday, Feb. 11 • 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Feb. 12 • 8:00 p.m.
Sunday, Feb. 13 • 2:30 p.m.

Tickets:

\$20 - \$64 | Call (608) 258-4141
or visit www.madisonopera.org

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

The Threepenny Opera

Music by Kurt Weill, Text by Bertolt Brecht (1928)

Based on "The Beggar's Opera" by John Gay (1728)

English adaptation by Marc Blitzstein (1954)

Directed by Dorothy Danner

Music Direction by John DeMain

Macheath: James DeVita

Jenny Diver: Tracy Michelle Arnold

Polly Peachum: Alicia Berneche

J.J. Peachum: David Barron

Mrs. Peachum: Amy Welk

Tiger Brown: Richard Henslin

Lucy Brown: Liz Cassarino

Street Singer/Pastor Kimball: Edward Marion

Filch/Crookfinger Jake/Messenger: Joseph Lullo

Bob the Saw/Warden: Paul Kennedy

Ready Money Matt: Alex Cotant

Walt Dreary: Bart Terrell

Betty: Kristin Hammargren

Dolly: Leslie Cao

Molly: Meghan Randolph

Coaxer: Lisa Maletic

ARTIST BIOS



James DeVita (Macheath) has been a company actor with American Players Theatre in Spring Green, WI for 16 years, where he recently premiered his latest play, *In Acting Shakespeare* and a new adaptation of *Gift of the Magi*. An accomplished actor for over 25 years, his work in classical theatre includes Iago, Macbeth, Richard III, Benedick, Richard II, Romeo and Hamlet. Mr. DeVita is also an award-winning author and playwright. Currently he is the resident playwright for First Stage Children's Theater in Milwaukee and has written or adapted 19 plays for young adults and children. Mr. DeVita has also published two novels, *The Silenced* and *Blue* with HarperCollins Publishing.



Tracy Michelle Arnold (Jenny Diver) is in her 11th season with the American Players Theatre in Spring Green, WI, where past roles have included Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Lady M, Beatrice, Olivia, Rosaline, Emilia, Regan, and Titania. She was last seen in Pinter's *Old Times* and Coward's *Hay Fever* at APT, and recently performed Amanda in Coward's *Private Lives* at the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre. Tracy has also performed with Writers' Theatre, Northlight, and Steppenwolf in Chicago.



Soprano **Alicia Berneche** (Polly Peachum) attracts national attention in new and standard works, with recent noted engagements at the Austin Lyric Opera as Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* and Adele in *Die Fledermaus*; Lyric Opera of Chicago as Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*; Portland Opera as Constance in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; Opera Omaha as Polly Peachum in *The Threepenny Opera*; Virginia Opera as Yum-Yum in *The Mikado*; and The Barbican in London and Brooklyn Academy of Music in the world premiere of Philip Glass' *Galileo Galilei*. Upcoming engagements include soprano soloist in Carmina Burana with the Minnesota Orchestra.



David Barron (J.J. Peachum) made his Broadway debut as Judge Turpin in the 1989 Tony-nominated revival of *Sweeney Todd*. An artist of great versatility in both musicals and opera, Barron's impressive credits include engagements as El Gallo in the historic off-Broadway production of *The Fantasticks*, as well as Daddy Warbucks in the National Broadway Tour of *Annie*. Other theater credits of note include *Brigadoon* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers* at the Goodspeed Opera House, Don Quixote in *Man of La Mancha* at Music Theater of Wichita, and Jud Fry in *Oklahoma* at the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, as well as off-Broadway appearances at New York's John Houseman Theater and the WPA Theater.



Amy L. Welk (Mrs. Peachum) has recently been performed Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, Martha Watson in *White Christmas*, and General Cartwright in *Guys and Dolls* at the Armory Dinner Theatre in Janesville, Wisconsin. Madison audiences know Ms. Welk as Joanne in *Company*, Mrs. Meers in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and Hattie Walker in *Follies*. In 2010, she appeared as Fraulein Schneider in Windwood Production's North American tour of *Cabaret*. Ms. Welk holds a BFA in Theatre Performance from UW-Whitewater and attended graduate school at the University of London.



Rick Henslin (Tiger Brown) is a member of the Madison Opera Chorus and a distinguished musical theater performer based in Madison, Wisconsin. Recent engagements include the title role in *Sweeney Todd*, Emile (cover) in *South Pacific*, and *Side by Side by Sondheim* with Four Seasons Theatre, and Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast* with the Verona Area Community Theater. In December 2010, Rick appeared as Tom Bailey in the Children's Theater of Madison's *A Wonderful Life*.



Liz Cassarino (Lucy Brown) makes her Madison Opera debut having recently been seen at University Theater as Livia Majeski in *Valparaiso*, Rona in *Putnam County Spelling Bee*, and the Baker's Wife in *Into the Woods*. An MFA candidate in acting at UW-Madison, she has also appeared locally with Music Theatre of Madison as Queenie in *Wild Party* and with the American Theater Company in Chicago as Faye in *Oklahoma*.



Noted for her inventive stagings, **Dorothy Danner** has directed nearly 200 productions of operettas, musicals and plays throughout the United States, Canada and Belgium, including operas for the companies of Glimmerglass, Houston, Philadelphia, Miami, Cleveland, Minnesota, Cincinnati, Portland, Kansas City, Virginia and for San Francisco's Merola Program. Her production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in New York for the Juilliard School garnered wide critical acclaim, as did her PBS *Tribute to Gilbert and Sullivan* for the Boston Pops and her television staging of Richard Wargo's opera, *Ballymore*. As a performer, Dorothy Danner, also known as Dorothy Frank, appeared in nine Broadway shows, from the original *Once Upon a Mattress* to Michael Bennett's *Ballroom*. A dedicated and inspiring teacher, she was co-founder of the Glimmerglass Opera Young American Artist Program, has served on the faculties of the Juilliard School, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Chautauqua Institution, and has been a frequent guest director at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, New York University, Boston University and Carnegie Mellon.



John DeMain is the Artistic Director of Madison Opera. He is also the Music Director of the Madison Symphony Orchestra and a sought after guest conductor of orchestras and opera companies around the world. In recent seasons, he has led productions at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera. Most recently, he conducted the Canadian premiere of *Nixon in China* at Vancouver Opera and *Carmina Burana* and *I Pagliacci* at Portland Opera. During his distinguished tenure as Music Director of Houston Grand Opera, Maestro DeMain conducted numerous world premieres, including Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* and Adams' *Nixon in China*, as well as the American premiere of Glass' *Akhmaten*. In addition, he led a history-making production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, which he subsequently recorded for RCA and won the Grammy Award, Tony Award and France's Grand Prix du Disque. In addition to *The Threepenny Opera*, this season at Madison Opera John DeMain conducted *The Marriage of Figaro* in November and will conduct *La Traviata* later in the spring.

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