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## Verdi classic *La Traviata* to be presented April 29 and May 1

*Madison Opera continues 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary season with spectacular production featuring Cuban-American soprano Elizabeth Caballero and Italian tenor Giuseppe Varano in his U.S. debut*

Madison, Wis. – Madison Opera presents Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata* on Friday, April 29 and Sunday, May 1 at the Overture Center for the Arts. A classic tragedy set amid the decadence of Parisian high society, *La Traviata* tells the story of the courtesan Violetta as she falls in love with Alfredo, only to be forced to give him up.

The Madison Opera production features sets and costumes by the Tony Award-winning designer Desmond Heeley, originally created for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Garnett Bruce directs, and Madison Opera Artistic Director John DeMain conducts the Madison Opera Chorus and Madison Symphony Orchestra.

“*La Traviata* is Verdi at his best,” says Artistic Director John DeMain. He continues, “The music is instantly recognizable, the story utterly moving, and the production is on a grand scale fitting for Madison Opera’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.”

The compelling Cuban-American soprano Elizabeth Caballero stars as the infamous party girl Violetta Valery, having last appeared with Madison Opera as Micaela in *Carmen* (2009). In his U.S. debut, the Italian tenor Giuseppe Varano sings Alfredo Germont, following performances of the role in Austria, Germany and Italy. Grammy Award-winning baritone Donnie Ray Albert was a hit at Opera in the Park in 2005 and returns to Madison as Alfredo’s father Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*.

Madison Opera continues its Opera Up Close series with a preview of *La Traviata* on April 16, and Pre-Opera Talks will be hosted one hour prior to each performance. Special events surrounding the production include the April 29 launch of “Out at the Opera,” a new affinity group for Madison Opera’s LGBT fans, and the company’s Golden Anniversary Gala on April 30.

Special event details and full cast and production information are enclosed. To receive production photos, schedule artist interviews, or for more information, please contact Director of Marketing and Community Engagement Brian Hinrichs at hinrichs@madisonopera.org or (608) 238-8085.

**Performances:**

Friday, April 29, 2011 • 8 p.m.

Sunday, May 1, 2011 • 2:30 p.m.

Overture Center for the Arts

*Sung in Italian with projected English translations*

**Box Office:**

201 State St., Madison, WI

(608) 258-4141

www.madisonopera.org

**Tickets:**

\$16 - \$114

*Student and group discounts available*

## PRODUCTION TEAM AND CAST

Conductor.....John DeMain  
Stage Director.....Garnett Bruce  
Set and Costume Designer.....Desmond Heeley  
Lighting Designer.....Christine Binder  
Choreographer.....Tania Tandas

Violetta Valery.....Elizabeth Caballero  
Alfredo Germont.....Giuseppe Varano  
Giorgio Germont.....Donnie Ray Albert  
Flora Bervoix.....Jamie Van Eyck  
Gastone.....Heath Rush  
Annina.....Allisanne Apple  
Barone Douphol.....Paul Rowe  
Marchese d’Obigny.....Jeremy Kelly  
Doctor Grenvil.....Gregory Brumfield

## RELATED EVENTS

### **Opera Up Close: The Traviata Preview**

*Saturday, April 16, 2011, 1 -3 p.m., Madison Museum of Contemporary Art Lecture Hall, \$20 general admission –* Join Madison Opera for a behind-the-scenes look at *La Traviata*, including a multimedia introduction to the music and life of composer Giuseppe Verdi, hosted by Brian Hinrichs with commentary from director Garnett Bruce, conductor John DeMain, and members of the cast. Tickets available at the door.

### **Pre-Opera Talks**

*Friday, April 29, 2011, 7 p.m. and Sunday, May 1, 2011, 1:30 p.m., Wisconsin Studio at Overture, Free –* Attend an introduction to *La Traviata* one hour prior to curtain to learn about the music, story, cast and design of Madison Opera’s production.

### **Out at the Opera**

*Friday, April 29, 2011, 8 p.m., Overture Hall/Fresco Restaurant, \$35 or \$75 –* Madison Opera’s new affinity group for the LGBT community and friends launches at the opening night performance of *La Traviata* and features a special after party at Fresco Restaurant. Prices include a circle or mezzanine level opera ticket and admission to the after party. Call (608) 238-8085 to RSVP or purchase.

### **A Golden Anniversary Gala**

*Saturday, April 30, 2011, 6 p.m., Overture Hall Lobby, \$250 –* Celebrate fifty years of Madison Opera at *A Golden Anniversary Gala*, featuring a candlelight dinner, “The Art of Opera Glasses” silent auction, and a special anniversary tribute performance, plus dessert and champagne on the spectacular set of *La Traviata* accompanied by a performance from dynamic songstress Robin Plier.

## CAST BIOS



Acclaimed by the San Francisco Chronicle as a “powerful diva in the making,” Cuban-American soprano **Elizabeth Caballero** is becoming widely recognized for her fearless portrayals of the lyric soprano repertoire. She recently appeared as Liu in Florida Grand Opera’s season-opening *Turandot*, a performance hailed as “meltingly effective” in *The Sun Sentinel*. Last season, she made her house debut at the Metropolitan Opera as Frasquita in *Carmen*. Other recent performances include Nedda in *Pagliacci* with Kentucky Opera; Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with Nashville Opera; Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Seattle Opera; and Violetta in *La Traviata* with Opera New Jersey. Ms. Caballero has previously performed with Madison Opera at Opera in the Park 2007 and as Micaela in *Carmen* in 2009.



Italian tenor **Giuseppe Varano** makes his U.S. debut as Alfredo in Madison Opera’s production of *La Traviata*. His 2010 performances as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at the Savonlinna Opera Festival in Finland earned Mr. Varano praise for his “shining” (*Osterbottens Tidning*) and “breathtaking” (*Das Opernglas*) voice. A young tenor on the rise, Giuseppe Varano has recently appeared as Pinkerton at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna and as Alfredo at Opera Graz, opposite Marlis Petersen as Violetta. Other recent highlights include Rodolfo in *La bohème* at the opera houses of Messina, Rimini and Leipzig, and the title role in *Faust* at the Teatre Principal de Palma in Spain. Future engagements include debuts at Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Colorado and Deutsche Opera am Rhein.



Now in his 35th year of performing professionally, **Donnie Ray Albert** has sung baritone roles and concerts in some of the world's most prominent opera houses and symphony halls. Mr. Albert has performed such roles as Wotan and the Wanderer in *Die Walküre* and *Siegried* with the New National Theatre in Tokyo, Japan, and the title role of *Macbeth* at the Klangbogen Festival in Vienna, Austria. Recent engagements include Mephistopheles in *Faust* with Semperoper Dresden; Four Villains in *Les Contes d’Hoffman* with the National Theater in Prague; and the title role in *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera. Donnie Ray Albert has received two Grammy Awards for Best Opera Recording for *Porgy and Bess* in 1977 and *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* in 2009. He first performed with Madison Opera at Opera in the Park 2005.



Mezzo-soprano **Jamie Van Eyck** appeals to audiences and critics alike as a compelling young artist in opera and concert. Her 2010-2011 season began with a Boston Lyric Opera debut as The Drummer in *The Emperor of Atlantis*, inciting praise from *The Boston Herald* for a portrayal that was “beautifully acted and sung.” Most recently, she returned to Utah Opera as Meg in *Little Women*. Last season, she made her role and company debut as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis and appeared at the Bard SummerScape Festival as Milli in Franz Schreker’s *Der Ferne Klang*. Ms. Van Eyck has previously performed with Madison Opera as Mercedes in *Carmen*, Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw*, and Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*.



Tenor **Heath Rush** studied with James Doing at the UW-Madison School of Music with the assistance of a grant from the Pleasant T. Rowland Foundation. He has performed with San Francisco Opera's acclaimed Merola Program and was an apprentice with Sarasota Opera and a member of the Orlando Opera Studio. Mr. Rush has appeared locally with the Madison Symphony Orchestra and Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. Previously with Madison Opera, he sang the role of Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*.



Mezzo-soprano **Allisanne Apple** has previously appeared with Madison Opera as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Kate in *Kiss Me Kate*, *Side by Side by Sondheim*, and Meg in *Falstaff*. She has also performed with the Lyric Opera of Chicago Chorus, Skylight Opera Theatre, Connecticut Opera, Chicago Opera Theater and Opera for the Young, as well as the Madison Symphony Orchestra. Most recently, Ms. Apple was seen as Aunt March in *Little Women* with the Children's Theatre of Madison.



Baritone **Paul Rowe** has maintained a wide ranging performing career throughout the United States for the past 20 years. In addition to previous roles with Madison Opera, Mr. Rowe has performed with many leading American musical organizations, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa, Musica Sacra, the Folger Consort, the Waverly Consort, and the Baltimore Choral Arts Society. Paul Rowe is Professor of Voice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Artistic Director of the Madison Early Music Festival.



Rising young baritone **Jeremy Kelly** sang his first performances of Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Florida Grand Opera and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with Opera Grand Rapids last season, in addition to performing Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. He began the 2010-2011 season with performances of the Musiklehrer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Toledo Opera and makes his Madison Opera debut as the Marchese d'Obigny in *La Traviata*.



Baritone **Gregory Brumfield** has performed with Virginia Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Chicago Lyric Opera as a chorus singer. Based in Madison, Wisconsin, he has been featured in numerous Children's Theatre of Madison productions and has performed with Madison Opera as both a chorus member and in such roles as Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata* and the Mandarin in *Turandot*.



Director **Garnett Bruce** continues to stage productions for leading national and international houses. Recent seasons have included his first production of *Otello* for Kentucky Opera, *Madama Butterfly* for returns to San Diego Opera and Utah Symphony and Opera, revivals of his production of *La Cenerentola* for Austin Lyric Opera and Orlando Opera, and *La bohème*, his first production as the newly named Artistic Adviser and Principal Stage Director for Opera Omaha. Mr. Bruce also serves on the directing faculties of the Aspen Music Festival and Peabody Conservatory. Highlights from his past seasons include *Turandot*, *La Traviata* and collaborating with Peter Sellars for *Doctor Atomic* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Tosca* at Opera Pacific, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, and Opera Cleveland; *Turandot* for San Francisco Opera, Dallas Opera, Cleveland Opera, and

Kentucky Opera; *Aida* and Samuel Barber's *Vanessa* for San Diego Opera; new productions of *La Cenerentola* and *Die Zauberflöte* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City; and new productions of *La Clemenza di Tito* and *La Cenerentola* for Wolf Trap Opera. Mr. Bruce made his European debut staging the David Hockney production of *Turandot* for Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy.



**John DeMain** is the Artistic Director of Madison Opera, 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 *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' *Akhnaten*. 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. Upcoming engagements include *Showboat* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago and *Porgy and Bess* at Seattle Opera.

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Madison Opera's 2010-2011 season marks the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The season opened in November with Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and continued in February with a sold-out run of Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*. On July 16, 2011, Madison Opera will present *Opera in the Park*, a free outdoor concert of favorite opera arias and Broadway hits in Garner Park. This Madison summer tradition is free to the community and the 2011 concert marks the event's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary.