

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opera on the Avalon set to launch summer 2014 festival

ST. JOHN'S, NL (May 14, 2014) — Opera on the Avalon (OOTA) has announced its five-week summer season for 2014. Now in its sixth season, OOTA's annual festival is set to begin in just under a week's time. The 2014 festival runs from May 19 to June 22 and will include a concert of Opera's Greatest hits, debuts by major artists such as Naomi Johns and Brittany Robinson, and the combination of standard and adventurous programming that OOTA is renowned for.

Opera on the Avalon is Atlantic Canada's only professional opera company. Led by artistic director Cheryl Hickman, the company offers promising young artists the opportunity to immerse themselves in an intensive program of opera and song repertoire with distinguished faculty. Each year, the festival runs for five weeks and brings in approximately 75 emerging artists and 10 guest artists.

This season's schedule includes two fully produced, costumed and staged operas with a full orchestra: **Puccini's *La Bohème***, conducted by Judith Yan (June 12-15) and **Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream***, conducted by Vlad Iftinca (June 19-21). OOTA will also present *Opera's Greatest Hits with Orchestra*, conducted by Judith Yan (May 30). Additional performances include three aria recitals and other open air concerts. Award winning directors Michael Cavanagh and Tom Diamond will direct the productions. In the past, a hallmark of the festival has been a wide variety of lectures and enrichment events, as well as collaborations with organizations such as Memorial University's School of Music and The Garrick Theatre in Bonavista. These will continue in 2014.

"We are proud to present an extraordinary season filled with exciting young artists. Opera on the Avalon is the only place in the country where you can find emerging artists who are on the cusp of major careers interacting with seasoned professionals on the same stage. Our audiences have an amazing array of concerts to choose from and we look forward to sharing many amazing days and nights of music together," said Cheryl Hickman.

Distinguished faculty for 2014 include William McGraw, Judith Yan, Brian Zeger, Mark Morash, Michael Cavanagh, Cheryl Hickman, Jenna Douglas, Joan Patenaude-Yarnell, Vlad Iftinca, composer Ben Moore and Tom Diamond.

The festival's *Opera Greatest Hits with Orchestra Gala* will take place on Friday, May 30, 8 p.m. at Cochrane Street United Church. The selection of hits to be performed by opera's rising stars include Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Verdi's *La Traviata*, Puccini's *La Bohème* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The event will feature newly announced singers including Canadian baritone Cameron McPhail and soprano Ashley Kerr from the United States.

COMPANY PREMIERES FOR 2014

***La Bohème* – Giacomo Puccini**

June 12-15

Puccini's masterpiece about an aspiring poet and a fragile seamstress who experience passionate love and poignant tragedy in 19th century Paris features two superb alternating casts in a new production. One cast features Naomi Johns as Mimi opposite Anthony Kalil as Rodolfo. A recipient of the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngel Canto prize, Johns will make her Opera on the Avalon debut in the 2014 season. This performance will mark her role debut as Mimi. Kalil, who played the role of Alfredo in last year's production of *La Traviata*, returns as Rodolfo. A recent winner of the Richard Tucker Career Grant Award, Kalil made his debut at the Metropolitan Opera in 2013. 2014 George London Award Winner Cameron McPhail, who was most recently seen as Schaunard in the Canadian Opera Company's production of *La Bohème*, returns as Marcello. He is joined by his real life wife Catherine Affleck, in her role debut as the fiery Musetta.

This opulent Opera on the Avalon production will be directed by renowned director Michael Cavanagh and will feature lighting by Robert Gauthier and costumes from Malibar. Cavanagh's direction has been praised by the Globe and Mail as "outstanding, from the intoxicated mayhem in the banquet scene to the little touches of humour that brightened and humanized the opera all evening." Joining the singers is critically acclaimed conductor Judith Yan from the Guelph Symphony Orchestra who leads the Opera on the Avalon Orchestra and Chorus.

The production of *La Bohème* features two exciting sets of singers, including Anthony Kalil and Naomi Johns led by Maestro Judith Yan, Jeremy Blossey and 2013 returning artist Tasha Koontz. All performances feature the Opera on the Avalon Orchestra, Chorus and Children's Chorus and take place in the Holy Heart Theatre in St. John's. An additional performance of *La Bohème* will travel to the Garrick Theatre in Bonavista.

La Bohème is on stage for three performances, Thursday, June 12 to Saturday, June 14, 2014:

Thursday, June 12 - 8 p.m.

Friday, June 13 - 8 p.m.

Saturday, June 14 - 8 p.m.

All performances will be held at the Holy Heart Theatre, 55 Bonaventure Avenue, St. John's, NL. The performance of *La Bohème* at The Garrick Theatre in Bonavista will take place on Sunday, June 15.

***A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Benjamin Britten**

June 19-21

What happens at night when the lights go out? Delicious and dark, entertaining and erotic, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an intoxicating blend of mortals, mechanicals and faeries, all thrown together in one place at one time. Britten's setting of Shakespeare's most

beloved comedy has everything from gorgeous shimmering string melodies to a hilarious parody of bel-canto opera. Newfoundland's own Jacob Bradbury makes his role debut as Puck. Bradbury will be attending the Actor's Studio in New York City in the fall. Sebastian Haboczki, who was last seen as Alfredo in our 2013 production of *La Traviata* returns for his role debut as Lysander. Hailed by the *South Florida Classical Review* for her "luminous tones and lush voice," soprano Brittany Robinson makes her debut in the role of Titania with Opera on the Avalon.

This 20th century masterpiece features two casts under the baton of Vlad Iftinca from the Metropolitan Opera in a new production directed by Tom Diamond. Diamond has a long and impressive resumé that includes nine productions with the Canadian Opera Company and five with Pacific Opera Victoria. Currently Resident Director and Dramaturg at Tapestry New Opera Works, Diamond is perhaps most often recognized for his participation in both seasons of the Gemini Award-winning television series *Bathroom Divas*.

A Midsummer Night's Dream is on stage for three performances, Thursday, June 19 to Saturday, June 21, 2014:
Thursday, June 19 - 8 p.m.
Friday, June 20 - 8 p.m.
Saturday, June 21 - 8 p.m.

All performances will be held at the Holy Heart Theatre, 55 Bonaventure Avenue, St. John's, NL.

SPECIAL EVENTS

A Masked Ball

May 23

Opera on the Avalon celebrates the opening of its sixth season on May 23, 2014 with a gala fundraiser like none other sponsored by BMW. Opera on the Avalon's *Opera Ball 2014: A Midsummer Night's Dream* will be created by event designer Jonathan Connors from Elite Production and will reflect the celestial and devilish themes of one of the season's productions – the 20th century masterpiece *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Always a highlight of the city's cultural and philanthropic season, Opera Ball is an extraordinary event that brings together local and national corporate, political, civic and philanthropic leaders. The proceeds from this celebrated signature fundraising event will go to support the commission of our new opera, "Ours," which will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Beaumont Hamel.

Opera Ball 2014: A Midsummer Night's Dream begins with a heavenly pre-performance cocktail reception at the Sheraton Hotel at 6:30 p.m., created to mirror *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. An indulgent dinner created by acclaimed chef Rory McPherson of Oppidan follows at 7 p.m. At 9 p.m. the curtain rises on the gala opening night performance of some of opera's most treasured hits. After the performances, guests will experience decadent cocktails, desserts and dancing in an atmosphere dramatically transformed into an exotic sanctuary full of diabolical surprises.

ADDITIONAL PERFORMANCES

Song Recital Concert **May 24**
8 p.m. at the DF Cook Recital Hall, Memorial University School of Music

Opera Arias and Art Songs Concert **May 31**
8 p.m. at the DF Cook Recital Hall, Memorial University School of Music

Ben Moore Concert **June 6**
8 p.m. at the DF Cook Recital Hall, Memorial University School of Music

The music of American composer Ben Moore has been performed by many leading singers including soprano Deborah Voigt, mezzo-sopranos Susan Graham and Frederica von Stade, tenors Lawrence Brownlee and Robert White, baritone Nathan Gunn and five-time Tony winner Audra McDonald. His work has been called "brilliant" and "gorgeously lyrical" by the *New York Times* while *Opera News* has praised the "easy tunefulness" and "romantic sweep" of his songs.

Fisher's Loft Brunch/*La Bohème* at The Garrick Theatre **June**
15
Bonavista, NL

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Opera Ball 2014: A Midsummer Night's Dream* are priced at \$250; ticket availability is limited. *Opera Ball* tickets may be purchased at info@operaontheavalon.com or by calling 709-738-1322.

Tickets for the Song Recital Concert are \$20 for general admission, \$15 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased by emailing info@operaontheavalon.com, or by calling the Opera on the Avalon office at 709-738-1322.

Tickets for Opera's Greatest Hits with Orchestra are \$50 for general admission, \$45 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased through the Holy Heart Theatre box office <http://holyhearttheatre.com>, by calling 709-579-4424 or visiting the box office. Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

Tickets for the Opera Arias and Art Songs Concert are \$20 for general admission, \$15 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased by emailing info@operaontheavalon.com, or by calling the Opera on the Avalon office at 709-738-1322.

Tickets for the Ben Moore Concert are \$20 for general admission, \$15 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased by emailing info@operaontheavalon.com, or by calling the Opera on the Avalon office at 709-738-1322.

Tickets for *La Bohème* are available now and are \$45 for general admission, \$40 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased through the Holy Heart Theatre box office <http://holyhearttheatre.com>, by calling 709-579-4424 or visiting the box office. Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

For more information about the Fisher's Loft Brunch/*La Bohème* in Bonavista, please contact The Garrick Theatre at 709-468-5777 or garrickboxoffice@nf.aibn.com

Tickets for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are available now and are \$45 for general admission or \$40 for students and seniors. Tickets may be purchased through the Holy Heart Theatre box office <http://holyhearttheatre.com>, by calling 709-579-4424 or visiting the box office. Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

For further press information or to obtain photographs, please contact: jess@operaontheavalon.com or call the Opera on the Avalon office at 709-738-1322.

The production of *La Bohème* is generously sponsored by Cox and Palmer.

The production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is generously sponsored by Marco.