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For Immediate Release

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OPERA COMPANY RETURNS WITH STUNNING PRODUCTION OF VERDI'S *LA TRAVIATA*

Opera Classic Comes to Warner Theatre for One Night Only!

TORRINGTON, CT- The Warner Theatre, 68 Main Street, announced that the internationally acclaimed Opera Company Teatro Lirico D'Europa will return to the Warner Theatre to present Verdi's classic *LA TRAVIATA* on **Saturday, March 8th at 8:00 PM.**

Teatro Lirico D'Europa's production of *LA TRAVIATA* has received outstanding critical acclaim. The **Chicago Star** calls this production, "Stunning! Nothing short of a triumph!" and the **Boston Phoenix** says, "Opera exists to melt our hearts and Teatro Lirico D'Europa does just that!" The **Boston Globe** remarks, "Energy, spirit and heart. No wonder audiences love this company!" and **The Daily Journal** calls it, "a lush spectacle of 19th century drama that dazzles the ear and eye!" The production features a live symphonic orchestra, a large chorus of trained singers and professional dancers. The soloists for the production are chosen from auditions held in major cities around the world. Sets and costumes for the tour are designed and created in Sofia, Bulgaria and shipped to the US. **This production will also feature English super titles.**

Reserved seat tickets are **\$59.50, \$49.50, \$39.50, \$29.50, \$19.50.** For tickets and information, please call or visit the Warner Theatre Box Office at (860) 489-7180, 68 Main Street, Torrington or buy online at www.warnertheatre.org.

LA TRAVIATA is presented through the generous support of the **CT Commission on Culture and Tourism** and Corporate Sponsor **Mitchell Auto Group.**

ABOUT *LA TRAVIATA*

by Mary Jane Phillips Matz

Giuseppe Verdi was born in 1813 in the living quarters over his parents' little village tavern in Italy's Po River valley. In spite of their modest circumstances, his parents gave him a solid classical education, and, after realizing that he had a great gift for music, they added private lessons in that field as well. When Verdi was 18, he went to Milan for further study, but he later returned to Busseto, the market town near his birthplace. There he married his patron's daughter, but she and their two children soon died, leaving him a stricken young widower in 1840.

Verdi's first opera had been given in 1839 at La Scala, one of the world's greatest opera houses, and it was followed three years later by his *Nabucco*, a hit on the national and international scene. As Verdi said, "After *Nabucco* I never had to look for work again." In the course of a career that lasted more than 50 years, he wrote 28 operas, gained worldwide fame, and became rich.

He also had a sterling record as a patriot in the long struggle for the unification of Italy, so several of his early operas had Italian patriotic themes. His people elected him to public office twice, first in 1859 as a Deputy to the Parma Legislature and then two years later to the First Parliament of Italy. His other principal interests were philanthropy and his farm, a huge estate near the Po. Verdi lived to be almost 87 and died in 1901.

Many of his early works are set in long-ago eras. Their main characters are kings, queens, and powerful nobles, but after 1849, the composer changed course and wrote *Stiffelio* (1850) and *La Traviata* (1853), two intensely personal operas based on recent real events. Both are about “fallen women” of his time. Lina, the leading soprano in *Stiffelio*, is the adulterous wife of a German Protestant minister who, according to tradition, lived in the early 1800s. Violetta in *La Traviata* is based on the life of a real and notorious French courtesan who had died in the 1840s.

The “original” behind Violetta was Marguerite Gautier, whose story had been told by Alexandre Dumas fils, one of her lovers, in a novel and a play called *La Dame aux Camélias*. Living in Italy when he did, Verdi showed enormous courage in writing about a disgraced woman who was more or less his contemporary. And it was natural that when people learned about his plans for *La Traviata*, many considered it scandalous. Felice Varesi, a very famous baritone, was outraged because “the main character is a kept woman or common whore of our own time who died in Paris not very long ago.” In another letter Varesi called Violetta “this unhappy prostitute.” Verdi, however, was not discouraged. In fact, he went right ahead, pouring compassion and humanity into his portrayal of her and showing how brutally and hypocritically “proper society” treated her.

As we look back on *La Traviata*, we may see it through the lens of Verdi’s private life, for when he decided to write it, he had been living for about three years with someone whom many people considered a “fallen woman.” This was the celebrated soprano Giuseppina Strepponi (1815-1897), who had a distinguished career but had lived a scandal-ridden personal life, having had three (or even four) illegitimate children by two or three different fathers. Hard up for cash, Strepponi sang right to the end of every pregnancy, with one of her children being born in Florence only a few hours after she finished a performance! Although she abandoned her children in orphanages or placed them with foster parents, everyone who knew about opera remembered these events.

Verdi originally met Strepponi in Milan, probably in 1839 at La Scala. Three years later she sang the leading soprano role in *Nabucco* there and was partly responsible for getting it produced. In 1847, after she retired from the stage, she and Verdi began living together in Paris. There no one cared about their personal lives, but in 1849 they foolishly and recklessly returned to Busseto, the small town where Verdi had been educated on scholarships, had married his patron’s daughter, and had worked as the municipal music teacher. The townspeople of Busseto honestly believed they had “made Verdi,” and they were simply enraged at seeing him and his mistress living together in a mansion on the main street.

Nearly two years of uproar followed their return, with people throwing rocks at Verdi’s windows and shouting obscenities at him and Strepponi from the sidewalk below. People also crossed the street to avoid her and moved away from her in church, and one neighbor even called the police, saying that a lot of noise was coming from Verdi’s courtyard. Infuriated at such harassment, Verdi and Strepponi moved to a nearby farm that he owned; they lived there until their deaths.

Given these facts, many see a personal association between Verdi’s life and his decision to write about Violetta and *La Traviata*. Others, though, see no connection, and the matter remains unresolved. What is certain is that Verdi once said that when he sat at his piano writing music, his heart pounded and his tears fell on the keyboard. Seeing how much passion he poured into *La Traviata*, we can easily believe him.

SYNOPSIS OF *LA TRAVIATA*

ACT I. *Violetta’s house, August 1847, Paris.*

A party is being given at the house of the city’s most beautiful and adored courtesan, Violetta Valéry. She greets her guests, among them Flora Bervoix and her escort, the Marquis D’Obigny, Baron Douphol, and Doctor Grenvil. Gastone introduces Alfredo Germont to Violetta, and the young man tells Violetta that he admires her and thinks of her constantly. Gastone proposes a toast and Alfredo responds with a drinking song. When the guests move into the ballroom to dance, Violetta feels indisposed and begs her guests to go on without her. Alfredo remains behind and declares how much he loves her. She tells him she can only offer friendship. She gives him a flower, asking him to return when it has faded. Alone, she thinks about Alfredo, but resolves to enjoy herself and her whirlwind lifestyle.

ACT II. Scene One. *A country house near Paris the following November.*

Alfredo and Violetta have been living together in the country for three months, when Alfredo learns from Annina that Violetta has been selling her possessions to support them. Disgraced, he rushes off to Paris to get money. Alfredo’s father, Giorgio Germont, surprises Violetta with a visit and requests that she leave Alfredo because his sister may have trouble marrying if her brother is linked to a courtesan. Violetta confesses that Alfredo’s love has redeemed her, and that she is very sick and might not live long. Germont is unmoved and insists on a definite separation. Violetta finally agrees to make the sacrifice and only begs that, after she dies, Alfredo should know the reason she left him. She writes a letter and, when Alfredo returns, says good-bye. He assumes she will only be gone for a short while, but a messenger delivers the letter announcing that she has returned to her former lover. Alfredo’s father tries to comfort his son, but to no avail.

ACT II. Scene Two. *A room in Flora’s house, later that day.*

Violetta’s friend Flora is hosting a party. Alfredo’s arrival startles the guests, but his disinterest in Violetta garners approval. He joins a game of cards as Violetta and her lover, Baron Douphol, enter. The Baron challenges Alfredo and promptly loses. The guests disperse

when dinner is announced. Violetta returns to warn Alfredo that his life is in danger and that he should leave the party. He agrees to go only if she follows him. Remembering her oath to his father, Violetta refuses and, furious, Alfredo calls the guests to witness that he has paid her back for their time together. His father arrives and denounces his son for such shameful behavior, and Douphol vows to avenge Violetta.

ACT III. *Violetta's bedroom, February 20, 1848.*

Violetta lies on her deathbed, knowing she will not live much longer. She reads a letter from Alfredo's father, relating how Alfredo fled the country after wounding Douphol in a duel, but promising that he will return to seek her pardon. When Alfredo enters the bedroom, the two reunite joyfully and dream of living in Paris, but Violetta collapses. Alfredo's father arrives and asks forgiveness for the pain he has caused the lovers. Violetta presses a miniature portrait of herself into Alfredo's hands, telling him to give it to the pure bride whom he will marry one day. Violetta suddenly feels that her pains have ceased and that she is coming back to life. But it is too late. . . she dies in Alfredo's arms. END.

ABOUT TEATRO LIRICO D'EUROPA

Teatro Lirico D'Europa, the European opera touring company formed in 1988 by Giorgio Lalov, a former Bulgarian opera singer, has completed over 3,000 performances worldwide and 7 seasons of major US tours. The popular company is now embarking on its 8th season of touring America. The fall 2007 and winter 2008 tours include over 80 performances of 5 different full-scale operas, including a traditional version of Verdi's tragic opera, LA TRAVIATA. This will be the 3rd US tour for Teatro's LA TRAVIATA but this tour will feature a new set designed by Martin Otava of the Prague State Opera. The productions will travel to the most outstanding venues across the U.S. with the Sofia Symphony Orchestra and Chorus and professional dancers. Soloists for the productions were chosen from auditions held in major cities around the world including Moscow, Sofia, New York, Vilnius and Prague. The principals are all seasoned professionals in the midst of major operatic careers. Visit the web site of JENNY KELLY PRODUCTIONS for an in-depth history of Teatro Lirico D'Europa including hundreds of US reviews, video clips, and a huge photo gallery - www.jennykellyproductions.com

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About the Warner Theatre

Built by Warner Brothers Studios and opened in 1931 as a movie palace, the Warner Theatre was described then as "Connecticut's Most Beautiful Theatre." Damaged extensively in a flood, the Warner was slated for demolition in the early 1980s until the non-profit Northwest Connecticut Association for the Arts (NCAA) was founded and purchased the theatre. The Warner reopened as a performing arts center in 1983, and restoration of the lobbies and auditorium was completed in November 2002. Today, the Warner is in operation year-round with more than 160 performances and some 94,000 patrons passing through its doors each season. NCAA's mission is to preserve the Warner Theatre as an historic landmark, enhance its reputation as a center of artistic excellence and a focal point of community involvement, and satisfy the diverse cultural needs of the region. To learn more about the Warner Theatre, visit our website: www.warnertheatre.org.