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News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opera Cleveland Raises The Curtain On A New Era

Acclaimed Soprano Lise Lindstrom Returns As Salome

In Company's Premiere Production

March 19, 2007...Cleveland. Opera Cleveland will open its debut season with Richard Strauss's provocative masterpiece, **Salome**, Friday, April 20, with additional performances on Sunday, April 22 and Saturday, April 28 at the State Theatre in Playhouse Square Center. Featuring acclaimed soprano **Lise Lindstrom** in the title role, the production will mark the beginning of a new era for opera lovers in Northeast Ohio. The international cast includes **Stephen Powell** as Jokanaan, **Luretta Bybee** as Herodias, **Timothy Mussard** as Herod, **Harold Gray Meers** as Narraboth, and **Millinee McCurdy** as the Page of Herodias. The Jews will be sung by **Steven Snow**, **Adam Smith**, **Brendan Touhy**, **Brian Joyce**, and **David Salsbery Fry** with the Nazarenes sung by **Joshua Sekoski**, and **Cy McFarlin** with **Dimitrie Lazich** as the first soldier, **Randall Levin** as the second soldier, and **Claudia Friendlander** as a Slave. **Salome** will be directed by **Jeannette Aster** and conducted by **Maestro Paul Nadler**. Sets are designed by **Robert Oswald** and provided by Orlando Opera, the lighting design is by **Marie Barrett**, costumes are by **Anabal Lapiz** and provided by Orlando Opera. Wigs and make up will be by **Alison Mizerski**.

Performances for **Salome** on Friday and Saturday will be at 8 p.m. with Sunday at 2 p.m. Tickets from \$25 to \$135 are on sale now and may be purchased online at www.operacleveland.org or www.tickets.com, by phone at Tickets.com 216.241.6000 or 800.766.6048, or at the State Theatre Box Office, 1519 Euclid Avenue. Discounts are available for students, seniors, and groups of ten or more. **Salome** will be sung in German with English "subtitles" projected above the stage.

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The premiere of **Salome**, Richard Strauss's first operatic success, caused a sensation at the Court Opera in Dresden on December 9, 1905 as much for the expanded tonality and chromatic dissonance of the music as for the subject matter. Based on the German translation of Oscar Wilde's play, **Salome** explores the obsessions and desires within a dysfunctional family and the young daughter who is discovering the power of her own sexuality. With one of opera's most famous scenes in "The Dance of the Seven Veils", Opera Cleveland's **Salome** promises an evening of hauntingly beautiful music and electrifying drama.

The 2007 Debut Season is made possible by the generous support of The Abington Foundation, The Eva and Joseph M. Bruening Foundation, The Cleveland Foundation, GAR Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Kulas Foundation, The John P. Murphy Foundation, The Ohio Arts Council, The Thomas H. White Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The 2007 Season Media Sponsors are Cleveland Magazine, The Plain Dealer, WCLV, and Time Warner.

The Company

Lise Lindstrom, *Salome* (soprano) is quickly establishing herself worldwide as an important interpreter of the demanding role of Turandot. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* lauds her characterization of the title role as having "fearless brilliance, her gleaming soprano cutting through every orchestral texture and her pitch dead center, even in the stratosphere." *Opera News* agrees, exclaiming that "every laser-like high note a brilliant, rock-solid monument to her voice and technique. The warmth came through, too, in the caressing of phrase after phrase, both in the aria and in the final duet. Her carefully conceived transformation from ice princess to woman in love was riveting."

The 2006-07 season began with her European debut in Franchetti's *Germania* in a new production of the opera at the Deutsche Oper Berlin conducted by Renato Palumbo. Among her other upcoming engagements in addition to her first performances of the title role in *Salome* with Opera Cleveland are subsequent performances at the Teatro Regio di Torino and Senta in *Der fliegende Holländer* with Utah Opera. Also in future seasons is an immediate re-engagement with the Deutsche Oper Berlin for a new production of *Turandot* as well as further performances of her sought-after characterization of the Ice Princess with Utah Opera.

In the 2005-06 season she debuted *Turandot* to high acclaim with Opera Hong Kong, Cleveland Opera, and Opera Grand Rapids. She also joined the roster of the New York City Opera for their production of *Turandot*. Lise Lindstrom recently made another successful debut as Magda in *The Consul* with Arizona Opera. For the performances of the role she was praised for her "heart-breaking characterization both vocal and dramatic" (*Arizona Republic*).

A frequent guest at summer festivals, she sang her first Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Des Moines Opera last July, and returned to Des Moines this season for Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and Lady Rich in Britten's *Gloriana*. Ms. Lindstrom made her professional debut as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with Skylight Opera Theater, for which she received the Debut Artist of the Year Award. Other past performances for the soprano include Rachel in *La Juive* in San Francisco with the Berkeley Jewish Festival and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with the Berkeley

Opera. She has also been heard as Susan B. Anthony in *The Mother of Us All* with City Summer Opera and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with Opera Domani in New York City.

Ms. Lindstrom's orchestral collaborations include Verdi's *Requiem* with the Brattleboro Festival in Vermont, Richard Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder* at a gala concert in San Francisco, and the premiere performance of John Beeman's *Dos Retablos* at New York's Bard College. She was a featured soloist at the Sonora Bach Festival in California and has appeared in concert with mezzo-soprano Federica von Stade alongside pianist Martin Katz upon personal invitation.

Lise Lindstrom received her Master of Music from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, where she sang Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and her first performances of Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. While still working towards her Master of Music, the soprano was selected as soloist for *Messiah* performances at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco.

Stephen Powell, *Jokanaan* (baritone) brings his handsome voice, elegant musicianship, and robust stage presence to a wide range of music, from Monteverdi and Handel through Verdi and Puccini to Sondheim and John Adams. *Opera* magazine has hailed him, writing "the big news was Stephen Powell's gorgeously-sung Onegin: rock solid, with creamy legato from top to bottom and dynamics smoothly tapered but never exaggerated," while *The Wall Street Journal* lauded his "rich, lyric baritone, commanding presence, and thoughtful musicianship."

In the 2006-07 season, Stephen Powell appears with Opera Orchestra of New York at Carnegie Hall as Camoëns in Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien*. He also performs the roles of Germont in *La Traviata* with Utah Opera, Jokanaan in *Salome* with Opera Cleveland and Zurga in *Les pêcheurs de perles* with Kentucky Opera. His concert engagements include performances of *Carmina Burana* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* with the North Carolina Symphony, *Messiah* with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic, and the Alabama Symphony Orchestra, and *Missa Solemnis* with the Phoenix Symphony. In July he will perform Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Rossen Milanov, at the Bravo! Festival in Vail.

Stephen Powell's 2005-06 opera engagements included the title role in *Eugene Onegin* with Cleveland Opera, the Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Indianapolis Opera and Escamillo in *Carmen* with the Minnesota Orchestra. His numerous concert engagements included *Carmina Burana* with the Brooklyn Philharmonic and the Cathedral Choral Society; *Messiah* with Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal; *St. Matthew Passion* with the Handel & Haydn Society and the North Carolina Symphony; Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 with the Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Rochester, and Phoenix Symphony Orchestras; and the Dvorak Requiem with the Florida Orchestra.

Mr. Powell began his 2004-05 season as Valentin in *Faust* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia. He then sang *Carmina Burana* at the Kennedy Center in the 40th anniversary performance of the Choral Arts Society of Washington, conducted by Leonard Slatkin. He continued with the title role in *Sweeney Todd* for Cleveland Opera, before joining Boston Baroque for performances of *Messiah*. He essayed the role of Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* for L'Opéra de Montréal, and sang further performances of *Carmina Burana* with the Nashville Symphony. He returned to Boston Baroque for performances and a recording of Bach's *Magnificat*, and concluded his season with New York City Opera as Zurga in a new production of *Les pêcheurs de perles*. In the summer of 2005 Mr. Powell performed Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Philadelphia Orchestra at Mann Music Center and also with the Ottawa Symphony, Pinchas Zukerman conducting; Escamillo in a concert version of *Carmen* with the Dallas Symphony at Vail Music Festival, Andrew Litton conducting; and *Carmina Burana* with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, Charles Dutoit conducting.

In the 2003-04 season Mr. Powell sang Enrico in a new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New York City Opera. He then performed Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Jacksonville Symphony before returning to New York to sing the title role in *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. He also portrayed the title role in *Sweeney Todd* with Arizona Opera. He next sang his first performances of Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and was soloist in Frank Martin's *In Terra Pax* with the Cathedral Choral Society of Washington. In summer 2004 he sang concert performances of Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* at the Eastern Music Festival, and two works with the Philadelphia Orchestra: *Carmina Burana* and, under Charles Dutoit at Saratoga, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.

Stephen Powell is an alumnus of the Lyric Opera of Chicago Center for American Artists. He later returned to Lyric Opera of Chicago to sing Marcello in *La Bohème*. His roles with the Metropolitan Opera have included Ping in *Turandot* and Schelkalov in *Boris Godunov*. On opening night of New York City Opera's 1995-96 season he created a sensation when he substituted on short notice to sing the title role in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*. His subsequent roles with that company have included Ford in *Falstaff*, the title role in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Elsewhere in the United States Mr. Powell has performed Escamillo in *Carmen* and Ford in *Falstaff* with Florentine Opera, Germont in *La Traviata* with Portland Opera, and both Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* and Clayton McAlister in Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* with San Diego Opera. In summer 2003 he had a huge success in the title role of *Eugene Onegin* with Opera Festival of New Jersey. He was recently seen with the Berkshire Opera in the title role in *Don Giovanni*, and has performed Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with Florida Grand Opera, San Diego Opera and at the Teatro Municipal in Rio de Janeiro. He has sung the title role in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with both L'Opera de Montreal and L'Opera de Quebec, which also saw his first performances of Rossini's Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Mr. Powell has spent three seasons with the Glimmerglass Opera, singing the roles of Ford, Malatesta, and Jack Point in *The Yeomen of the Guard*. He created the role of Felipe Nuñez in the world premiere of *The Conquistador* with San Diego Opera.

Mr. Powell has appeared as soloist with many of America's leading orchestras. He has sung Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with the San Francisco Symphony under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas, and has performed *Carmina Burana* with the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Houston Symphony, and the San Francisco Symphony. He toured North America with Edo de Waart and the Sydney Symphony in performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Other highlights of past seasons include Handel's *Messiah* with the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, Detroit Symphony, Les Violons du Roy, Handel & Haydn Society, and the Minnesota Orchestra, and his debut with the California Symphony interpreting Copland's *Old American Songs*. His Atlanta Symphony debut was as Marcello in concert performances of *La Bohème* under the baton of Robert Spano. With the Milwaukee Symphony he has performed both Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* and the Brahms Requiem, and he has sung Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* with the Dallas Symphony. He toured Quebec, Montreal and Toronto with Les Violons du Roy as Christus in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* and made his first recital appearance with New York Festival of Song, with Steven Blier at the piano. Stephen Powell frequently joins his wife, soprano Barbara Shirvis, in a recital program that they created together of love songs through the ages called *Hearts Afire*.

Luretta Bybee, *Herodias* (mezzo-soprano) has proven herself to be an artist of remarkable range and versatility in her performances throughout the world in a wide variety of repertoire. International recognition came early in her career when she sang the title role in the world tour of Peter Brook's *La Tragedie de Carmen*. Bizet's heroine has since figured heavily in Ms. Bybee's career success, having taken her to the opera companies of Hawaii, Tulsa, Memphis, Dayton, Shreveport, Chautauqua, Dublin, and as her debut, to New York City Opera, the same year

in which New York City Opera audiences also heard her as Isabella in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*. She joined the Metropolitan Opera roster the following season.

Engagements for the 2006-2007 Season and beyond include her debut as Amneris in *Aida* with Nashville Opera, Opera Carolina, Seattle Opera and Portland Opera, as well as Herodias in *Salome* with Opera Cleveland, and a return to the Seattle Opera as Mary in *The Flying Dutchman*. Most recently, Ms. Bybee include two new roles to her repertoire, Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* with Opera Memphis and the title role in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* for L'Opera de Montreal, as well as Herodias in *Salome* with Orlando Opera, Emilia in *Otello* with New Orleans Opera, Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* with Memphis Opera, Paula in Daniel Catan's *Florenca en el Amazonas* with Seattle Opera and participation in their 2005 *Ring* cycle.

Ms. Bybee's interpretations of Rossini characters have garnered widespread recognition and praise. In addition to her appearances as Isabella at NYCO, she has sung the role in Cologne, Dublin and at the Festival International de Santander. She made her Frankfurt Opera debut in concert performances of *Tancredi* and she sang the role of Falliero in the American premiere of *Bianca e Falliero* at the Florida Grand Opera. Ms. Bybee also enjoyed great success as Farnace in Mozart's *Mitriade, Re di Ponto* at the Wexford Festival and in Queen Elizabeth Hall in London. She made her Seattle Opera debut as Princess Maria in Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, in a production directed by Francesca Zambello, released on video.

The Verdi *Requiem* marked the mezzo's debut at Carnegie Hall, where she has also since appeared in Handel's *Messiah*, which she has sung with the Colorado and Houston Symphonies. She sang Bernstein's Songfest to open the season at the 92nd St. Y in New York, and again in with Seiji Ozawa at the Tanglewood Festival. Ms. Bybee created the role of Joanna in Carly Simon's opera, *Romulus Hunt*, in its world premiere in New York. The production was directed by Francesca Zambello and recorded on Angel records.

Timothy Mussard, *Herod (tenor)* is one of opera's most promising heroic tenors, with a successful European debut singing both Siegfrieds in Marseille Opera's new "Ring" cycle and the title role in *Siegfried* for the Stuttgart Opera. In the U.S.A., he has appeared with the Los Angeles Music Center Opera in the title role of *Stiffelio* and as Herod in *Salome*, Opera Colorado, New Orleans Opera, Opera Columbus, and Florida Grand Opera as Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Seattle Opera in the title roles of *Lohengrin* and *Don Carlos*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, and Radames in *Aida*, Austin Lyric Opera in the title role in *Tannhäuser*, Tulsa Opera and Knoxville Opera as Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Dayton Opera as Pollione in *Norma*. He also appeared with the Hong Kong Arts Festival as Herod.

Notable conductors with whom he has worked include Zubin Mehta, Herman Michael, Gerard Schwarz, Edward Downes, Richard Hickox, Klaus Donath, Carol Crawford, Bruce Ferden, Thomas Fulton, Carl St. Clair, and Willie Anthony Waters.

As a concert artist, he has appeared as tenor soloist in Beethoven's Symphony No.9 with the Glendale Symphony, a gala opera concert for the Lyric Opera of Chicago conducted by Zubin Mehta, concert performances of *Fidelio* at Dartmouth College, Lukas Foss' *Serenade for Tenor and Orchestra* conducted by the composer in Mexico City and Los Angeles. He has also presented lieder recitals throughout the U.S. as a scholar specializing in the lieder of Schubert and Schumann.

A resident of southern California, Mr. Mussard holds M.M. and D.M.A. degrees from the University of Washington (Seattle). In addition to his singing career, he was the Associate Professor and Chair of the Voice Department and

Vice-Chair of the Department of Music at the University of California, Los Angeles and is currently a member of the faculty of the Baldwin Wallace Conservatory in Berea, Ohio.

Harold Gray Meers, *Narraboth (tenor)* has already performed with many of America's leading opera companies. Mr. Meers has performed with the opera companies of San Francisco, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Baltimore, Boston, Virginia, Omaha, New Orleans, Santa Barbara, Sacramento, Toledo, Des Moines as well as the Glimmerglass Opera. Additional upcoming engagements beyond his Opera Cleveland's debut as Narraboth in *Salome* include a Chautauqua Opera debut as Nemorino in *l'Elisir d'Amore*. Most recent engagements include his first Duke in *Rigoletto* for Opera Santa Barbara, Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* for Sacramento Opera, Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* in Bangkok and concerts in Florida. Last season he sang Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* in Santa Barbara and Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* in Sacramento.

Mr. Meers made his San Francisco opera debut as the Novice in *Billy Budd* followed by debuts with Baltimore as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, Philadelphia for Little Bat in *Susannah* as well as in *Aridane* and *La Traviata* and in St. Louis for Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, Fritz in *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* and Laertes in *Hamlet*. He recently sang Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Macheath in *The Threepenny Opera* for San Francisco's West Bay Opera, Camille in *The Merry Widow* for the Virginia Opera and the title role in *La Clemenza di Tito* for the Fremont (CA) Symphony.

While a student, he sang Alfredo in *La Traviata*, Tamino in *The Magic Flute* and Nemorino in *l'Elisir d'Amore* with the Illinois Opera Theatre. Mr. Meers has a B.A. from Judson College and a M.M. from Illinois State University, is a graduate of the Opera Institute at Boston University and lives in Springfield, Illinois with his wife, soprano Sandra DeAthos.

Millinee McCurdy, *The Page of Herodias (mezzo-soprano)* described as "a luscious mezzo" (*The Boston Globe*), was recently heard as soloist with The Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, for which *The Montgomery Advertiser* praised her "rich, robust voice" stating "the special moments came when Millinee McCurdy appeared on stage." This season, Ms. McCurdy returned to Nashville Opera as Siebel in *Faust*, Amarillo Opera as Meg Page in *Falstaff* and Opera North as Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* as well as making debuts with The Lyric Opera of San Antonio, Opera Birmingham, and The Akron Symphony Orchestra. In the 2004-2005 season, she joined Tulsa Opera for their production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, performed Peep-Bo in Sorg Opera's *The Mikado*, and returned to both Opera North as Tessa in *The Gondoliers* and Des Moines Metro Opera for their production of *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. On the concert stage, Ms. McCurdy has appeared as alto soloist in works such as Honegger's *Le Roi David*, Vivaldi's *Gloria* and *Lauda Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Mozart's *Requiem*. Recently, she was a winner in both the Rose Palm-Tenser competition sponsored by the Mobile Opera Guild and Opera Birmingham's W. Cassell Stewart Competition. A native of Alabama, Ms. McCurdy received Master of Music degrees with distinction in performance honors from New England Conservatory of Music. There she received accolades for her performance as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, played Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel* and Nancy in *Albert Herring*. Additionally, Ms. McCurdy holds a Bachelor of Music degree in voice from The University of Alabama.

Steven Snow, *Jew #1 (tenor)* most recently sang Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Amici Opera, where he had previously sung the role of Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. This past December he toured with pianist Rosetta Bacon in a series of Advent Concerts titled *A Promise of Light*, featuring music from their recently released CD, *Behold That Star!* Other recent performances include Max in *Der Freischütz* with the Little Opera Company of New Jersey, Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with the Maine Grand Opera and tenor solos in Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with the Hunterdon Symphony. Mr. Snow performed the roles of Eisenstein and Alfredo Fettucini in Opera New York's

off-Broadway production of *Tales from the Manhattan Woods*, Cavaradossi in OperaDelaware's production of *Tosca* as well as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Rodolfo in *La bohème* with the Lyric Opera of San Antonio. In earlier seasons, he performed the roles of Luigi in *Il tabarro* with the Des Moines Metro Opera, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Gold Coast Opera and Don Jose in *Carmen* with the Natchez Opera Festival. He also appeared at Carnegie Hall singing Mozart's *Requiem* and *Vesperae solennes de confessore* (K.339).

Mr. Snow toured the U.S. & Canada as Juan Peròn in *Evita* and as Giuseppe in David Bell's *Phantom*. He has performed numerous roles at Candlewood Playhouse, Light Opera of Manhattan, and the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players. He participated as an International Artist with the Israel Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv. His other appearances include the role of George Ferguson in Living Audio Repertory Company's series of dramas set in northern Québec and the WHYY-TV12 special *South Philly Italian Style*. He has also been seen singing the National Anthem for the Somerset Patriots, Philadelphia Flyers and Trenton Thunder.

Mr. Snow graduated from the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, where he appeared with the AVA Opera Theater in such roles as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*, Mayor Upfold in *Albert Herring*, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. He is a career development award recipient from the Recording Industries Music Performance Trust Fund.

Adam J. Smith, *Jew #2 (tenor)* has been seen in various productions, most recently as Alfredo in Act I of Verdi's *La Traviata*. He has also performed the role of Count Belfiore in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*, as well as Mr. Angel in *The Impresario*. Other roles include St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow*, El Remendado in *Carmen* and, with Red {an orchestra}, King Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in the organization's first full-length opera production. He was the tenor soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* at Fairmount Presbyterian Church with City Music Cleveland. Recently he was named the George Hacket Vocal Scholar for 2006 in a competition held by the Singer's Club of Cleveland. He is a member of Opera Cleveland's chorus and is currently a senior studying with Mary Schiller at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Brendan Touhy, *Jew #3 (tenor)*, a Pacific Northwest native, has spent the past three years attending the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Mr Touhy completed his Masters in the fall and is currently in the first year of his Artist Diploma. While at CCM, he has performed such roles as Il Podesta in *La Finta Giardiniera*, The Doctor in *The Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe*, Albert Herring in *Albert Herring*, Don Jose in *L'oiseau rebelle*, and most recently Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* for which he got great reviews. Other roles Mr. Touhy has performed include Tamino in *Die Zauberflöt*, Beadle Bamford in *Sweeney Todd*, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus*, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. Mr. Touhy will next be performing the role of Pylade in the CCM production of *Iphigenie en Tauride*.

Brian Joyce, *Jew #4 (tenor)* Tenor Brian Joyce recently sang with Austin Lyric Opera in the American premiere of Philip Glass' *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The sellout opera was met with rave reviews from around the country. This November, he will return to Austin to sing Cassio in their season opening gala.

Prior to Austin, Mr. Joyce spent two years singing in Germany, including time spent in the young artist studio with Deutsche Oper am Rhein. While in the studio of Deutsche Oper am Rhein, he performed mainstage roles in *Norma*, *L'amour des Trois Oranges*, *La Traviata*, and *L'Orfeo*. He also performed roles with Oldenburgisches Staatstheater in *Erendira* and *Les Contes d'Hoffman*.

Mr. Joyce holds a Master of Music degree from Stephen F. Austin State University and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of North Texas. During his studies he sang the leading roles in *Rape of Lucretia*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Street Scene*, and *Die Fledermaus*.

David Salsbery Fry, *Jew #5 (bass)* has appeared this season as Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* both with the Maryland Opera Studio and at Théâtre municipal de Castres in France. Other career highlights include Osmin in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with the Aspen Opera Theater Center under the baton of Arnold Östman and Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea* with Santa Fe Pro Musica.

Last season, he debuted with New York City Opera as Second Servant in *Capriccio*, performed Giove in *La Calisto* with Juilliard Opera Center. Following his engagements at Juilliard, he debuted with The Santa Fe Opera as Second Soldier in *Salome* as a member of their Apprentice Program for Singers.

Mr. Fry received a Graduate Diploma in voice from The Juilliard School, a Master of Music in opera from the University of Maryland, and a Bachelor of Arts in music from the Zanvyl Krieger School of Arts and Sciences of The Johns Hopkins University. Originally from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Mr. Fry currently resides in New York City. This performance marks his Opera Cleveland debut.

Joshua Sekoski, *Nazarene #1 (bass-baritone)* recently returned to his alma mater, Duke University, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude as a member of Phi Beta Kappa, to sing the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Duke Symphony Orchestra. Hailed as having a “wonderful voice” by *Classical Voice of North Carolina*, this was Mr. Sekoski's second production with the DSO after having sung Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 2004. As its 2001 Concerto Competition winner, Mr. Sekoski performed Ralph Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel* with the DSO. Following his success in *Figaro*, he returned to Durham to sing Bach's *Magnificat* under the baton Maestro Rodney Wynkoop with the Choral Society of Durham.

In March of 2006, Mr. Sekoski completed his second season with the Sarasota Opera as a Studio Artist after having joined the company as an Apprentice Artist for the 2005 Season. In addition to covering Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* on the mainstage, he appeared in scenes and concerts as Giovanni, *Don Giovanni*, Dappertutto, *Les contes d'Hoffman*, Dandini, *La Cenerentola*, Sulpice, *La fille du regiment*, Enrico, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte*.

While completing his Master of Music, Mr. Sekoski's portrayal of Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* with the University of Texas Opera Theater received high praise and garnered him a 2002-2003 Austin Critics Table nomination for “Best Male Performance, Opera.” In addition, he was the distinguished recipient of the Mary Prudie Brown Award for Outstanding Performance in 2002 for his work as Marcello in *La bohème*, Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*, and the Friedrich Bhaer in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* with the Opera in the Ozarks. This award led to the National Federation of Music Clubs Scholarship to return to Opera in the Ozarks in 2003 to sing the title role in *Don Giovanni*, which he then reprised with the University of Texas Opera Theater. Shortly after completing this second portrayal, Mr. Sekoski sang a performance of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* with Amarillo Opera.

Mr. Sekoski first performed Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with the UT Opera Theater in 2001. His subsequent performance of the role with Shaker Mountain Opera in 2004 was closely followed by his New York City debut as Mozart's loveable Vogelfänger with One World Symphony. Charles Kondek at *The Independent* responded to the

performance at Shaker Mountain Opera by exclaiming, “Pamina (Ashleigh Rabbitt) and Papageno (Joshua Sekoski) were deliciously captivating, their duet a little gem.”

A native of Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania, Mr. Sekoski currently resides in New York City.

Cyrus A. McFarlin, *Nazarene #2 (bass-baritone)* has sung in and around the greater Cleveland area for more than 15 years, including appearances with Cleveland Opera, Cleveland Orchestra, Opera Circle, and Cuyahoga Community College. He has served as a guest soloist at several area churches, as well as a children’s choral director. He has performed minor roles in various operas including *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *La Straniera*, and Verdi’s *Don Carlo*. He has also performed as a soloist with the Lakeland Community College Orchestra. Throughout the holiday season, he also performs with the Cleveland Carolers.

A graduate of Bowling Green State University, he currently serves as soloist and section leader at Euclid Avenue Christian Church. Mr. McFarlin resides in Copley, Ohio with his wife, Kim.

Dimitrie Lazich, *Soldier #1 (lyric baritone)* is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music. He is extremely excited to make his debut this season with Opera Cleveland. Mr. Lazich has performed leading roles in *Die Zauberflöte*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *The Rake’s Progress*, *La Bohème*, *Die Fledermaus*, among many others.

Mr. Lazich has also performed leading roles with the Opera Theater of Pittsburgh in *Candide* and most recently Louis in their production of Bolcolm’s *A View from the Bridge*. With the Opera Company of Philadelphia, he has performed Wagner in *Faust* as well as Lakai in their production of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. A part of the Opera Studio Nederland in 2000-01 he performed the roles of Falke in *Die Fledermaus* as well as Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia*.

Mr. Lazich made his professional European debut with the Staatsoper Stuttgart singing in their production of *Dr. Faust*. Over the past four summers he has attended The Music Academy of the West where he performed Beaupertuis in *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, as well as Don Alvaro in *Il Viaggio a Reims* where he worked closely with Ms. Marylin Horne and the late Mr. Randal Behr.

Randall C. Levin, *Soldier #2 (bass-baritone)*, hails from Akron Ohio, where he has performed both as a professional and a student in area opera and choral productions. He was most recently heard as Colline in Opera Western Reserve’s production of *La Bohème*. Mr. Levin pursued graduate studies at the College-Conservatory of Music at University of Cincinnati where he performed principal and supporting roles in CCM’s acclaimed Mainstage Opera Series. His credits at CCM included Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* and Arkel in Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In 2003, Mr. Levin was engaged by the Opera Theater and Music Festival of Lucca (Italy) to sing the role of Businello in the Italian premier of Dominic Argento’s *Casanova’s Homecoming*.

Mr. Levin was awarded a fellowship by the Aspen Music Festival in 2002, where he performed the leading role of Frank Maurant in Kurt Weill’s *Street Scene* under the baton of Julius Rudel. While at Aspen, Mr. Levin also performed as a bass-soloist with the Aspen Chamber Symphony in Weill’s *Seven Deadly Sins* under the baton of Michael Stern. Mr. Levin earned his bachelors degree in 2001 from the University of Akron School of Music where his roles included Bartolo in Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Simone in Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*. In 1999,

Mr. Levin created the role of Frog in the world premier of David Bernstein's *A Method for Madness*. He also appeared as a guest artist at the Cuyahoga Community College as Melchior in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Claudia Friedlander, *A Slave (soprano)* has performed in opera and recital throughout the eastern United States and Canada, most recently appearing as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* with the Lancaster Opera Company. Previous performances include the Frau in *Erwartung*, Lady Billows in *Albert Herring*, and Giorgetta in *Il tabarro*.

An enthusiastic interpreter of contemporary music, she created the role of Gabrielle Martin in Paul Matthews' opera *Chatter & Static* and has been featured in concerts of the Consortium of Vermont Composers. Ms. Friedlander has participated in summer festivals at Music Academy of the West and Tanglewood. She earned Master of Music degrees in both Voice and Clarinet from Peabody Conservatory and holds a doctorate from McGill University. She is the winner of the Artist Award in Singing from The Maryland State Arts Council. A native New Yorker, Ms. Friedlander is proud to be making her professional operatic debut with Opera Cleveland.

Paul Nadler, *Conductor* has distinguished himself as one of the world's most exciting symphonic and operatic conductors. He has led over 40 performances at The Metropolitan Opera, conducting renowned singers including Luciano Pavarotti, Placido Domingo, Bryn Terfel, and Renée Fleming. In concert he has led performances with renowned soloists such as Glenn Dicterow, Garrick Ohlsson, Misha Dichter and Elmar Olivera. Maestro Nadler is Music Director Emeritus of the Southwest Florida Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest Conductor of the Filarmonica de Stat Iasi (Romania).

In 2006-2007 Maestro Nadler conducted *Eugene Onegin* at The Metropolitan Opera in March. He conducted the Isai, Craiova, and Bucharest Orchestras and the National Opera Company of Bucharest.

Highlights of recent seasons include guest conducting appearances with the Brasov Philharmonic (Romania), Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Augsburg Symphony (Germany), Romanian National Radio Orchestra, Verbier Festival (Switzerland), Florida Philharmonic Orchestra and the Timisiora Symphony (Romania). Symphonic credits also include performances with the Grant Park Music Festival, New World Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Jerusalem Symphony and the Bucharest Philharmonic.

Operatic credits include the Utah Opera, Calgary Opera, Florentine Opera, Minnesota Opera, Syracuse Opera, and Orlando Opera. In December 2002, Maestro Nadler conducted at the Kennedy Center Awards ceremony in honor of his colleague James Levine. He is co-director of the International Vocal Arts Institute.

Jeannette Aster, *Director*. Born in Linz, Austria, Jeannette Aster was brought up and educated in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. . Trained initially as a classical dancer, she also obtained her BMus in Voice Performance from McGill University before going on to study Opera Production at the London Opera Centre in London, England.

After serving 5 years as a staff director in such prestigious opera houses as the Netherlands Opera, Hamburg State Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Ms. Aster made her Canadian debut as stage director in 1977 at the National Arts Centre Festival in Ottawa with Mozart's *The Magic Flute* returning the following season to direct *Così Fan Tutte*. She has since enjoyed an internationally recognized career in opera around the world.

Her long association with the Canadian Opera Company led to the next important step in her career. Working with General Director, Lotfi Mansouri, she helped found the COC Ensemble (young Artist program) and in 1980 became its first resident director. In 1986 at the invitation of Peter Hemmings, she joined the newly formed Los Angeles Music Centre Opera as a founding Associate Director and resident stage director.

For 10 years, from 1988 – 1998, Ms. Aster was the driving force behind the resurgence of opera in Canada's capital city as Artistic Director of Opera Lyra Ottawa. Under her visionary leadership, the company grew to become a dominant presence in the cultural life of Ottawa and gained national recognition for fostering and promoting Canadian artists. In addition to presenting critically acclaimed mainstage opera productions at the National Arts Centre, Ms Aster commissioned 3 new operas and instituted a fully comprehensive training program which included a Boys Choir, Teen Chorus and Associate Artist Studio, as well as innovative community based education projects for both adults and young people.

Since 1999 Ms. Aster has been Artistic Consultant and Director of Productions for Eurostage, an innovative private sector opera producer based in Amsterdam Holland, which develops new opera productions in collaboration with the State Operas in Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Russia for touring throughout Western Europe. Her productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Rigoletto*, and most recently *Lucia Di Lammermoor*, have been presented in theatres in Holland, France, Germany, Switzerland and England.

Ms. Aster continues to work internationally as an opera consultant and free-lance stage director. Of particular note have been her memorable productions of Verdi's *Falstaff* in Los Angeles, a critically acclaimed revival of *Otello* with Placido Domingo in both Los Angeles and Houston after which Mr. Domingo invited her to direct this opera in Puerto Rico as well. Her staging of *Tristan Und Isolde*, designed by David Hockney at the Maggio Musicale in Florence won the 1990 International Critics Prize. Other international engagements have included the European Premiere of Sir Michael Tippett's *New Year* at Glyndebourne and a revival of *Katya Kabanova* in Paris. Her production of *Salome* has been seen previously at the Lyric Opera Chicago, Washington Opera, San Francisco Opera, Detroit, the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. This production was also featured in the prestigious Hong Kong Festival. Ms Aster made her New Zealand debut with a new production of *The Marriage Of Figaro* and subsequently returned to direct *La Boheme* and *Les Contes De Hoffmann*

In addition to *Salome* in Cleveland, her 2006-2007 season includes new productions of *Così Fan Tutte* in France and Berlin, an exciting Shanghai opera debut with Mozart's *Magic Flute* and *La Traviata* in the newly renovated historic state opera house of Kazan, Russia in 2008.

Throughout her career, Ms. Aster has been involved in the development of young talent. She regularly offers master classes in operatic role study and dramatic interpretation around the world in such prestigious institutions as the Hoch Schule fur Kunst in Berlin, University of Toronto Opera School, International Opera Centre in Amsterdam, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Hoog School voor Kunst en Musik in Utrecht, National, at CNIPAL, the national singers' training centre in Marseilles France, Conservatoire de Dijon and Shanghai Conservatory. She also sits on the juries of several international voice competitions including Voix Nouvelles (France) Vervier (Belgium), Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques (Canada), and the Canadian eliminations for the Belvedere, Marmande, and Czech singing competitions.

After over 30 years in working in opera, Ms. Aster is currently General Director of La Roche D'Hys - Domaine des Arts, an International Centre for Cultural Encounters in Burgundy, France. The Centre was created as an international professional development center to host special projects which stimulate creative thinking and offer a

forum for the exchange of ideas. Programs include workshops, master classes, seminars, conferences, and artist retreats, in all the arts disciplines as well as the presentation of concerts, theatrical and literary events.

Marie Barrett, *Lighting Designer*, has been lighting opera for over two decades. *Salome* is her Opera Cleveland debut. Ms. Barrett has designed for many opera companies including San Diego Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera and Seattle Opera in the U.S. Internationally she has designed for Netherlands Opera, Maggio Musicale in Florence and the Bastille in Paris. Ms. Barrett has worked with many noteworthy directors including Jonathan Miller (*Tosca*, *The Rise and Fall of Mahogany*, *The Mikado*), Andre Serban (*The Fiery Angel*), and Michael Hampe (*Die Zauberflöte*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Der Rosenkavalier*). Recent career highlights include well-received productions of *Ariadne* and *Barber of Seville* in Dallas, *Katya Kabanova* and *The Magic Flute* in San Diego, *Un Ballo in Maschera* for the Canadian Opera Company and San Francisco Opera, and *Roméo et Juliette* for Houston Grand Opera. Upcoming productions include *Tannhauser* for San Diego Opera and *Macbeth* and *Tosca* for Dallas Opera.