

Contact:

Lisa Hofmann
Public Relations & Communications Manager
216.575.0903 ext. 216
hofmann@operacleveland.org

Leon Major
Artistic Director

Richard Buckley
Principal Conductor

Jeff Sodowsky
Executive Director

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***Tosca* storms into State Theatre Oct. 19, 21, 27**

Opera Cleveland closes its debut season with Giacomo Puccini's powerhouse *Tosca* on Oct. 19, with additional performances on Oct. 21 and 27. Performed at the State Theatre in Playhouse Square, the production features soprano Brenda Harris as Floria Tosca, Gordon Hawkins as Baron Scarpia and Alfredo Portilla as Mario Cavaradossi. Maestro Richard Buckley and Director Garnett Bruce lead the cast. The same team brought Cleveland Opera's *Turandot* much success in 2006. "Richard Buckley conducts a performance that blends exciting propulsion with fine elasticity," and "Garnett Bruce's staging deftly manages the crowds and interaction of characters," wrote Donald Rosenberg in the *Plain Dealer*.

The cast includes Kristopher Irmeter as Cesare Angelotti, Peter Strummer as a Sacristan, Timothy Culver as Spoletta, Jonathan Stuckey as Sciarrone and Cyrus McFarlin as a Jailor. James Sale is the lighting designer and Kim Brown is the costume coordinator, and wigs and make up are by Alison Mizerski. The sets were designed by David Gano and are provided by the New Orleans Opera Association.

Tosca grabs the audience's attention from the start with three crashing chords, foreshadowing the impending melodrama, set in Rome 1800. Prima donna Tosca is passionately in love with the painter Cavaradossi. But the nefarious police chief Scarpia lusts after Tosca. The opera's dramatic potency occurs in the tense dynamics between them, as Scarpia deviously engages Tosca in a game for Cavaradossi's life. Puccini's vivid score boldly underlines the action in *Tosca*, combining to create one of opera's most popular productions.

Performances on Friday and Saturday begin at 8 p.m. with the Sunday matinee at 2 p.m. Performances will last approximately two hours, plus two 20-minute intermissions. All ticket-holders are welcome to attend the pre-opera lecture one hour prior to the curtain. Tickets range from \$25 to \$135 and are on sale now. They may be purchased online at www.tickets.com; by phone at 216.241.6000 or 800.766.6048; or at the State Theatre Box Office, 1519 Euclid Ave. Discounts are available for groups of ten or more by calling 216.575.0903, ext. 215. *Tosca* will be sung in Italian with English "subtitles" projected above the stage.

CAST

Brenda Harris	Floria Tosca
Gordon Hawkins	Baron Scarpia
Alfredo Portilla	Mario Cavaradossi
Kristopher Irmiter	Cesare Angelotti
Peter Strummer	A Sacristan
Timothy Culver	Spoletta
Jonathan Stuckey	Sciarrone
Cyrus McFarlin	A Jailor
Richard Buckley	Conductor
Garnett Bruce	Director
James Sale	Lighting Designer
Kim Brown	Costume Coordinator
Alison Mizerski	Wigs and Make up
Set Design	David Gano, provided by New Orleans Opera Association

ABOUT TOSCA

Music: Giacomo Puccini
Libretto: Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica
Based on the play *La Tosca* by Victorien Sardou
World Premiere: Jan. 14, 1900 in Rome

RELATED EVENTS

- Oct. 2** Opera Cleveland and Operatic Adventures *Tosca* preview
Westlake Porter Library, 7 p.m.
- Oct. 18** *Tosca* Master Class, 11 a.m. in the State Theatre Rehearsal Room.
- Oct. 19** Gala Opening Night Dinner, 5:30 p.m. For an invitation, call 216.575.0903, ext. 222.
Pre-Opera Lecture, 7:05 p.m. in the State Theatre;
free with tickets to the performance
Gala Opening Night After Party, 11 p.m. For tickets, call 216.575.0903, ext. 222.
- Oct. 21** Pre-Opera Lecture, 1:05 p.m. in the State Theatre;
free with tickets to the performance
- Oct. 27** Pre-Opera Lecture, 7:05 p.m. in the State Theatre;
free with tickets to the performance

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

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, Continental Airlines, GAR Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, The Kulas Foundation, The John P. Murphy Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Ohio Arts Council, The Reinberger Foundation, and The Thomas H. White Foundation. The 2007 Season Media Sponsors are The Plain Dealer, Cleveland Magazine, Currents, WCLV, Media Connect and Time Warner Cable.

SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES

Brenda Harris—*Floria Tosca*, soprano—has appeared in leading roles with many of the world's most

prominent opera companies and orchestras. Notable highlights include portraying Vitellia in *La Clemenza di Tito* with the Metropolitan Opera; the title role of *Agrippina*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and Arminda in *La finta giardiniera* with New York City Opera; Chrysothemis in Strauss' *Elektra* with Austin Lyric Opera; and the title role in *Agrippina* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Washington National Opera.

Ms. Harris' 2006-07 roles included Lady MacBeth in *Macbeth* with Arizona Opera and Edmonton Opera and Alice Ford in *Falstaff* with Fort Worth Opera. During the 2005-06 season, among other roles, she sang the title role of *Vanessa* with both the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Italy and the Chautauqua Opera, the title role in Mercadante's *Orazi e Curiazi* with Minnesota Opera. Ms. Harris has been praised by critics as having "drop-dead gorgeous singing, soaring on high, glowing with mezzo-ish warmth in lower registers, nearly every phrase elegantly turned" (*Dallas Morning News*).

Gordon Hawkins—*Baron Scarpia*, baritone—has been heard in broadcasts Live from the Metropolitan Opera as Marcello in *La Bohème* with Plácido Domingo and Mirella Freni, as Silvano in *Un Ballo in maschera* with Luciano Pavarotti and Aprile Mollo, as well as performances in *Andrea Chénier* and *Billy Budd*.

Mr. Hawkins' recent engagements include: Alberich in *Das Rheingold* with Washington Opera; the title role in *MacBeth* with Seattle Opera; Donner/Gunther in the *Ring Cycle* with Seattle Opera; Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* with Washington Opera; a reprisal of the role of Enrico in Christof Loy's critically acclaimed new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with the Deutsche Oper am Rhein; and Amonasro in *Aida* and Il Conte di Luna in *Il Trovatore* with Dusseldorf Opera and the Deutsche Oper Berlin. He was a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Luciano Pavarotti International Vocal Competition and the Washington National Opera's 2006 Artist of the Year award.

Alfredo Portilla—*Mario Cavaradossi*, tenor—began his opera career in his native Mexico at the Bellas Artes Opera workshop. But singing engagements have sent him around the globe. Notable engagements include: Alfredo in *La Traviata* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera; Macduff in *Macbeth* at New York City Opera; Alfredo in *Die Fledermaus* with San Francisco Opera; Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Ismaele in *Nabucco* at La Bastille; and Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino.

Recently he sang *Tosca* with Pittsburgh Opera, Festspielhaus und Festspiele in Baden Baden and in Tel Aviv. He was also seen as Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* at Amsterdam Opera and Teatro de La Maestranza in Seville. Mr. Portilla performed *Il Trovatore* at the Bregenz Festival, under Fabio Luisi.

Kristopher Irmiter—*Cesare Angelotti*, bass-baritone—is labeled by critics as having a voice that is "velvety, finely handled, richly expressive, alternately stentorian, and tender," and having acting abilities that are "especially noteworthy, first-rate, sharp timing, enough comic talent to succeed on his acting ability alone." He has performed Scarpia in *Tosca* with Opera Columbus; the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and Don Profondo in *Il Viaggio a Reims* with Portland Opera; and Braxton/Sherrin in *Mines of Sulphur* with Glimmerglass Opera, which was recorded on the Chandos label and is currently nominated for a Grammy.

Most recent engagements from the 2006-07 season include: Escamillo in *Carmen* with the San Francisco Opera; Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* with Atlanta Opera; Arlington in the world premiere of *Wakonda's Dream* with Opera Omaha; Mr. Redburn in *Billy Budd* with Pittsburgh Opera; Sam in *Trouble in Tabiti* and Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* with the Todi Music Festival. He was a two-time Regional Finalist at the Metropolitan Opera Auditions.

Garnett Bruce—*Director*—continues to stage productions for leading national and international houses. The 2006-07 season includes his debut at Lyric Opera of Chicago directing the opening night production of *Turandot*, his debut with Vancouver Opera and Edmonton Opera for *Macbeth*, as well as *Rigoletto* for the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera. Mr. Bruce serves as the Opera Stage Director on the faculty of the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

Highlights from his past seasons include: *Orfeo ed Euridice* for the Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, *Tosca* for Opera Pacific, *Turandot* for Cleveland Opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Utah Opera, *La Cenerentola* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Wolf Trap Opera, Samuel Barber's *Vanessa* for San Diego Opera, and Francesca Zambello's productions of *Madama Butterfly* (Houston, Opera Pacific) and *Jenufa* (Dallas Opera, San Francisco Opera). He made his European debut staging the David Hockney production of *Turandot* for Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy. His summers have included a long relationship with the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he serves on the directing staff.

Richard Buckley—*Conductor*—has had an extraordinary career, having guest conducted some of the world's finest orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Chicago and Philadelphia orchestras. He is the Principal Conductor of Opera Cleveland, having recently conducted *Turandot* and *La Traviata* for the company.

Artistic director of Austin Lyric Opera, Maestro Buckley has conducted productions with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera, New York City Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, and L'Opéra de Montréal. In Europe he has enjoyed engagements at the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, L'Opéra National de Paris, and Royal Danish Opera. Maestro Buckley is a strong supporter of new opera. He premiered Bright Sheng's *The Song of Manjunn*, Stephen Paulus' *The Woodlanders* and *The Women at Otavi Crossing*, and led the U.S. premiere of Aulis Sallinen's *The King Goes Forth to France*.

#