

Opera Theatre of the Rockies

Martile Rowland, Founder/Artistic Director

Christopher Wilkins, Music Advisor

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NEWS RELEASE

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An Opera for Everyone!

Humperdinck's classic *Hänsel and Gretel* gets two Pikes Peak Center performances courtesy of the **Opera Theatre of the Rockies**

Last May, over 2,400 witnessed the return of grand opera to Pikes Peak Center with *Puccini Spectacular*. Now fully-committed to growing the opera audience in Southern Colorado, **Opera Theatre of the Rockies** has chosen an opera that has the widest possible appeal for their next offering in the region's premiere performing facility.

On Sat., March 3 at 2:30 and 7:30 pm, **Opera Theatre** will present *Hänsel and Gretel*, the operatic masterpiece composed by Engelbert Humperdinck in full grand opera style. Tickets are on sale for both performances through TicketsWest.

"I believe the phrase 'for children of all ages' was first coined in reference to the appeal of the opera *Hänsel and Gretel*," said Martile Rowland, Opera Theatre's founder and artistic director who will once again act as producer and stage director for the production. "Audiences will witness beautiful storytelling through a classic musical theatre style with delightful special effects sure to appeal to children and first-time opera goers. But those who already know and love opera are in for a special treat. This work is a supreme addition to the Romantic literature and features glorious but challenging vocal parts and a rich and powerful orchestra. I'm excited to say that our production will give great light to all these elements."

Indeed, this fairytale-based creation will be produced with all the trimmings. "Be assured," said Rowland. "We are preparing for the total Grand Opera experiences: glorious singers, large, professional orchestra, ballet dancers from *Colorado's Classical Youth Ballet*, members of the *Colorado Springs Children's Chorale*, impressive sets and costumes and some spectacular theatrical special effects."

The Pikes Peak Center stage will be adorned by an impressive set designed by the internationally-renowned Peter Dean Beck which will bring the storybook to full life. Cast members include a number of performers who have called Colorado Springs their home for many years: Soprano Judeth Shay Burns (Gretel), Baritone Norman Phillips (the Father) and Soprano Nan Rubley (the Dew Fairy and Sandman). Mezzo-Soprano Jessica Oliver (the Mother) moved to Colorado Springs this past September, 2006 from Chicago for the reason that lures many superb singers to this part of the world: to study voice and opera with Rowland (Martile is, in fact, the reigning *Classical Singer Magazine Music Teacher of the Year*). The other principals, Mezzo-Soprano Sarah Barber (the Witch) and Mezzo-Soprano Jennifer DeDominici, reside in Metro-Denver. All principals, except Oliver, have performed for Opera Theatre in the past; all principals, except Phillips, currently study with Rowland.

“With the great singers, dancers and production values we’ve put together, there’s one thing that rises above the rest for me,” said Rowland. “We’re bringing back the man who put Colorado Springs on the national operatic map. Don Jenkins, who was the driving force behind the **Colorado Opera Festival** for decades, is going to conduct our performances. He is a wonderful man and a great musician. I was ecstatic when he agreed to assume the baton.”

Jenkins is mostly excited by the musical and artistic prospects. “Don’t let its Fairytale emblem fool you,” he said. “Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel and Gretel* from 1893 stands as a major achievement in the art form’s evolution. It’s really more Wagner than Brother’s Grimm and it possesses a richly orchestrated score and offers its principal singers bravura opportunities to display their excellence. It miraculously renders this timeless tales of parental selfishness and childhood rebellion.”

This performance codifies what will now become a Colorado Springs tradition: great opera performances in the superb setting that is Pikes Peak Center in late winter. The Opera Theatre of the Rockies is proud to announce that Bizet’s *Carmen* will be performed in March, 2008. The performance of this timeless classic will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the organization.

“Of course I always hoped that we would be able to produce opera on this level of excellence,” said Rowland. “But truth be known, my eyes fill with tears when I look back on the past decade. I wake up every morning thrilled by how far we’ve come.”

Hänsel and Gretel receives two performances on March 3 in the Pikes Peak Center, 190 South Cascade Avenue in downtown Colorado Springs at 2:30pm and 7:30pm. Tickets for the performances are available at all TicketsWest outlets, online at www.ticketwest.com and by calling 520-SHOW (7469) or 866- 464-2626 (toll free).

Sponsors for these performances include the Colorado Springs Gazette, KCME-FM, 88.7, Patsy’s Original Candies, the Bee Vradenburg Foundation and El Pomar. Additional information and a complete listing of all the events and presentation surrounding the performances is available by contacting Opera Theatre of the Rockies at 719-570-1950; operarockies@qwest.net; and www.operatheatreoftherockies.com.

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