

## Opera Theatre of the Rockies plays Pikes Peak Center with crowd pleasing *Puccini Spectacular*

The **Opera Theatre of the Rockies** will have its first-ever production in the **Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts**, 190 South Cascade Avenue in downtown Colorado Springs, on Saturday, May 6 at 7:30 pm and Sunday, May 7 at 3 pm. *Puccini Spectacular*, produced and directed by **Opera Theatre's** founding artistic director, Martile Rowland, will feature 100 stage performers, elaborate costumes and impressive stage craft to bring musical and theatrical honor to the opera's most beloved composer. Christopher Wilkins, the company's music advisor, will conduct soloists, choirs and a professional symphonic orchestra.

"It's our eighth season," said Rowland. "We've been building steadily toward returning grand opera to Pikes Peak Center. Exceptional community and foundation support and our hard working Board of Directors have made this goal a reality. Our efforts in developing regional talent have resulted in a rich pool of performers easily able to fill the demanding roles our "Spectacular" requires. I can promise, our performance will not disappoint – opera lovers as well as first-timers will be equally captivated by our evening and afternoon offerings. Many will discover a remarkable fact: that Puccini personally paved the way for the great popularity of today's musical theatre experience as epitomized in the work of Andrew Lloyd Webber and *Les Misérables*."

Rowland has devised an original concept to assure this response. Using complete Acts from three different Puccini operas, she has created seamless entertainment. After the mood is set by *La Tragedia*, a passionate orchestral excerpt from the composer's first opera *Le Villi* (1884), Act I from *Tosca* will be performed. Debuted in 1900, this beautiful yet tragic story of love caught in the web of politics and greed is still in the repertoire of every opera company in the world. The orchestral *Intermezzo* from 1893's *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini's first international success, creates a dramatic bridge to a comic masterpiece, Act II from 1896's *La Bohème*, the work most responsible for producing the international frenzy that was to surround the composer for the rest of his life. After intermission, it's time for *Turandot*, the grandest of all Puccini and his final effort debuted after his death in 1926, here introduced by the immortal tenor aria *Nessun Dorma* and then brought to flesh and blood life through majestic offerings from the square of ancient Peking – Act I and Act II, scene 2.

"One look at this program, and you see Martile's creative stamp everywhere: originality, artistic vision, fabulous theater, the coming together of many, many people, and most of all, a whole lot of fun to be had," said Wilkins, who will conduct an **Opera Theatre** production for the third time. "Returning to Colorado Springs to work with Martile is like being invited to tour the moon with John Glenn. We can count on high adventure, real challenges, big rewards, and a joy ride like no other!"

There are many ingredients required to produce *Puccini Spectacular*. Two choirs will be needed – the critically acclaimed **OTR Chorus**, a group of 60 powerful singers, many who have performed solo roles and all able to produce theatrical excellence; and a children's chorus of 20, comprised primarily of students from the **Colorado Springs Conservatory**. Most of the 20 principals (see attached file for a complete cast list) have previously been

seen on the **Opera Theatre's** stage. These "singing-actors" possess exceptional vocal beauty and power and the stage presence to project exciting characterizations. The orchestra will perform in the theatrical "pit" of Pikes Peak Center to bring to life the fascinating colors and textures of Puccini's scores.

"We are asking everyone to work harder and give more of their artistic and creative powers than ever before," said Rowland. "This is true not only the performers, but of the entire artistic staff: Deborah Jenkins Teske, a master of the choral art, is preparing all of our ensembles; Daniel Brink, a superb musician and an outstanding opera scholar is our overall musical director; the audience will be treated to sensational lighting effects thanks to one the world's premiere craftsmen – Lloyd Sobel; Nancy Hankin, whose technical-theatre excellence dominates Pikes Peak region stages, will design our stage scenario; Anne Davis is a world-class wig and makeup designer; and what can I say about Chris Wilkins? Of course, he is a superb conductor who has left a powerful legacy in our community from his years as music director of the Colorado Springs Symphony. But it's much more than that. The support and love he has freely given to me and the company has sustained us all through the difficult times. He is a miracle in my life!"

*Puccini Spectacular* has been generously supported by grants and resources provided by El Pomar Foundation, Bee Vradenburg Foundation, KCME-FM, 88.7 public radio and the Colorado Springs Gazette. Tickets, priced \$15-75, are available at Pikes Peak Center Box Office, all TicketsWest outlets; by calling 520-SHOW (7469) or 866- 464-2626 (toll free); or online at [www.ticketwest.com](http://www.ticketwest.com). Senior, student, military and group discounts are available and the \$75 ticket is part of the Pikes Peak Center Patron Club and includes choice seats, hors d'oeuvres, wine and parking at the performance. Additional information is available online at [www.operatheatreoftherockies.org](http://www.operatheatreoftherockies.org).

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