

news

2013 – 2014 Season

release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Spectacular visuals and internationally-acclaimed star baritones set to steal the show in VO's

DON GIOVANNI

Spectacular new state-of-the-art production is onstage for five performances only

Vancouver, BC ~ Sumptuous cinematic visuals by the video designer for Blue Man Group and TED Talks team up with two of the world's most dynamic and talented baritones in Vancouver Opera's spectacular new production of *Don Giovanni*.

Mozart's masterpiece will captivate audiences for five passionate performances only, March 1 to 9, 2014. Opening night is **Saturday, March 1, 2014** with subsequent performances **Thursday March 6; Friday, March 7; Saturday, March 8**, all beginning at 7:30pm, and a matinée performance on **Sunday, March 9** at 2:00pm.

VO's innovative new production is a vibrant feast for the eyes and ears as the 18th-century Spanish world of Don Giovanni is magnificently created by video designer and visual innovator **Bob Bonniol**. Mr. Bonniol currently serves as Blue Man Group's Resident Design/Consultant. He has created interactive LED installations at the Microsoft Entertainment & Devices Campus, was Video Content Designer for R. Kelly's 2007/2008 world tour, and has done video design for *America's Got Talent Live*. In 2010 he appeared on Live Design's list of the 50 Most Influential People in Entertainment Design and Technology.

Using state-of-the art d3 video technology, VO's *Don Giovanni* will take place in an awe-inspiring three-dimensional world where the floor, the walls, and indeed the entire set is used as a projection surface.

All performances are at the **Queen Elizabeth Theatre**, Georgia and Hamilton Streets, Vancouver, B.C. Tickets are available exclusively through the **Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre**, online at www.vancouveropera.ca or by telephone at 604-683-0222. See complete ticket information below. This production of *Don Giovanni* is a co-production with The Banff Centre.

The role of the reckless Giovanni, who leaves behind death and destruction in his pursuit of passion will be shared by two devastatingly charming singers. Bass-baritone **Daniel Okulitch** returns to VO fresh from the world-premiere of Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Charles Wuorinen's *Brokeback Mountain*, based on the short story by Annie Proulx.

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news

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Mr. Okulitch will sing on Saturday March 1, having arrived from Madrid just days ago. He will also appear on March 6 and 8.

Alternating with Mr. Okulitch will be baritone **Brett Polegato**, last seen at VO as the rakish *Eugene Onegin* in 2008. His *Onegin* was declared "a cad and a misfit, but you can't help feeling for him in the end," by the *Georgia Straight*. Mr. Polegato has received lavish praise for his past portrayals of *Don Giovanni*. "Baritone Brett Polegato surpassed all expectations in the title role... He was superb" raved the *Globe and Mail*. He was "breathtaking as an imploding antihero, slipping into a boozy delirium, maudlin and reflective one moment, sinister and threatening the next," agreed the *National Post*. Mr. Polegato will sing on March 7 and 9.

Joining Mr. Okulitch and Mr. Polegato are sopranos **Erin Wall** and **Katherine Whyte** as Donna Anna. Ms. Wall sang the tragic and beautiful Violetta in 2011's *La Traviata*; this will be Ms. Whyte's VO debut. Mezzo-soprano **Krisztina Szabó** and soprano **Leslie Ann Bradley** will sing Donna Elvira. Ms. Szabó charmed audiences as the fiery and street-smart Musetta in 2012's *La bohème*, and as Sesto in 2011's *La clemenza di Tito*; Ms. Bradley makes her VO debut.

Don Ottavio will be sung by tenor **Colin Ainsworth**, memorable for his performances as the sweet yet determined Tony in VO's stellar 2011 production of *West Side Story*, and as Kristian in VO's world-premiere production of Estacio and Murrell's *Lillian Alling*, in 2010. The roles of Leporello and the Commendatore will be alternately sung by bass-baritones **Stephen Hegedus** and **Giles Tomkins**. Mr. Hegedus appeared earlier this season as Angelotti in 2013's *Tosca*. Mr. Tomkins sang the harrumphing Superintendent Budd in VO's delightful *Albert Herring* this past December. Soprano **Rachel Fenlon** (Mabel in 2012's *The Pirates of Penzance*) will sing Zerlina; baritone **Aaron Durand** (Sid in 2013's *Albert Herring*) will sing Masetto.

Steuart Bedford returns to VO to conduct the Vancouver Opera Orchestra and Vancouver Opera Chorus (**Leslie Dala**, Chorus Director / Associate Conductor), having last appeared 13 years ago to conduct the 2000 production of *Don Giovanni*. Maestro Bedford is noted worldwide as a leading exponent of Mozart's operas and for his close collaboration with Benjamin Britten: he conducted the world premiere of *Death in Venice*, in 1973. He is a professor at the Royal Academy of Music and the Artistic Director of the Aldeburgh Festival. The stage director is **Kelly Robinson**, who last appeared with VO for the 2010 world premiere of *Lillian Alling*.

THE STORY, IN BRIEF

Don Giovanni is a dangerously attractive aristocrat and serial seducer who leaves death and destruction in his wake. Defying both society and God in his reckless pursuit of gratification, he manages to evade the vengeful retribution of his most outraged victims, only to self-destruct as he is dragged to hell in a surreal encounter with a curse-hurling stone statue.

Mozart's musical and dramatic portrait of this complex character, and of those whose lives he stains, is Shakespearean in its understanding of human nature. Filled with wisdom and beauty, and by turns funny and

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terrifying, *Don Giovanni* is a towering creation.

BACKGROUND

With interpretations by everyone from Molière to Johnny Depp, the character of Don Juan, the serial seducer, has captivated audiences since he first appeared around 1630 in Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina's play *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra* (*The Trickster of Seville and the Stone Guest*). Since then, the rakish Don has appeared in works by Lord Byron, George Bernard Shaw, Sylvia Townsend, Ingmar Bergman, John Berger and others.

Don Juan first appeared as the main character in a morality tale. In Molina's play, he seduces women with deception and sometimes force, kills the father of one of the women and then proceeds to mock the dead man. He meets his end with a fitting punishment: dragged to hell to burn in the fires of justice - a fine example for Catholics who were contemplating straying from their principles.

Molière's take, first performed about 30 years later, was slightly different. His Don Juan is an anti-hero: an irreverent intellectual who prefers honesty over hypocrisy. He is flippant and unrepentant, and even worse, witty and entertaining. Audiences were amused rather than awed, and the play was withdrawn after a few performances.

The ambiguity of the character is still explored today. In a 2006 production for London's West End, Patrick Marber presented *Don Juan in Soho*, in which 'DJ' is a metropolitan playboy living in a secular world where there is no divine retribution. Instead (spoiler alert!) justice is meted out by the brother of the wife DJ abandoned.

In 1994, Don Juan appears as a lost young man, played by Johnny Depp in Jeremy Leven's film *Don Juan DeMarco*. In 2010, he is captured in *Juan*, Kasper Holten's film version of Mozart's opera, and he appears yet again in 2013 in the film *Don Jon*, starring Joseph Gordon-Levitt.

Is Don Juan an irredeemable villain, or a misunderstood romantic hero? Re-inventions abound, but whether he is one or the other, or something in between, no other character is as beguiling as the world's most infamous lover.

FULL TICKET INFORMATION

Single tickets are available from the Vancouver Opera Ticket Centre, online at www.vancouveropera.ca, or by phone at 604-683-0222. Visa, MasterCard and American Express are accepted.

Groups: For special pricing for groups of ten or more, call 604-683-0222.

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