

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 23, 2018

For More Information
Darlene Ronald
204-255-0508;dronald84@shaw.ca

**New Production of All-Time Favourite – *La Traviata*
Has World Premiere on Manitoba Opera Stage
April 14, 17, 20, 2018**

A Canadian Opera First
Five Companies Join Forces to Create New Production

A new production of one of the world's all-time favourite operas - *La Traviata* - will have its world premiere with Manitoba Opera at the Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg, **Saturday, April 14** (7:30 pm), **Tuesday, April 17** (7 pm), and **Friday, April 20** (7:30 pm).

Reset to the glamorous world of 1920s Paris, the new production is the first-ever collaboration of five Canadian opera companies: Pacific Opera Victoria (POV), Vancouver Opera (VO), Edmonton Opera (EO), Manitoba Opera (MO), and Opéra de Montréal (OM). Each company provided a fifth of the cost of the production with the set built by EO and the wardrobe and props built/sourced by POV. Scenery and costume design are by the award-winning, Stratford, Ontario-based designer Christina Poddubiuk.

"History will be made when the curtain goes up on opening night of *La Traviata* April 14," commented Larry Desrochers, Manitoba Opera's General Director & CEO. "It marks the first time five Canadian opera companies have partnered to create a new production. Eight years ago Canada's opera sector determined that as a result of American companies reducing their rental inventory, Canadian companies would need to team up to create new productions of both new and existing operas. Manitoba Opera is very pleased to have been a part of this first multi company co-pro."

This tragic love story that has melted hearts for over 150 years was originally set in and around Paris about 1700. It is based on the real-life French courtesan, Marie Duplessis, whose lover, Alexandre Dumas (the younger), wrote the novel and play on which the great Italian composer, Giuseppe Verdi, based his opera.

In this new production, the irresistible music and singing of Verdi's masterpiece remain true to the original. However, the heroine Violetta is a celebrated music hall artist, inspired by the legendary performer of that era, Josephine Baker. She unexpectedly finds true love with Alfredo, a wealthy young gentleman, but they are cruelly separated by family, society, and finally, death.

Renowned Canadian director Alain Gauthier, who is directing Manitoba Opera's production, explains the inspiration for the setting: "The music hall scene in the 1920s was at its apogee in Paris and stars like Baker were admired and marginalized, just like Violetta in *La Traviata*. *La Traviata*, apart from being the unfortunate story of a sick courtesan, is also the tale of a rejected woman; rejected for her choices, but also for who she deeply is. In that sense, making Violetta a music hall artist could powerfully enhance the dramatic impulses of this opera."

2. MB Opera Media Release *La Traviata*, 2018

La Traviata “The Fallen One” features some of the most memorable music ever written for opera including the boisterous drinking song, Brindisi: “Liabiamo, libiamo ne ‘lieti calici!”; Alfredo’s “Un di felice” singing of his love and Violetta’s reply; Violetta’s irresistible pledge to pleasure: “Sempre libera degg’io”; and the great baritone-soprano duet between Germont and Violetta, considered the quintessential Verdi duet.

MANITOBA OPERA CAST

American soprano **Angel Blue**, in her Canadian debut, will sing Violetta. She recently sang Mimi (*La Bohème*) at the Met; Canadian tenor **Adam Luther** makes his MO debut singing Alfredo; and acclaimed baritone **James Westman** returns to the MO stage as Germont (he last performed with MO as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, 2009); rounding out the cast are **Barbara King** (Flora); **Howard Rempel** (Marquis d’Obigny); **Andrew Love** (Baron Douphol); **David Watson** (Dr. Grenvil); **James McLennan** (Gastone); and **Shannon Melody Unger** (Annina).

Tyrone Paterson will conduct the **Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra** with a 40-voice **Manitoba Opera Chorus**.

Light design is by **Kevin Lamotte**.

TICKETS

Call 204-944-8824, online at manitobaopera.mb.ca, or in person at the MO Box Office, lower level, Centennial Concert Hall (9:30 am – 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday). Seniors, student, and youth discounts available.

UPCOMING PERFORMANCES BY OTHER COMPANIES:

The production will be presented by EO in October 2018, by POV in February 2019, by VO in October 2019, and in Montreal in September 2020.

-30-

2017/18 FUNDERS, SPONSORS & SUPPORTERS

2017/18 SEASON PRESENTED BY BMO

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra Richardson Foundation McKim
Great West Life Gail Asper Family Foundation
Wawanesa Insurance Investors Group Johnston Group
Winnipeg Free Press TD Bank The Thomas Sill Foundation Inc.
Manitoba Hydro Bergmann’s on Lombard
Planned Perfectly Golden West Radio Granite Financial

Manitoba Arts Council Province of Manitoba Canadian Council for the Arts
Winnipeg Arts Council The Winnipeg Foundation