



For Immediate Release
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A SEASON THAT CUTS LIKE A KNIFE

Manitoba Opera's 20/21 Season to Feature A Manitoba First: *Sweeney Todd* and the Political Thriller: *Tosca*

In its 48th season, Manitoba Opera (MO) will be bringing two outstanding works to the stage. Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* - a masterpiece of American repertoire which has won or been nominated for over 60 awards - will open the season November 7, 19, 13, and Puccini's *Tosca* - one of opera's most suspenseful and compelling works - will be presented April 10, 13, 16. Both productions will be presented at the Centennial Concert Hall. For tickets call 204-957-7842 or go to mbopera.ca

These showpieces are unparalleled theatrical experiences. *Sweeney Todd* is a darkly comic look at poverty and vengeance in Victorian England; *Tosca* is a first-rate political thriller fueled by jealousy, lust, and double crossings. Each features amazing music and arias, edge-of-your-seat stories, sets that will transport you to another time and place - all delivered by a host of incomparable artists from all over North America.

A Manitoba First! This will be the first time that a full-scale production of *Sweeney Todd* will be presented in the province. Manitoba Opera is the only arts organization in the province able to present this work as written with a full orchestra, sets, and costumes.

SWEENEY TODD: A MUSICAL THRILLER

Based on the Victorian short story, *A String of Pearls*, Sondheim's musical thriller won the **1979 Tony Award for Best Musical**, and over the years has won or been nominated for more than **60 other awards**. Though *Sweeney Todd* was born on Broadway, in the years since this tale of a wronged barber who is exiled by a corrupt judge and returns to Dickensian London to quench his thirst for vengeance, has migrated to the world's leading opera companies. It has been performed by numerous companies including the Royal Opera House, Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

The Portland Opera production of *Sweeney Todd*, which Manitoba Opera is presenting, is based on the highly acclaimed original Broadway production directed by Harold Prince. It will be **directed by American stage director and choreographer Albert Sherman**, no stranger to the works of Sondheim and a member of the New York City Opera's directing staff for over 30 seasons.

Unquestionably operatic in scope, *Sweeney Todd's* powerful music and larger-than-life characters, along with talented singers, a 24-voice chorus, and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra is sure to be a truly remarkable experience and one not to be missed.

2. Manitoba Opera announces 2020/21 Season

TOSCA

Tosca is full-force Puccini. With its gripping political intrigue, passionate drama, soaring music, and heart-breaking arias, *Tosca* is everything you would expect from an opera. And it all takes place in just one day.

Set in revolutionary Napoleonic Rome of 1800, ***Tosca*** is the gripping story of a woman determined to get the man she wants and escape from the man she doesn't. When the treacherous chief of police arrests her lover, Cavaradossi, *Tosca* is forced to make an agonizing decision: submit to Scarpia's desires or see her beloved painter die.

SWEENEY TODD THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET

Saturday, November 7 Tuesday, November 10 Friday, November 13

Music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim

Book by Hugh Wheeler

From an adaptation by Christopher Bond

Originally directed on Broadway by Harold Prince; Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick

Sung in English with English projections

A BLOODY GOOD STORY

Sweeney Todd is the dark and witty tale of a man whose quest for revenge consumes him until he loses sight of both the person he was and the reason he sought revenge in the first place.

In 19th century London, a barber returns home after 15 years of exile to take revenge on the corrupt judge who framed him, violated his wife, and now wants to marry his daughter. When revenge eludes him, Sweeney swears vengeance on the entire human race, murdering as many people as he can, while his accomplice, the ever-practical Mrs. Lovett, whose torch for Todd has burned many years, bakes the bodies into meat pies and sells them to the unsuspecting public.

THE ARTISTS

American baritone **Corey Crider**, who is considered to have "complete mastery over the role's notorious demands" (*The Roanoke Times*), will lead the cast for *Sweeney Todd*. Multi-award winning singer/actress **Susannah Mars**, no stranger to the role of the amoral pie shop owner, will sing his partner in crime, Mrs. Lovett. Canadian Grammy Award-winning baritone, **Elliot Madore**, who wowed Winnipeg last season as Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, returns for the role of the honorable young sailor Anthony Hope. The Alberta-born soprano, **Caitlin Wood**, will sing Todd's daughter Johanna, for which she received rave reviews with Vancouver Opera in 2015.

THE MUSIC

Perhaps composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim's most perfect score, *Sweeney Todd* is lush, operatic, and full of soaring beauty, pitch-black comedy, and stunning terror.

It's one of the signal achievements of the American musical theater of the last 50 years, and it's the high-water mark of Sondheim's six remarkable collaborations with director Harold Prince.

Features nightmarish songs like Sweeney Todd's "Epiphany," the comic-relief of "A Little Priest," full cast ballads, and other selections like "No place like London," the tender "Johanna" sung by Anthony, Mrs. Lovett's "The Worst Pies in London" and "God, that's Good."

3. Manitoba Opera announces 2020/21 Season

SETTING AND TIME: Set in the mean streets of Dickensian London

SET AND COSTUMES: Portland Opera

Originally Produced on Broadway by Richard Barr, Charles Woodward, Robert Fryer, Mary Lea Johnson, Martin Richards in Association with Dean and Judy Manos

SWEENEY TODD is presented through special arrangements with Music Theatre International (MTI). All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. www.MTIShows.com

TOSCA

Saturday, April 10 Tuesday, April 13 Friday, April 16

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Based on Victorien Sardou's drama *La Tosca*

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

Last performed by Manitoba Opera in 2010

THE STORY

The celebrated soprano Floria Tosca is in love with Mario Cavaradossi the young painter who helps a political prisoner escape. Mario is caught by Scarpia, the chief of police who lusts after Tosca. He tortures Mario and abuses his power to force the passionate singer to betray her lover's secret.

When Cavaradossi is imprisoned and faces death, Tosca will stop at nothing to save him, but when Scarpia moves in to claim her, she stabs him to death. She rushes to the roof where Mario is awaiting the firing squad and tells him it is a sham - that Scarpia has ordered his soldiers to use blanks and that he must pretend to die. Shots ring out, and Mario falls to the ground. But Scarpia has triumphed after all - Mario's execution was real. When the soldiers discover Scarpia's corpse, Tosca cannot escape them. She leaps from the parapet, calling out to Scarpia to meet her before the judgement of God.

THE ARTISTS

Tosca features three returning stars from Manitoba Opera's acclaimed 2017 production of *Madama Butterfly*. The story's explosive triangle will consist of soprano **Hiroimi Omura**, who quickly became a fan favourite in her MO debut as Cio-cio-san, singing Tosca; Canada's premiere tenor **David Pomeroy** joining the company this season as the tortured Don José in *Carmen*, singing Cavaradossi; and one of the country's most notorious "opera bad guys," Winnipeg-born baritone **Gregory Dahl** (Sharpless), back home as the sinister Baron Scarpia. *Tosca* will be directed by Winnipeg-based **Robert Herriot**. Herriot last directed *Madama Butterfly* in 2017.

THE MUSIC

Puccini's gift for painting a picture in his works is used to great effect in *Tosca* as he tells his story perfectly with every musical detail. Highlights include Cavaradossi's "Recondita armonia"; Scarpia's "Te Deum," sung with self-satisfied villainy and madness; Tosca's "Vissi d'arte," the opera's most famous aria in which Tosca sings that she's always lived her life for art and for love, and this is what it has gotten her; and "E lucevan le stelle," Cavaradossi's farewell to Tosca.

4. Manitoba Opera announces 2020/21 Season

SETTING AND TIME: Napoleonic Rome of 1800

SET: Seattle Opera **COSTUMES:** Canadian Opera Company

Tyrone Paterson will conduct both productions which also feature the **Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra** and the **Manitoba Opera Chorus**.

TICKETS

Tickets are currently available by subscription only; single tickets will be available beginning in September. For more information, contact the Manitoba Opera Box Office, 204-957-7842 or online at www.mbopera.ca

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