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## **Opera Colorado to Present Another World Premiere Along with Classic Works in 2017 – 2018 Season**

DENVER, CO (November 14, 2016)—Opera Colorado has announced their 2017 – 2018 season, which continues to enrich and diversify the scope of its programming with their second world premiere in two years, while also staging enduring works from the classic repertoire. The three-production season will feature the world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me*, a WWII romance based on a true story, with music by Gerald Cohen and libretto by Deborah Brevoort; Giacomo Puccini's beloved classic *La Bohème*; and Giuseppe Verdi's masterful comic opera *Falstaff*. In 2017 – 2018 Opera Colorado will also continue to explore performing in diverse venues throughout the community, staging *Steal a Pencil for Me* at the Elaine Wolf Theatre at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center, MACC at the JCC.

"We're thrilled to be continuing our mission to support new American work by staging the world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me*—right on the heels of our world premiere of *The Scarlet Letter* in May 2016—and sharing with audiences a richly complex and moving depiction of this true story," said Greg Carpenter, General Director. "We're equally excited about the classic works we will be presenting next season. *La Bohème* holds a special place in our company's history because we first staged it during our inaugural season featuring the legendary Plácido Domingo. This will also mark the first time we present *Falstaff* in over 25 years, so we look forward to introducing younger audiences to Verdi's incomparable satirical opera."

- Opera Colorado opens its season with the traditional Grand Opera production of Puccini's timeless *La Bohème*. American soprano Anya Matanovic and tenor Dominick Chenes star as the leading couple, Mimi and Rodolfo, in this poignant tale of love and loss among young artists in the vibrant bohemian Latin Quarter of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Paris. Ever since its 1896 premiere in Turin, Italy, *La Bohème* remains a worldwide favorite that appeals to both opera enthusiasts and new audiences. (November 2017, Ellie Caulkins Opera House)
- The world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me*, a touching and unexpected love story about a Dutch man, the woman he loves, and his estranged wife, as together they struggle to survive in a Holocaust concentration camp. Surrounded by torture, disease, starvation, and death, the secret lovers exchange passionate letters written with stolen pencil stubs, keeping their hopes and hearts alive in a time of darkness. (January 2018, Elaine Wolf Theatre at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center)

- The three-production season concludes with ***Falstaff***, Verdi's last opera and one of only two comic operas he created in his lifetime. A brilliant adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *Henry IV*, Verdi's witty and insightful comedy tells the tale of Falstaff, a rotund knight played by Icelandic baritone Olafur Sigurdarson, who has run out of money and seeks to get rich quickly by attempting to seduce two married women with wealthy husbands. (May 2018, Ellie Caulkins Opera House)

"I'm invigorated by the company's innovative energy and promising trajectory as I mark my second full season," said Ari Pelto, Opera Colorado's inaugural Music Director. "After working closely with Gerald Cohen and Deborah Brevoort to develop *Steal a Pencil for Me* for a semi-staged reading in 2013, I'm excited to bring to life this remarkable, touching work that shows the power of love and the beauty of everyday humanity during trying times."

"I knew Jaap and Ina Polak for nearly 30 years as their cantor, and their dramatic and moving story is very close to my heart," said *Steal a Pencil for Me* composer Gerald Cohen. "My parents were WWII refugees, and for a long time I contemplated creating an opera set during the Holocaust. As Jaap and Ina opened up about their wartime experience, I realized they had an extraordinary story that needed to be told. I am so thrilled to have Opera Colorado presenting the world premiere production of this opera, including the opportunity to work on it again with the superb music director Ari Pelto."

This season marks Opera Colorado's second full three-production season since the completion of its successful restructuring campaign in 2013. Highlights from the company's recent seasons include the world premiere of *The Scarlet Letter*, a new American opera composed by Lori Laitman, with libretto by David Mason in May 2016; the company's inventive new production of *La Fanciulla del West*, reimagined in Colorado during the Pike's Peak gold rush; and the Colorado premiere of *As One* conceived and composed by Laura Kaminsky with the libretto by Mark Campbell and Kimberly Reed, to be presented in March 2017.

## Opera Colorado 2017–18 Season

### ***La Bohème***

**By Giacomo Puccini**

Traditional Grand Opera Production

November 4, 7, 10, 12, 2017

Ellie Caulkins Opera House

#### **Creative team:**

Ari Pelto	Conductor
Matthew Ozawa	Director

#### **Cast:**

Anya Matanovic	Mimi
Dominick Chenes	Rodolfo
Levi Hernandez	Marcello
Monica Yunus	Musetta
Joshua Bloom	Colline
Andrew Garland	Schaunard

## ***Steal a Pencil for Me***

**Music by Gerald Cohen**

**Libretto by Deborah Brevoort**

**Based on the book of the same title by Jaap Polak and Ina Soep Polak**

World Premiere

January 25, 27, 28, 30, 2018

Elaine Wolf Theater at the Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center

350 S. Dahlia Street

### **Creative team:**

Ari Pelto	Conductor
Omer Ben Seadia	Director

### **Cast:**

Inna Dukach	Ina Soep
Gideon Dabi	Jaap Polak
Adriana Zabala	Manja Polak

## ***Falstaff***

**By Giuseppe Verdi**

Traditional Grand Opera Production

May 5, 8, 11, 13, 2018

Ellie Caulkins Opera House

### **Creative team:**

Ari Pelto	Conductor
David Edwards	Director

### **Cast:**

Olafur Sigurdarson	Falstaff
Cynthia Clayton	Alice
Marco Nistico	Ford
Sandra Piques Eddy	Meg
Dana Beth Miller	Dame Quickly
Susannah Biller	Nannetta
Mingjie Lei	Fenton

### **About Ari Pelto**

Ari Pelto, Music Director of Opera Colorado, is widely known for performances, which have been called poetic, earthy, vigorous, and highly individual. He is in demand in opera houses and with symphony orchestras throughout the United States. At age of 24 Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival and has gone on to conduct on stages worldwide. His international appearances include symphonic performances with the Bochumer Philharmoniker, productions of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Falstaff* at New National Theatre of Tokyo, and *Faust* at the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly praised debut with New York City Opera conducting *La Traviata*, after which he became a regular guest conductor, returning for productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *La Boheme*, and

*Carmen*. In 2015, Pelto was named Opera Colorado's first-ever Music Director, where he has conducted acclaimed performances of *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida*, and the recent world premiere of Lori Laitman's long-awaited work, *The Scarlet Letter*, a recording of which will be released in fall 2017 on the Naxos label. In upcoming seasons at Opera Colorado Pelto will lead productions of *La Fanciulla del West*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and more. Highlights of his 2015/16 season included *Aida* at Utah Symphony and Opera, for which the *Salt Lake Tribune* raved "Whether in the grandeur of the triumphal scene or the exquisite beauty of the Nile scene, one couldn't have asked for a more inspiring performance of Verdi's score"; a double bill of *La Voix Humaine* starring Patricia Racette and *Gianni Schicchi* at Chicago Opera Theater; and return appearances at Atlanta Ballet and at Opera Memphis. He conducted a variety of symphonic programs with orchestras in the U.S., including Omaha Symphony and the NYU Symphony. After earning his Bachelor of Music in violin performance at Oberlin Conservatory, he studied conducting at the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki, Rubin Academy in Jerusalem, and with Imre Pallo at Indiana University.

### **About Greg Carpenter**

The fourth General Director in Opera Colorado's 33-year history, Greg Carpenter guides both the artistic and administrative operations of the company. His role as General Director began in 2007, prior to which he served as Opera Colorado's Director of Development from 2004 – 2007, overseeing all fundraising and Board of Directors activities. Prior to joining Opera Colorado, he worked for four years for the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. His work there included Special Projects Manager for the President of the National Symphony Orchestra from 2000 – 2001 and Manager of Development from 2001 – 2004. Carpenter's extensive experience working in the arts also includes two years as the Artist and Event Services Manager for the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, and Special Projects Coordinator for the University of Maryland School of Music. From 1986 – 1998, Carpenter performed as a professional opera singer. His work as an opera singer included both lead and supporting roles at Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, Cleveland Opera, and Lyric Opera Cleveland. Carpenter has served on the Board of Directors for OPERA America, the national service organization for the opera industry. For the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention held in Denver, he served as Chairman of the Fundraising Committee. In 2009 Carpenter received a Livingston Fellowship Award in Leadership from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. He also regularly serves as a judge for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and has served as a judge for the Fritz and Lavinia Jensen Foundation Competition. Greg Carpenter received a Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance from Wittenberg University, a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Michigan State University and he completed post-graduate studies at the University of Maryland School of Music.

### **About Opera Colorado**

Great cities need great art, and for more than three decades, Opera Colorado has brought world-class performing arts to Colorado audiences. Today Opera Colorado serves as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community, bringing grand opera to the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, its Denver home since its opening in 2005. Alongside standard repertoire in the grand opera tradition Opera Colorado presents new works or rarely performed productions each season. The company reaches more than 37,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. Opera Colorado's Young Artists, singers at the beginning stages of their careers, perform during their eight-month residency with the company in schools and community centers across the State— including an annual tour on the Western Slope. Recognized nationally for its excellence, the Young Artists program provides training for the next generation of American opera singers. The 2016 – 2017 Season productions at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House will feature Puccini's *La Fanciulla de West* in November 2016 and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in May 2017, and *As One* by Laura Kaminsky, Mark

Campbell and Kimberly Reed, at the Performing Arts Complex at PCS in March 2017.  
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