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**ASH LAWN OPERA FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 33RD SEASON
WITH ARTISTS COMING FROM AROUND THE WORLD
FOR EXPANDED SEASON**

**Artists from Metropolitan Opera and Europe to perform in *The Barber of Seville*;
original Princess Ying on Broadway to direct *The King and I***

Now in its third season performing at the historic Paramount Theater in downtown Charlottesville, the Ash Lawn Opera Festival presents performances in July and August of Rossini's witty *The Barber of Seville (Il barbiere di Siviglia)* and Rodgers and Hammerstein's ever-popular *The King and I*.

In addition, the company produces a family version of *The Barber of Seville*, "**The Barber of C'ville**", to introduce children to the fun and magic of opera.

Launching a new partnership with the Charlottesville Symphony Society, Ash Lawn Opera (ALO) expands its season to include a holiday opera this December at The Paramount Theater, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* at the centennial of the birth of its composer, Gian Carlo Menotti.

Incoming President of the Board of Directors, Anne Fife comments, "I am delighted to become the President at such an exciting time. Building on our heritage of thirty-two seasons, this summer we are not only bringing back four accomplished artists who made their debuts at Ash Lawn Opera, but we are also introducing artists who have performed at such prestigious houses as the Metropolitan Opera and La Scala. Adding a family opera this summer and a holiday opera this winter helps us spread the message that opera is something everyone can enjoy".

General Director, Michelle Krisel comments, "I think the public will be pleased with the high artistic level coupled with low ticket prices, while still enjoying the community spirit of including local children in performances, maintaining our relationship with Ash Lawn-Highland, offering free concerts and lectures, and growing our Education Programs. We are particularly proud to launch a partnership with the Charlottesville Symphony Society and expand our season to include performances of the perennial holiday-favorite, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* on December 10th".

Ash Lawn Opera opens its 2011 season on July 15 with four performances of *The Barber of Seville* at The Paramount Theater in Italian with English supertitles. Gioacchino Rossini's comic masterpiece remains as fresh as when it was written two hundred years ago. One of the most popular operas of all times, there is even a steak dish (Tournedos Rossini) named after the composer and Bugs Bunny has immortalized the Barber's antics in Looney Tunes.

The internationally recognized cast includes Liam Bonner (Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera) making his debut in the title role. Arthur Espiritu (La Scala, Theatre St. Gallen) sings Count Almaviva, Karin Mushegain (Los Angeles Opera) sings Rosina, Brian Kontes (Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera) sings Basilio, Andrew Adelsberger (Castleton Festival) sings Bartolo, and Oleksandr Pushniak (Washington National Opera) sings Fiorello. The performances are led by conductor Steven Jarvi (Tanglewood, New World Symphony) and stage director David Paul (Shakespeare Theatre).

The season continues with *The King and I* on July 30 with five performances at The Paramount Theater. A smash hit since it debuted on Broadway and then made immortal by the film starring Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr, *The King and I* features the unforgettable songs “Whistle a happy tune” and “Shall we dance”, as well as the King’s famous retort, ‘Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera’. Based on the true story of a British governess who travels to Siam in the 1860’s to help the King modernize his country, *The King and I* is the story of the cultural misunderstanding between East and West, and the love that neither Anna nor the King is able to express.

The King and I is directed by Baayork Lee who was, herself, the original five year old Princess Ying Yaowlak on Broadway. Ms. Lee was also in the original cast of *Chorus Line* and *Promises, Promises*, and has directed tours of *The King and I*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Bombay Dreams*. Jon Kalbfleisch, for 20 years the Music Director of The Signature Theater in Wash. D.C. conducts. Choreographer Susan Kikuchi has performed with the Martha Graham Dance Company and on Broadway. Seth Mease Carico (Deutsche Oper Berlin) sings the King and Elizabeth Andrews Roberts (Washington National Opera) sings Anna, with twenty-five local children rounding out the cast.

“**The Barber of C’ville**” matinee on July 23rd at The Paramount Theater introduces children and their families to the fun and magic of opera. This hour-long performance of excerpts in English from *The Barber of Seville* features an interactive narration, lively printed educational materials, and souvenirs to take home. Using the full orchestra, sets, and costumes, this is a great way to make opera accessible and fun for the next generation.

Performing for the first time at the **Wintergreen Summer Music Festival**, Ash Lawn Opera takes a concert performance (with piano) of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* to the Evans Center (Wintergreen Resort) on July 9 at 7:30 pm.

Ash Lawn Opera continues its tradition of performing at President Monroe’s **Ash Lawn-Highland**, with one performance of opera scenes in English on Aug. 5. ALO also offers many **free events** for the community, including noon-time Recitals at The Paramount, opera scenes at The Haven, and pre-performance lectures before every main stage performance, as well as **Education Programs** free to local children and educators through its Artist-in-Residence, KidsFest, and Opera Connects for Teachers programs.

Singing Ensemble in the performances at The Paramount Theater, and taking the lead roles in “The Barber of C’ville” as well as in the performances at Ash Lawn-Highland and The Wintergreen Festival, are twelve accomplished **Young Artists**. Having already completed their musical educations, among this talented group is a soprano who was a National Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera’s National Council Auditions; a tenor who has sung a lead role with the Virginia Opera; a soprano who was a soloist with the Boston POPS; a tenor who has covered a role at the Chicago Lyric Opera; a bass-baritone who has sung a lead role with the Des Moines Metro Opera: “Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera” (as the King would say).

Tickets

Tickets for *The Barber of Seville*, *The King and I*, and “The Barber of C’ville” range from \$10 - \$45, with a mid-week discount, and are now available at The Paramount Theater. Purchase tickets online at www.theparamount.net or call the Paramount box office at 434.979.1333. The Paramount Theater box office is open weekdays from 10 am - 2pm.

To obtain a discount for groups of 12 or more, please contact boxoffice@theparamount.net

Tickets for the performance at the Wintergreen Summer Music Festival go on sale on May 9th and are \$10 - 20. Please visit www.wintergreenperformingarts.org or phone 434.325.8292.

Tickets for “Opera Under the Stars” are \$10 – 20 and are available at Ash Lawn-Highland beginning at 6 pm the night of the performance. There is no reserved seating.

Calendar

The Barber of Seville

July 15 / 7:30

July 17 / 2 pm

July 21 / 7:30

July 23 / 7:30

The King and I

July 30 / 7:30

July 31 / 2 pm

Aug. 4 / 7:30

Aug. 6 / 7:30

Aug. 7 / 2 pm

“The Barber of C’ville”

July 23 / 4 pm

Free pre-performance lecture begins one hour before curtain

The Wintergreen Summer Festival

mini *The Barber of Seville* - July 9 / 7:30

Ash Lawn-Highland

“Opera under the Stars” – Aug. 5 / 7:30

Recitals at The Paramount (FREE)

June 29 & July 27 at noon

The Haven / First Street Church (FREE)

Opera Scenes in English – Aug. 3 / 7:30