

For Immediate Release

CYRANO: A WORLD PREMIERE OPERA
BY DAVID DiCHIERA, LIBRETTO BY BERNARD UZAN
DETROIT OPERA HOUSE, OCTOBER 13 – 28, 2007

Mark Flint to Conduct and John Pascoe to Design New Production
Michigan Opera Theatre Premiere to Feature Singers
Marian Pop as Cyrano and Leah Partridge as Roxane

Opera Company of Philadelphia & Florida Grand Opera
Will Present *Cyrano* February & April/May 2008

DETROIT, Jan. 04, 2007—**Michigan Opera Theatre** will present *Cyrano*, a world premiere opera by Company Founder and General Director, **David DiChiera**, and director/librettist **Bernard Uzan**, Oct. 13 – 28, 2007 at the Detroit Opera House. This three-act opera, DiChiera's first-ever major opera, is based on Edmond Rostand's celebrated stage drama of 1897, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, a romantic tragedy. *Cyrano* is a co-production with the **Opera Company of Philadelphia** and **Florida Grand Opera**.

Over eight years in the making, *Cyrano* represents DiChiera in his debut as an opera composer, reuniting him with long-time colleague Uzan and a host of creative team members. For more than 36 years, DiChiera has produced opera and musical theatre productions, in addition to salvaging the Detroit Music Hall in 1971, founding Michigan Opera Theatre, and establishing the Detroit Opera House in 1996. His enormous and well-documented contributions to the cultural life of Detroit, in addition to founding Opera Pacific in Orange County and providing artistic vision for Dayton Opera, have earned him a special place within the rarified world of the performing arts.

"I had always been interested in composing an opera, but never found the right subject or had the time," said DiChiera. "Bernard approached me with the idea of setting *Cyrano*, and I was immediately struck by the dual aspects of Cyrano's personality, a powerful struggle between his overwhelming external bravado and the inner sadness and anguish of his internal persona. When you add Roxane to the mix, you have a tale similar to *Romeo and Juliet*—a great love story."

"I have loved Rostand's *Cyrano* since my youth," commented director and librettist Uzan. "This wonderful story, full of humanity coupled with Rostand's beautiful use of the French language has always captivated me. The themes of *Cyrano* are so universal that I think they welcome many different interpretations."

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Cyrano de Bergerac, Rostand's most popular play, blends nostalgia for 17th century French life with swashbuckling heroism, romance, and lyrical verse. Cyrano, a nobleman with a larger than life personality, skilled in both the sword and the pen, is physically plain with a rather large nose. Despite his overwhelming love for the beautiful Roxane, Cyrano agrees to help his younger rival, the handsome Christian, to win her heart. From the renowned balcony scene to the moving climax, the triumph of the spiritual over the corporal is ultimately achieved. Cyrano, similar to Don Quixote and Don Juan, has become one of the world's most enduring and popular literary figures.

DiChiera began work on *Cyrano* in 1999, and through the years composed the opera in a variety of locales: Detroit, California, New York, the Caribbean, and Scotland. "The more I read Rostand's play, it became clear to me that I wanted to further explore the beauty of the French language. His words lent themselves to music, and for me, simply needed to be sung," said DiChiera. The opera will be sung in French with English Surtitles.

Widely known for his work as an opera impresario, DiChiera earned his Masters in composition at UCLA under the direction of Lukas Foss and Boris Kremenilev. "I'm very much a romantic, a melodist and really had nothing to say musically with the atonal compositional style so prevalent in the 1950s and early '60s. I've composed a romantic opera that is very faithful to what Rostand penned, as set to a libretto by Bernard. The score is lush and at times big and sweeping. In other sections, especially the final letter scene, it is tender and nostalgic." DiChiera's previous musical compositions include a Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, two song cycles for singer and piano, a children's opera, and various chamber and choral works.

Mark D. Flint, who has created the 70-piece *Cyrano* orchestration, will also conduct all five performances in Detroit featuring an international cast led by highly acclaimed Romanian baritone **Marian Pop** in the title role and American soprano **Leah Partridge** as Roxane. Casting for the role of Christian will be announced in late January.

Celebrated English artist **John Pascoe** will design the lavish 17th century period scenery and costumes, and **Donald Thomas** will serve as lighting designer. **Suzanne Mallare Acton** will prepare the 48-member Michigan Opera Theatre Chorus.

Casting for Michigan Opera Theatre's presentation of *Cyrano* features a roster of talented artists, including: **Peter Volpe** as DeGuiche, **Mark Panuccio** as Ragueneau, **Gloria Parker** as the Duenna, and **Gaetan Lapperiere** as Lebre. **Daniel Okulitch** will essay the dual roles of Carbon and Inconnu, and **Torrance Blaisdell** will sing the roles of the Capucin and the Marquis de Cuigy.

Following the Detroit engagement, *Cyrano* will be presented by the **Opera Company of Philadelphia** Feb. 8 - 17, 2008 at the Academy of Music, and **Florida Grand Opera** April 26 – May 7, 2008 at the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, and May 15 and 17, 2008 at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts in Fort Lauderdale. Casting and conducting for both Philadelphia and Florida performances will be slightly different than the Detroit premiere. In all, *Cyrano* will be given eighteen performances nationwide during the 2007/08 season.

“The Opera Company of Philadelphia is pleased to continue its commitment to producing American repertory through this new collaboration with our colleagues in Detroit and Miami,” shared General and Artistic Director **Robert B. Driver**. “We’re bringing *Cyrano* to Philadelphia because it has all the makings of a great operatic experience—a story based in classic literature; a libretto written and directed by someone with a solid background in opera and theater; a lush and grand scale production; and music from David DiChiera, who has used his great melodic gift to create a work that will surely gain a lasting place in operatic literature.”

Florida Grand Opera General Director **Robert M. Heuer** stated, "We are very excited to present this new opera by David DiChiera in South Florida. The music in *Cyrano* is luxuriant and romantic, and the story is known to all, not only from the famous novel, but also from the films starring Jose Ferrer, Gerard Depardieu, and most recently, Steve Martin. This new work provides an extraordinary opportunity to engage the whole community in the art of opera."

Cyrano will launch Michigan Opera Theatre’s 37th anniversary season. The performance schedule is: Oct. 13, 2007 at 7:30 pm, Oct. 17 at 7:30 pm, Oct. 20 at 7:30 pm, Oct. 26 at 7:30 pm, and Oct. 28 at 2:30 pm. Pre-performance talks about *Cyrano* will be offered at each performance beginning one hour prior to curtain. The Detroit Opera House is located at 1526 Broadway at Grand Circus Park. For ticket information, telephone the Michigan Opera Theatre Box Office at 313/237-SING or visit www.motopera.com.

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Please Note:

A complete performance schedule for all three opera companies is attached.
Cyrano production renderings by John Pascoe are available upon request.
Complete artist and creative team biographies are available upon request.