

Pittsburgh Opera NEWS RELEASE

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Pittsburgh Opera Announces the Triumphant Return of *Aida*

- WHAT:** Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida*
- WHERE:** The Benedum Center for the Performing Arts
- WHEN:** Saturday, March 29 at 8:00 PM Tuesday, April 1 at 7:00 PM
Friday, April 4 at 8:00 PM Sunday, April 6 at 2:00 PM
- RUN TIME:** 3 hours and 15 minutes with two intermissions.
- LANGUAGE:** Sung in Italian with English texts projected above the stage.
- TICKETS:** Start at \$16. Call (412) 456-6666, visit www.pittsburghopera.org or purchase in person at the Theater Square box office at 665 Penn Avenue.

Pittsburgh, PA . . . Pittsburgh Opera announces Giuseppe Verdi's spectacular grand opera *Aida* as its third mainstage opera of the season. Returning to the Benedum stage for the first time since 1995, this magnificent production features a powerhouse international cast starring Hungarian diva Eszter Sümegi as Aida, Ukrainian tenor Vladimir Kuzmenko as Radamès, and Mark S. Doss as Amonasro. Superstar mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, making her role debut as Amneris, rounds out the quartet of principals—all new to Pittsburgh audiences. Maestro Antony Walker leads more than 150 singers and instrumentalists in Verdi's most famous score, while Metropolitan Opera stage director Stephen Pickover marshals an additional 75 supernumeraries and dancers for the opera's famous processions and ceremonies.

THE OPERA

Since its first Cairo production in 1871, Giuseppe's Verdi's *Aida* has been a mega-hit, known worldwide for its famous and fiendishly difficult arias, the exotic Egyptian mystique of the score, and the spectacular triumphal scene in the second act.

The Story. The opera tells the story of Aida, daughter of the Ethiopian king Amonasro and a slave at the court of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Aida has the misfortune to fall in love with Radamès, the general of the Egyptian armies destined to destroy her homeland and bring her father as a captive to the royal court. And since no grand opera would be complete without a love triangle, Radamès is also loved by Amneris,

Pharaoh's daughter and Aida's mistress. The action comes to a head when Radamès is rewarded for his victory with the hand of Amneris. On the night before his wedding to Amneris, Radamès plans to meet Aida outside the temple where he and Amneris are to keep a prayer vigil. But Amonasro finds Aida first and forces her promise to discover which way Radamès will send his army against the Ethiopian rebels. Just as Aida tricks Radamès into revealing the information, Amneris overhears their conversation, and full of jealous rage, she alerts the Egyptian soldiers. Radamès is convicted of treason and sentenced to death. But after he is sealed in a crypt beneath the temple, Aida joins him from her hiding-place, and the lovers expire together. In a theatrical masterstroke, Verdi places the despairing Amneris on an upper level of the temple, praying for forgiveness.

Stephen Pickover, stage director for the production, commented, "Before reality TV ever existed, Verdi and his librettist Ghislanzoni exposed an intimate, tragic, behind-the-scenes love story, set against the vast backdrop of the Egyptian Empire. The fleeting private glimpses into the characters' personal lives—some led by fate, some by love, others by power—are just as vital, contemporary, and heart-breaking today as in the past." Artistic Director Christopher Hahn adds, "It's ironic that most people think of *Aida* as a series of spectacular, larger-than-life sequences, but in reality it's more of a chamber opera with one enormous scene right in the middle. And what's so wonderful about Verdi is that the very human drama of this piece is just as moving and true to life as the smaller operas like *La traviata* and *Rigoletto*." Hahn notes that Amneris, the proud Egyptian princess, is one of Verdi's greatest creations. "She's cunning, she's manipulative, and as you might expect, she turns vindictively on Aida and Radamès when she discovers proof of their treachery. And yet she's a fully human character, as she proves when she tries to find a way to save Radamès, and in the final scene, when her heartbreak and remorse are so apparent."

THE PRODUCTION

Set and Costumes. This *Aida* is a co-production of Pittsburgh Opera with L'Opéra de Montréal and Utah Opera. Designed by Claude Girard and Bernard Uzan of L'Opéra de Montréal, this is the same production seen by Pittsburgh audiences back in 1995—but with a few significant improvements. According to Christopher Hahn, "When we decided to bring back this production, we felt it needed to be reconfigured to allow for a greater variety of acting spaces. Both Stephen Pickover and I attended performances last season in Montréal to see the set in action, and we came up with a set of recommendations that would make the action more interesting to watch without adding either to the cost or the time needed for moving such massive set pieces for scene changes." The costumes and props, with their over-the-top splendor, have also received a thorough overhaul at the hands of Pittsburgh Opera's costume and scenery wizards.

The Triumphal Scene. *Aida* is the opera that added the term “spear-carrier” to the English vocabulary. That’s because the Triumphal Scene in the second act is right out of the Grand Opera playbook. The Egyptian army celebrates its triumph over the rebellious Ethiopians with a spectacular parade, complete with phalanxes of soldiers, dancing girls, captives in chains, and wagons overflowing with the spoils of war. At the climax, the Egyptian general Radamès arrives in a horse-drawn chariot to receive a hero’s welcome. What else can Pittsburgh audiences expect from the opera’s most popular scene? Hahn promises plenty of glitz—but no elephants. “In our production there will be 60 extras—soldiers, war captives, priests, and of course, our wonderful dancers from Attack Theatre. That’s in addition to the 72 choristers, 15 extra musicians including the famous *Aida* trumpets, and seven soloists.” Add in the 59 orchestra members, and that’s a total of 217 performers for this scene.

Special guests. Adding a touch of Pittsburgh glamour will be wrestling legend and beloved Pittsburgher **Bruno Sammartino**, who will lead a squadron of victorious Egyptian soldiers. Born in Abruzzo, Italy, “The Original Italian Stallion” is the longest-running champion of the World Wide Wrestling Federation (WWWF), holding the title over 11 years in total. He will appear in all but the Tuesday evening performance. Pittsburgh Opera has Stephanie Blythe (Amneris) to thank for another addition to the “Parade of Champions”: her husband, **David Smith-Larsen**. The English-born Smith-Larsen is also a former professional wrestler. He has established an acting career since 1994, mostly for French stage and cinema. He was already working as a supernumerary in opera when he met Ms. Blythe during a production of Verdi’s *Falstaff* in Paris in 1999. He has performed in many new productions in Europe and America, including productions at the prestigious Santa Fe and Seattle opera companies.

CAST & CONDUCTOR

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|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Conductor | Antony Walker | |
| Aida | Eszter Sümegi + | soprano |
| Amneris | Stephanie Blythe + | mezzo-soprano |
| Radamès | Vladimir Kuzmenko + | tenor |
| Amonasro | Mark S. Doss+ | baritone |
| Ramfis | Morris Robinson | bass |
| The King of Egypt | Liam Moran* | bass |
| High Priestess | Deborah Selig* | soprano |
| Messenger | Carlos Feliciano+* | tenor |

+ Pittsburgh Opera Debut

* Resident Artist of the Pittsburgh Opera Center

PRODUCTION CREDITS

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|-----------------------|--|
| Stage Director | Stephen Pickover + |
| Set Designers | Claude Girard & Bernard Uzan for L'Opéra de Montréal |
| Costume Designer | Claude Girard for L'Opéra de Montréal |
| Lighting Designer | Cindy Limauro |
| Wig & Makeup Designer | James Geier |
| Choreographers | Michele de la Reza and Peter Kope for Attack Theatre |

RELATED EVENTS

Pittsburgh Opera Preview on WQED-FM (89.3)

Sunday, March 23 and Thursday, March 27 from 7:00 – 7:30pm

An in-depth introduction to the singers, music and production of *Aida*.

http://www.wqed.org/fm/programs_pop.php

Free Pre-Opera Talks

One hour before every performance, Benedum Center.

Join Pittsburgh Opera Artistic Director Christopher Hahn for a lively behind-the-scenes introduction to Verdi's *Aida*. Free of charge to all ticket holders. No reservations necessary.

Meet the Artists!

Immediately following the *Tuesday, April 1* performance, the audience is invited to join Artistic Director Christopher Hahn and members of the cast for coffee and conversation in the lower lobby of the Benedum Center (free).

This production is generously sponsored by PPG Industries
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Pittsburgh Opera, celebrating 69 years of opera in southwestern Pennsylvania, is a member of OPERA America, the national organization for opera companies, and the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. Pittsburgh Opera's performances are supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the PA Department of Community and Economic Development, and Allegheny Regional Asset District. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and KDKA are season media sponsors.

CAST & PRODUCTION BIOS

Hungarian soprano **Eszter Sümegi** (Aida) has been a star at the Hungarian State Opera since her professional debut there in 1993 as Mimi/*La bohème*. As a member of the State Opera, she has sung leading soprano roles including Nedda/*Pagliacci*, Madeleine/*Andrea Chenier*, the title role in *Tosca*, Angelica and Georgette/*Il Trittico*, Liù/*Turandot*, Leonora/*Il trovatore*, Desdemona/*Otello*, Countess/*Le nozze di Figaro*, Elizabeth/*Tannhäuser*, and Elsa/*Lohengrin*. In 1993 she made her international debut as Inès/*La favorita* in Philadelphia after having won the Luciano Pavarotti International Voice Competition. Since then, she has performed in Berlin, Reykjavik, Ljubljana, Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Salzburg, Vienna, Paris, and Toronto. Ms. Sümegi performs regularly in concert in Budapest and abroad. Her international concert engagements include Gorecki's Symphony No. 3 in Bregenz, a Verdi and Puccini gala concert in Istanbul, a concert performance of Catalani's *La Wally* in Paris, the Verdi Requiem in Rome and Toronto, the Brahms Requiem in Catania, as well as gala concerts in Philadelphia and New York. In 2003 Eszter Sümegi released a solo album with the Budapest Concert Orchestra conducted by István Dénes. This past year included *Il trovatore* with Renato Bruson in Budapest, a concert performance of *Il trovatore* at Zagreb Opera to honor the 100th birthday of soprano Zinka Milanov, *Tosca* with Neil Shikoff at the Vienna Staatsoper, and the world premiere of some Kodály songs at the Budapest Spring Festival with the Hungarian National Orchestra.

Mezzo-soprano **Stephanie Blythe** (Amneris) is considered to be one of the most highly respected artists of her generation. She has appeared in the great opera houses of the world including the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, and the Opéra National de Paris. This is her debut with Pittsburgh Opera, and she returns to open next season as Dalila/*Samson & Dalila*. Her many roles include the title roles in *Carmen*, *La grande duchesse de Gerolstein*, *Tancredi*, *Mignon*, and *Giulio Cesare*; Frugola, Principessa, and Zita/*Il Trittico*, Baba the Turk/*The Rake's Progress*, Jocasta/*Oedipus Rex*, Mère Marie in *Dialogues des Carmélites*; Isabella/*L'italiana in Algeri*, Fricka /*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*, Azucena /*Il trovatore*, Ulrica/*Un ballo in maschera*, Mistress Quickly/*Falstaff*, and Juno/*Semele*. This season she returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Ulrica and Fricka. Ms. Blythe has appeared with many of the world's finest orchestras and is a frequent recitalist. This season she makes her debut with the Halle Orchestra and returns to LA Opera for the Verdi Requiem and the Philadelphia Orchestra for Mahler's Symphony No. 8 with Christoph Eschenbach, both in Philadelphia and in Carnegie Hall. Ms. Blythe's most recent solo recordings include a collection of pieces by Mahler, Brahms, and Wagner and an album of Handel and Bach arias, all released on the Virgin Classics label. Ms. Blythe was the winner of the 1999 Richard Tucker Award and the 2007 Opera News Award.

Tenor **Vladimir Kuzmenko** makes his Pittsburgh Opera debut as Radamès. His repertoire includes Tchaikovsky's Vaudemont/*Iolanta*, Hermann/*The Queen of Spades*, Lensky/*Eugene Onegin*, and Andrei/*Mazepa*; Verdi's Alfredo/*La traviata*, Ismaele/*Nabucco*, the Duke/*Rigoletto*, Don Alvaro/*La forza del destino*, Don Carlo, Otello, and Manrico/*Il trovatore*; and Puccini's Calaf/*Turandot*, Cavaradossi/*Tosca*, and Rodolfo/*La bohème*. Other roles include Grigori/*Boris Godunov*, Almaviva/*Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Don Ottavio/*Don Giovanni*, the title role in *Faust*, and Turiddu/*Cavalleria rusticana*. Kuzmenko has performed all over Europe in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Dresden, Munich, Stuttgart, Zurich, Helsinki, and London. After his successful debuts in Denmark and the UK in 1998, Stuttgart and the Scottish National Opera offered Kuzmenko new productions of *The Queen of Spades* and *Aida*. In 2006-2007 Mr. Kuzmenko sang Hermann/*The Queen of Spades* in Helsinki and Manrico in Tel Aviv. In 2005-2006 he sang, among other roles, the title role in Otello and Cavaradossi for the Finnish National Opera in Helsinki, as well as Don Alvaro at San Francisco Opera. In February 2003, Kuzmenko replaced Plácido Domingo in *The Queen of Spades* at short notice at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, making his unexpected Spanish debut. After graduating from both the Ukrainian Institute of Culture in conducting and the Kiev Conservatory in singing in 1992, Kuzmenko became a principal tenor at the Kiev Opera and later a principal tenor at the Warsaw National Opera in 1994.

Fresh from performances as Jochanaan in Florentine Opera's *Salome*, Grammy Award-winner **Mark S. Doss** (Amonasro) makes his debut with Pittsburgh Opera. He is also featured as Amonasro on a recently released DVD by Opus Arte recorded live in 2004 at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. Returning to La Scala in May, where he has appeared in five different roles since 2004, Mr. Doss sings Charrington in *1984*, a new opera based on George Orwell's novel. In June he joins Opera Theatre of St. Louis as Diomede/*Troilus and Cressida*. He opened the 2007-2008 season as Escamillo/*Carmen* with Portland Opera and followed with Méphistophélès/*Faust* with Oper Frankfurt. The 2006-2007 season found him singing Méphistophélès with Portland Opera, *Messiah* at the Chicago Civic Opera House, Jochanaan/*Salome* at La Scala, and Thoas/*Iphégenie en Tauride* with San Francisco Opera. Highlights of the 2005-2006 season include Alidoro/*La cenerentola* at both La Scala and Lyric Opera of Chicago, Escamillo/*Carmen* with Teatro Sociale di Mantova and Lyric Opera of Chicago, Amonasro at the Festspielhaus in Baden-Baden, Germany, Scarpia/*Tosca* with Oper Frankfurt, and as featured soloist in Santa Fe Opera's 50th Anniversary Gala Concert. The 2004-2005 season saw Mr. Doss as Randolph in Lyric Opera of Chicago's world premiere of *A Wedding*, Méphistophélès in Oper Frankfurt's *Faust*, and Argante/*Rinaldo* at La Scala. Mr. Doss, a native of Cleveland, Ohio and a graduate of Indiana University, won the Grammy for his role in Handel's *Semele* (1993).

Bass **Morris Robinson** (Ramfis) first came to Pittsburgh's attention in 2005, when he stepped in at the last minute to sing Sparafucile/*Rigoletto*. At the time he was a recent alumnus of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. Mr. Robinson made his debut at the Met in 2002 in *Fidelio* and has appeared there as Sarastro/*Die Zauberflöte*, the King/*Aida*, and in *Nabucco*, *Tannhäuser*, *Les Troyens*, and *Salome*. Other past opera engagements have included Ramfis and Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* at Florida Grand Opera, the King at the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Sparafucile, the Blind Ballad Singer/*Gloriana*, and Pluto/*Hippolytus and Aricie* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Commendatore/*Don Giovanni*, the Bonze/*Madama Butterfly*, and the King at the Boston Lyric Opera; the Bonze at the Seattle Opera, and Un Songe/*Dardanus* at Wolf Trap Opera. This season, Mr. Robinson appears with Washington National Opera as the Commendatore and Opera Pacific as Sarastro. He also appears in concert with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the São Paulo Symphony, and the National Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Robinson's first album, *Going Home*, was released in February 2007 on the Decca label. An Atlanta native, Mr. Robinson is a graduate of The Citadel and studied music at the Boston University Opera Institute.

Bass **Liam Moran** (The King of Egypt) began as a first-year resident artist with Pittsburgh Opera after summer engagements with the National Symphony Orchestra (Zuniga/*Carmen*) and the Speaker/*The Magic Flute* and Siroco/*L'étoile* at Wolf Trap Opera. After his mainstage debut here as The Bonze/*Madama Butterfly*, he appeared as Dulcamara/*The Elixir of Love* Behind the Curtain and the Immigration Officer/*Flight*. Later this season he sings Capellio/*The Capulets & the Montagues* Student Matinee. Mr. Moran returns to Wolf Trap this summer for Melisso/*Alcina* and Truffaldino/*Ariadne auf Naxos*. He has also performed with Florida Grand Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Glimmerglass Opera, San Francisco Opera's Merola Program, and Opera Omaha. His concert work ranges from Monteverdi to Penderecki, and he has been featured with the Palm Beach Symphony, the New World Symphony's "Concerts in Context" series, Los Angeles' Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, and several recital series. For Glimmerglass in 2006 he created the role of M. Follenvie in the world premiere of Steven Hartke's *The Greater Good*, recorded for Naxos Records. A prize winner in the Florida Grand Opera Competition and Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions/New England region, Mr. Moran completed his studies at McGill University in Montreal and the Yale School of Music.

A native of Washington, DC, soprano **Deborah Selig** (High Priestess) joins Pittsburgh Opera as a first-year resident artist. She made her Pittsburgh Opera mainstage debut as Giannetta/*The Elixir of Love* and sang Tina/*Flight* for the Opera Center production. Upcoming engagements include Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Bridgeport Symphony, and Rose/*Street Scene* with Chautauqua Opera. Ms. Selig was educated at the University of Michigan and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She trained as

a young artist with Santa Fe Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and the Tanglewood Music Center. She has appeared with Central City Opera (*Zerlina/Don Giovanni*), Mobile Opera (*Valencienne/The Merry Widow*), Connecticut Lyric Opera (*Susanna/The Marriage of Figaro*), Dayton Opera (*Adele/Die Fledermaus; Amy/Little Women*), and Chautauqua Opera (*Mary Warren/The Crucible*). Her concert appearances include *Messiah* with the Dayton Philharmonic and Cincinnati Baroque; Górecki's Symphony #3 with the Kentucky Symphony; Haydn's "Lord Nelson" Mass with Harvard Pro Musica; selections from *The Merry Widow* with Cincinnati Symphony; and Ligeti's *Le grand macabre* with the Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music. She received the Richard F. Gold Career Grant of the Shoshana Foundation, was a winner of the Southern Ohio district Metropolitan Opera Competition, and won 2nd place in the National Opera Association Competition. Ms. Selig is represented by Wolverton Artists Management.

A native of Puerto Rico, tenor **Carlos Feliciano** (Messenger) is a first-year resident artist with Pittsburgh Opera. He makes his Pittsburgh debut this season as the Messenger and also covered Pinkerton/*Madama Butterfly*. Educated at the Manhattan School of Music (BM) and the Juilliard School (Graduate diploma), Mr. Feliciano won the Herbert Gold Award of the Five Towns Music & Art Foundation and was a finalist in the Violetta Dupont Competition. While at Juilliard he sang Pedrillo/*The Abduction of Seraglio* and Satirino/*La Calisto*. His professional credits include Don Ottavio in the New York Opera Society's production of *Don Giovanni* in Castres, France, as well as Don Fernando in the zarzuela *Doña Francisquita* and the Christmas Oratorio by Saint-Saëns in Puerto Rico. With the Assisi Music Festival in Italy he sang in Handel's *Judas Maccabeus*, Mozart's "Coronation" Mass, and the role of St. Francis in the world premiere of *Il poverello* by Santini. Making a sweep of the Beaumarchais-inspired operas of Mozart and Rossini, he performed Count Almaviva/*Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Little Opera Company of New Jersey and Project Opera of Manhattan, as well as Don Curzio/*Le nozze di Figaro* and Tamino/*Die Zauberflöte* with the same company.

Antony Walker (Music Director & Conductor). Since his debut in 1991, this exciting and prolific young conductor has led 54 operas, 47 large scale choral/orchestral works and numerous symphonic and chamber works with companies in Europe, the United States, and Australia. His conducting schedule has included engagements with Glimmerglass Opera, Opera Australia, Welsh National Opera, Minnesota Opera, New York City Opera, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Cincinnati Opera, Hawaii Opera Theater, Arizona Opera, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of Welsh National Opera, Sydney Opera House Orchestra, Adelaide Chamber Orchestra, Barossa Festival Orchestra, the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and with the Pittsburgh Opera Center and Chatham Baroque for Monteverdi's *Ulysses* in 2004. Maestro Walker has recorded 26 CDs and DVDs of the works of Beethoven, Mahler, Mozart, Orff, Fauré, Puccini, Verdi, Purcell, Handel, Bach, and others. His CD collaboration with Teddy Tahu Rhodes garnered the ARIA award for Best Classical Music Album of 2004, and his DVD of Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto won the international DVD Association Award for Music Excellence for 2005. Releases of additional works including Handel's *Semele*, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, Rameau's *Dardanus*, and Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* have won high praise in reviews. As Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera, Maestro Walker has championed under-performed works, such as *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, *Stiffelio*, *Roberto Devereux*, *La donna del lago*, *Esclarmonde*, *Luisa Miller*, Rossini's *Otello*, and Bellini's *I puritani*. As Co-Artistic Director of Pinchgut Opera in Australia, he has conducted baroque works including *Dardanus*, *L'Orfeo*, and most recently *Idomeneo* with the Orchestra of the Antipodes on period instruments. Deeply committed to contemporary music, he has conducted many premieres of significant international compositions in his native Australia, among them Arvo Pärt's *St. John Passion*, Poulenc's *Figure humaine*, Iannis Xenakis' *Idmen A and B*, and more than 70 premieres of new Australian works.

Stage Director **Stephen Pickover** makes his Pittsburgh Opera debut with *Aida*. He has directed numerous operas, musicals, and plays both in the US and abroad. He most recently directed *Tristan und Isolde* at the Teatro Regio in Turin, Italy. He has directed with the Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Montreal, Minnesota and San Francisco Symphonies, and is frequently a guest stage director at the Metropolitan Opera, where his repertoire includes *Faust*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Norma*, *Susannah*, *Moses und Aron*, *Tannhäuser*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Makropulos Case*, *Billy Budd*, *Peter Grimes*, *Arabella*, *Fedora*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Rusalka*, *Fidelio*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Kat'a Kabanova*, *Aida*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Carmen*, and *Khovanschina*. Pickover has a passion for developing new work and was the Artistic/Resident Director of New York's Riverside Opera Ensemble, where he conceived and directed *Where or When*, a new Rodgers and Hart Off-Broadway revue and the world premiere of Patrick Byers' opera *Incident at San Bajo*, *Iolanta*, *Man with a Load of Mischief*. He also developed and directed the new musical *Street Sense* by Migdalia Cruz and Linda Eisenstein at the Cleveland Public Theatre and was the Artistic Director of Struthers Library Theatre in Pennsylvania where he directed *Evita*, *The Sound of Music*, *A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Oklahoma*, *The Boyfriend*, *Camelot*, *The Music Man*, and *The Fantasticks*.

Quebecois set and costume designer **Claude Girard**'s work has been seen previously at Pittsburgh Opera for *La bohème* (1994), *Romeo & Juliet* (1998), and *Pagliacci* (2006). After studies in Quebec and Venice, he began his designing career in 1967, working for the Grands Ballets Canadiens. Since then, he has designed sets, costumes and lighting for productions such as *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *La cenerentola*, *Norma*, *Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Merry Widow*, *Nabucco*, *Aida*, *La traviata*, and *Der fliegende Holländer* for L'Opéra de Montreal, Opéra de Nancy (France), Liège (Belgium), Philadelphia, Portland, Seattle, Tulsa, Detroit, Dayton, Louisville, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Calgary, and Vancouver. In addition to opera sets, he has created designs for more than 30 ballet productions and has had the opportunity to direct artistic events throughout Canada and France. Mr. Girard created design concepts for *Don Giovanni* performed at the Banff Opera Festival (1993). He also directed the 1991-1993 Canada Day celebrations for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and Société Radio-Canada.

Cindy Limauro's lighting designs have been seen nationally and internationally in opera, theater, and dance. Past productions with Pittsburgh Opera include *The Magic Flute*, *Tosca*, *Fidelio*, *Carmen*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Recent Pittsburgh designs include the world premiere of *Henry*, *The Shaughraun*, *Henry IV*, *The Dead*, *A Woman of No Importance*, and *Travesties* for Pittsburgh Irish and Classical Theatre; *Summer and Smoke* and the world premiere of *Just Above My Head* for Opera Theater; and several productions for Dance Alloy. Other productions include *The Threepenny Opera* and the world premiere of Pasatieri's *The Three Sisters* for Opera Columbus, *Mister Roberts* starring Martin Sheen for Burt Reynolds' Jupiter Theater, the world premiere of *Dracula II Musical* and *Nunsense* in Rome, and productions for the Pittsburgh Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet, Maryland Ballet, City Theatre, Columbus Light Opera, Pittsburgh Public Theater, Barter Theatre, and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. Her lighting design work was recently displayed in the international World Stage Design Exhibit in Toronto. She heads the lighting design program at Carnegie Mellon School of Drama.

James Geier (Wig & Makeup Designer) returns to Pittsburgh Opera for a fifth season after recently completing his fourth season at Cincinnati Opera. He formerly worked as a staff makeup artist and wigmaker for a decade with San Francisco Opera and, more recently, as resident wig and makeup designer for Florida Grand Opera. Mr. Geier is a graduate of the Theatre Arts Department at Brandeis University and completed apprenticeships with both the San Francisco and Santa Fe Operas. He has worked for several film companies, including Lucasfilms Ltd., as well as an impressive number of opera, ballet, and theatre companies. His credits include the Denver Center Theatre Company, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Cincinnati Ballet, Spoleto Festival USA, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Baltimore Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, Tulsa Opera, Ft. Worth Opera, Omaha Opera, Portland Opera, the Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre.

Michele de la Reza (Choreographer) is co-founder and artistic director of Attack Theatre, whose work has been presented throughout the US and in Switzerland, Japan, Monaco, Germany, France, Indonesia and Turkey. With co-artistic director Peter Kope, they made their Broadway debut in 2000 as choreographers for *Squonk*. They have choreographed and performed in ten productions with Pittsburgh Opera ranging from *Carmen* and *Rigoletto* to *Dead Man Walking*. Next season they will collaborate on *Samson & Dalila*. Attack Theatre is also the movement coach for Pittsburgh Opera Center. With the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, they choreographed and performed in Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* featuring Pinchas Zuckerman and annually in the Holiday Pops series. They have collaborated with theater companies (Quantum Theatre), museums (Carnegie Museum of Art, Andy Warhol Museum, Frick Art Museum, Mattress Factory), and international dance companies (Japan's Nibroll Collective and Belgium's Compagnie Matteo Moles). Michele was a leading dancer with Dance Alloy and NYC-based Perks DanceMusicTheatre for eight years. She received her BFA from the Juilliard School and a Master's from the University of Pittsburgh.

Peter Kope (**Choreographer**), founder and artistic director of Attack Theatre, has created and performed works for the Avignon Festival (France), the 7th Next Wave Dance Festival (Japan), the Spoleto Festival USA, Tanzmesse (Germany), and the Broadway production of *Squonk*. He has also performed with Jacob Pillow's "Men Dancers: The Ted Shawn Legacy", the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Dance Alloy, and PerksDanceMusicTheatre. Mr. Kope's interests in visual and installation art have led to many cross-disciplinary collaborations and site-specific commissions. Attack Theatre has recently commissioned music by Dave Eggar (NYC) and Somei Satoh (Tokyo) and is preparing for its third annual performance event, *The Dirty Ball* on April 12th. Attack Theatre was featured in *Dance Magazine* as one of "25 to Watch for 2007," named "Best Dance Company for 2007" (*City Paper*), "Best Dance Performance for 2006" (for *The Kitchen Sink* in the *Post-Gazette*), and received the National Dance Project touring award for *Games of Steel*. Attack Theatre is the company in residence at Carnegie Mellon University's School of Music. Mr. Kope has taught at numerous universities throughout the US and at hundreds of primary and secondary schools. He holds degrees from the University of Dayton.

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