



MANITOBA OPERA

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Manitoba Opera's 2016/17 Season to Showcase Two Company Premieres of Celebrated Works by Verdi and Massenet

Two Manitoba Opera premieres, both in the grand opera tradition, will be showcased in the company's 44th season. **Falstaff**, Giuseppe Verdi's crowning achievement and his final opera, opens November 19, with additional performances November 22 and 25. This must-see opera is indisputably one of the operatic world's greatest comedies. The romantic tragedy, **Werther** (pronounced Vare-tare) by French composer, Jules Massenet, is scheduled for April 29, May 2, and 5. Both productions will be presented at the Centennial Concert Hall.

"Neither of these two wonderful operas has been presented before in Manitoba," commented General Director and CEO, Larry Desrochers, "and they are long overdue. I'm thrilled that we are able to program them and equally thrilled by the talented artists we have appearing next year. Our 44th season promises to be a real treat for anyone who loves grand opera."

FALSTAFF

Falstaff is the musical retelling of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Sir John Falstaff, a down-and-out Knight of the Garter, audaciously woos two married women hoping to tap into their husbands' fortunes. However, he underestimates the outrage and cleverness of these "Merry Wives." Their retribution is the foundation for brilliant music, delightful comic situations, Verdi's self-parody, and a bit of pathos, too. Falstaff's vanity and buffoonery are lampooned, but undaunted he declares, "All the world's a jest, he who laughs last, laughs best!" Set in Windsor, during the reign of Henry IV of England, *Falstaff* will be sung in Italian with English translations projected above the stage.

Written when the composer was 80, this great comic masterpiece came after a long line of tragic works. In writing the libretto, Arrigo Boito took wide liberties with the plot of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, changing characters and introducing scenes from *King Henry IV* for the sake of operatic convenience. Verdi unified it through his music and fashioned it into a witty and lively opera with equal parts orchestral virtuosity and riotously paced comedy.

WERTHER

Werther tells of promises kept and fragile hearts broken. It is a simple story of an apparently idyllic middle-class family torn apart by irrepressible desire. *Werther* follows a young poet, a hopeless romantic who falls instantly in love with the beautiful and unattainable Charlotte who is promised to marry another. Werther tries to stay away but, with each letter he writes to Charlotte, his tormented heart aches to be with her. Seeking peace the only way he knows how, he takes his own life, as Charlotte finally returns his love.

Massenet's most romantic tragedy overflows with yearning and heartbreaking melancholy. It is a work of irresistible melodic beauty infused with vivid and lush orchestration. The result is a masterpiece that is among the most beautiful and moving in all of French opera.

Werther is based on the German Romantic poet, Goethe's semi-autobiographical novel, *Sorrows of the Young Werther*. The character of Werther is modelled after two real people - Goethe himself, and his friend Karl Wilhelm Jerusalem. It caused a sensation when it first appeared in 1774 and over a hundred years later, it similarly moved Massenet. "Such delirious, exotic passion brought tears to my eyes," he recalled. "Into *Werther*, I put all my soul and artistic conscience."

The libretto for *Werther* was written by Edouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann. The Manitoba Opera production will be set in Wetzlar, Germany, from July to December in the early 20th century. It will be sung in French with projected English translations.

FALSTAFF - ARTISTS

Baritone **Todd Thomas**, last seen on the Manitoba Opera stage as Rigoletto in 2012, returns to delve into the title role and Winnipeg's own **Monica Huisman** appears as Alice, the merriest of the "Windsor Wives." Former Winnipegger **Gregory Dahl**, who is appearing this season as George in *Of Mice and Men*, will sing the role of Ford. The ensemble-cast will also include **Sasha Djhanian** in her Manitoba Opera debut as Nannetta, **Lauren Segal** as Meg Page, and **Lynne McMurtry** as Dame Quickly. Another Manitoban, **James McLennan**, returns to sing Bardolfo and **Christopher Mayell**, Pong in last season's *Turandot*, will be Dr. Caius.

Former Winnipegger **Michael Cavanagh** will direct, with Manitoba Opera's Music Advisor and Principal Conductor, **Tyrone Paterson** conducting the **Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra**. The **Manitoba Opera Chorus** will add their voices to the production.

WERTHER - ARTISTS

Canadian leading tenor **John Tessier** joins the company once again to star as Werther, the idealistic young poet who cannot live without love. Tessier was Tonio in the 2012 production of *The Daughter of the Regiment*. **Lauren Segal**, last on the Manitoba Opera stage as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* 2012, returns as Charlotte, the object of his obsession. **Keith Phares**, Marcello in *La Bohème* two years ago, will sing the role of Albert. **Terence Mierau**, **David Watson**, and **Lara Secord-Haid**, as Schmidt, Le Bailli, and Sophie, respectively, round out the cast.

Werther will be directed by Winnipegger **Ann Hodges**, with **Tyrone Paterson** conducting the **WSO**.

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.

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