

Press Release

Proudly presented by Opera Hong Kong

Verdi's *Il Trovatore*

Regarded as Verdi's Most Passionate Opera



(28 March 2023, Hong Kong) Highlighting its 20th anniversary year, Opera Hong Kong proudly presents Verdi's *Il Trovatore* to Hong Kong audience on 11 to 14 May 2023, in the Grand Theatre of Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Together with *Rigoletto* and *La Traviata*, *Il Trovatore* is regarded as one of the three masterpieces of Giuseppe Verdi. To this day, the trio are still considered representative of Italian opera classics, enjoying timeless popularity all over the world.

The background of the story is set in medieval Spain. The protagonist Manrico is a poet and a brave fighter who has won the heart of Leonora with his singing. However, Count di Luna has also fallen in love with Leonora. Fate has brought the two brothers who do not know each other exists face to face. They have become deadly rivals in love, each wanting to kill the other. The tragic truth of their blood tie is only revealed at the end of the story. There is also a lethal gypsy curse threading through a plot woven with love, jealousy and revenge. They make *Il Trovatore* the most passionate opera ever written by Verdi.

The opera was premiered at Teatro Apollo in Rome in the 19th century with resounding success. Verdi combines the dramatic fireworks of medieval Spain with the passion of his native Italy in the music, among them *Stride la vampa* ("The flames are roaring!"), *The Anvil Chorus*, *Di quella pira l'orrendo foco* ("The horrid flames of that pyre") are all beautiful, passionate timeless classics.

Conductor

Dejan Savic, an outstanding Serbian conductor, has been the Chief Conductor of the National Theatre Belgrade since 2004. He was the Superintendent of the National Theatre Belgrade and also the Guest Conductor of ERT Symphony Orchestra in Athens for four seasons. In 2014, he conducted *Tosca* as his Asian debut at Busan Cultural Center. He was with Opera Hong Kong for *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schichi* in 2017 and *The Magic Flute* in 2018, with the same production staged in Fuzhou as well. Recently he conducted a number of Verdi's repertoires, including *Un ballo in Maschera*, *Otello*, *La Traviata*, *La forza del destino*, *Nabucco*, *Il Trovatore*, *Rigoletto* and *Aïda* on stages of State Opera Stara Zagora, Opera Nationala Romania Timisoara, Sarajevo National Theatre in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sofia Opera & Ballet in Bulgaria and National Theatre Belgrade.

Director

Enrico Castiglione is one of the international acclaimed theatre and video directors and set designers. His style of direction was passionately realistic, characterized by a strong visual dimension of cinematographic inspiration. There were over two hundred DVDs of his theatrical productions broadcasted live in cinemas worldwide and also by international networks, including *Manon Lescaut* in 2019, *Tosca* in 2000 and 2008 and many others. He was also a television director of mega concerts featuring artists of high caliber like José Carreras and Lorin Maazel. He was the founder and artistic director of Taormina Opera Festival, Euro Mediterranean Festival, Easter Festival in Rome and Italian Bellini Opera Festival. He was also a President of Una Vita per la Musica award conferred each year for the recognition of greatest musical figures worldwide.

Leonora

Martina Serafin and **Roberta Mantegna** will take on the role as Leonora. Born in Vienna, Martina Serafin is one of the greatest performers of the title role of *Tosca*, which she has sung at the Rome Opera, Florence, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Arena di Verona, Teatro alla Scala, Terme di Caracalla, the Paris Opera and Wiener Staatsoper. In 2013 she extended to Verdi repertoire, appearing as Elisabeth in *Don Carlo* at Teatro alla Scala, followed by Abigail in *Nabucco* at the Chorégies d'Orange, Arena di Verona and Teatro alla Scala. She is also a specialist in German repertoires, singing Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* at Metropolitan Opera and Wiener Staatsoper, Elsa in *Lohengrin*, Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser* and Marie in *Wozzeck*.

Born in Palermo, Roberta Mantegna is a former member of Young Artist Programme of Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, she made her debuts as the title roles in *Norma* in Treviso and *Maria Stuarda* in Rome, followed by rounds of captivating performances of Micaëla in *Carmen* at Terme di Caracalla, The Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* in Dubai with Teatro di San Carlo Napoli tour, Imogene in *Il Pirata* at La Scala Milan, Leonora in *Il Trovatore* in Leipzig, Macerata, Rome and Venice, and at the Festival Verdi in Parma. In the first half of 2023, she appeared in *Falstaff* at New National Theatre Tokyo and *Roberto Devereux* at Opera Australia.

Manrico

Manrico will be sung by the renowned tenors **Marco Berti** and **Irakli Kakhidze**. Born in Como, Marco Berti is a tenor with great vocal and interpretative skills and represents the most classic expression of the Voce all'Italiana. Magnificent interpreter of the great Italian and French repertoires, he excels in the interpretation of the roles by Puccini, Verdi, Bellini, Bizet, Leoncavallo, Mascagni and Giordano. Spanning over two decades, his career consists of successes in the major opera houses worldwide, from Covent Garden to The Metropolitan NY, Teatro alla Scala to the Arena di Verona, Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona to l'Opéra de Paris, and the grand oriental stages of Beijing and Tokyo. He has worked with the greatest conductors including Gianandrea Gavazzeni, Zubin Mehta, Riccardo Muti, Antonio Pappano, Daniel Oren, James Conlon and Nicola Luisotti, and world-renowned stage directors including Franco Zeffirelli, Pier Luigi Pizzi, Liliana Cavani, and Ferzan Özpetek.

Georgian tenor Irakli Kakhidze has a close collaboration with the Nationaltheater Mannheim of Germany, appearing as the title roles in *Ernani* and *Don Carlo*, Pollione in *Norma*, Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Roberto in *Le Villi*, Don Alvaro in *La forza del destino*, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and Radames in *Aïda*. Recently he was also Cavaradossi at Deutsche Oper am Rhein and Kutaisi State Opera and Manrico in *Il Trovatore* at Hessisches Staatstheater Wiesbaden. A previous soloist at Tbilisi Opera House, he was awarded by Georgia Theatre Society for the best performance of the role Turiddu in *Cavalleria rusticana* and won the Lado Atanéli Competition in 2011.

Count di Luna

Simone Piazzola has established himself as one of the leading baritones of his generation on an international scale. His most recent and future engagements include Amonasro in *Aida* and Germont in *La Traviata* at Arena di Verona; Germont in *La Traviata* at the Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, Semperoper Dresden, Teatre Principal de Palma de Mallorca, Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège, and in Palermo, Rovigo, Padova, Livorno and Treviso; the title role of *Rigoletto* in Warsaw and Malta; Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* at Hamburg Staatsoper; Ezio in *Attila* at Teatro Petruzzelli di Bari; Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at Teatro Filarmonico di Verona; De Siriex in *Fedora* in Piacenza and Modena; Ford in *Falstaff* at Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège.

Mario Cassi will share the same role of Count di Luna. Making his operatic debut in 2001 for the role of Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and Signor Lupo in *Pollicino* by Daniele Abbado, Mario Cassi is a returning guest in many Europe's most prestigious theatres and festivals. Among his successful performances are *Hansel and Gretel* at Teatro dell'Opera di Rome, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* at Théâtre du Châtelet, *Don Pasquale* in Ravenna, a production that was released in DVD and was toured in Moscow, Liège, Cologne and Paris under the baton of Riccardo Muti. Recently he sang in La Scala Milan for *La bohème* and *Rigoletto*, and Arena in Verona for *Aida*.

Azucena

Marianne Cornetti is internationally recognized as one of the leading Verdi mezzo-sopranos of her generation. She has appeared as Amneris in *Aida*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Princess Eboli in *Don Carlo* at prestigious opera houses across the world, garnering rave reviews and winning the hearts of audiences globally. Acclaimed performances of iconic leading Verdi roles include engagements as Azucena in *Il Trovatore* at the Teatro alla Scala, Metropolitan Opera and Arena di Verona, as well as Amneris in *Aida* at the Teatro alla Scala, Wiener Staatsoper and Deutsche Oper Berlin.

The Chinese mezzo soprano **Guang Yang** finished her Juilliard School Opera Center Programme and the lyric Opera of Chicago Young Artist Programme. She was Amneris in *Aida* under Zubin Mehta with National Center for The Performing Arts in Beijing and she reprised the same role in the Florida Grand Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Omaha, San Francisco Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin. Other highlights include Ferena in *Nabucco*, Adalgisa in *Norma*, Azucena in *Il Trovatore*, Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Ortrud in *Lohengrin* and Aunt Xue in *Dream of the Red Chamber* with San Francisco Opera. She was with Opera Hong Kong for Eboli in *Don Carlo* in 2008 and Mrs Charlie Soong in *Dr. Sun Yat-sen* in 2011.

Special thanks to the continuous support from the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

Programme Details

Date and time: 11-13 May 2023 (Thur to Sat) 7:45pm, 14 May 2023 (Sun) 3pm

Venue: Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Ticket price: \$1,080, \$920, \$720, \$620, \$420, \$220

Tickets available at URBTIX from 28 March 2023

Performed in Italian with Chinese and English Surtitles.

Please visit <http://operahongkong.org> for more details.

High resolution photos can be downloaded at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/h4j27mcrh6gzxp95xc6e/h?dl=0&rlkey=7flflfacvrvlglkgegztsjn98>

Production Team

Producer Warren Mok
Conductor Dejan Savic
Director and Lighting Designer Enrico Castiglione
Chorus Director Alex Tam
Orchestra Executive Anders Hui

Performers

Leonora Martina Serafin (11 & 13/5)
Roberta Mantegna (12 & 14/5)
Manrico Marco Berti (11 & 13/5)
Irakli Kakhidze (12 & 14/5)
Count di Luna Simone Piazzola (11 & 13/5)
Mario Cassi (12 & 14/5)
Azucena Marianne Cornetti (11 & 13/5)
Guang Yang (12 & 14/5)
Ferrando Daniel Giulianini
Ines Ashley Chui (11 & 13/5)
Christy Li (12 & 14/5)
Ruiz Samuel Huang (11 & 13/5)
Wesley Lam (12 & 14/5)
An Old Gypsy Lam Kwok Ho
A Messenger Jeff Chan

Opera Hong Kong Orchestra
Opera Hong Kong Chorus

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Media Enquiry

For media enquiry, please contact:

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About Opera Hong Kong

Founded in 2003 Opera Hong Kong (OHK) is Hong Kong's first professional opera company. Over the years, the company has gone from strength to strength under the artistic direction of Warren Mok, the internationally acclaimed Hong Kong tenor. OHK has elevated opera in Asia's world city, with many world-class productions covering all major works in the operatic canon and has collaborated with opera houses and festivals including Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Taormina Opera Festival, Theater Erfurt, Opéra de Nice, National Centre for the Performing Arts and Shanghai Opera House.

In 2019, OHK was selected by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council as one of the three recipients of the coveted "Eminent Arts Group Scheme". The Scheme's consecutive 5-year funding has become a boost to further the company's development.

OHK is committed to promoting the city's brightest, young opera singers. In 2015, OHK launched the Jockey Club Opera Hong Kong Young Artist Development and Education Programme (the Programme), a three-year opera training programme designed to nurture ten young local artists. The success of the Programme led to its renewal by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for another three years from 2019 to 2022, providing intensive training to 12 local artists. The Programme has been completed successfully in March 2022.

OHK also places a strong emphasis on its education and community activities. Opera school tours, summer schools and master classes are held regularly to reach young audiences. The music centre in Wanchai provides a wide range of courses for early age children to adult in addition to Children Chorus classes. The OHK Chorus and the OHK Children Chorus were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognised contributors on the local choral scene.

The recent development of the Greater Bay Area has created an environment for OHK to initiate more collaborations and bring the art of opera to a wider audience.

Official website: www.operahongkong.org

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