

INDIANAPOLIS OPERA

A VOICE. A STAGE. A STORY.

For Immediate Release

Indianapolis Opera Presents Original Rodgers and Hammerstein's Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-Winning Production of *South Pacific*, March 23, 24 and 25, 2018

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, February 23, 2018 – Indianapolis Opera proudly presents classic Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *South Pacific* at the Schrott Center for the Arts on the campus of Butler University on March 23, 24 and 25, 2018.

The Indianapolis Opera proudly presents the original production of *South Pacific* that will be accompanied by a professional live orchestra and regionally renowned operatically trained singers. “Rodgers wrote most of the lyrical melodies specifically for opera stars, including Ezio Pinza and Giorgio Tozzi, who both had highly successful careers at the Metropolitan Opera for many years” said Indianapolis Opera’s General Director, David Craig Starkey. “*South Pacific* is an endearing love story that addresses issues of prejudice, race, and acceptance, making this classic piece more relevant than ever.” The classic musical is set against the dramatic background of an idyllic South Pacific island during WWII. The musical’s unforgettable characters and relationships, great humor and extraordinary music have made *South Pacific* an engaging and moving classic since 1949. Audience members will be moved by some of the most popular songs in all of Lyric Theatre including “Some Enchanted Evening”, “I’m Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair” and “Younger Than Springtime”.

Based on the anecdotes of a real-life U.S. Navy commander who was stationed on an island, the musical follows two intercultural love stories: Nellie, played by Christina Overton, is a spunky nurse from Arkansas, falls in love with Emile, played by Brian Banion, a French plantation owner on the island who has two children from his late Polynesian wife; at the same time, U.S. Lieutenant Cable, played by Grant Knox, falls for a beautiful island native named Liat, played by Indianapolis Opera’s Resident Artist,

INDIANAPOLIS OPERA

A VOICE. A STAGE. A STORY.

Gretchen Adams. Both Americans find themselves struggling to reconcile their own cultural prejudices with their amorous feelings, all the while under the dark cloud of a war that is coming ever closer to their island paradise.

Maestro Keith Chambers will conduct the *South Pacific* orchestra. Maestro Chambers has conducted over 100 performances of 40 different operas for companies including **The Dallas Opera, Amarillo Opera, Shreveport Opera, Asheville Lyric Opera, First Coast Opera, American Lyric Theater, Manhattan Opera Studio, Moores Opera Center, The Living Opera, Martha Cardona Opera, Opera in the Ozarks, and American Opera Projects.** As Founder & Artistic Director of **New Amsterdam Opera,** he has conducted acclaimed performances of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Verdi's *La forza del destino*. He also concurrently serves as Principal Guest Conductor of **Manhattan Opera Studio.** Mr. Chambers regularly collaborates with top-level artists including Frederica von Stade, Joyce DiDonato, Bryan Hymel, Ana Maria Martinez, Ailyn Pérez, Stephen Costello, and Nathan Gunn. He has served as Cover Conductor for over 40 different operas and has assisted noted conductors including Emmanuel Villaume, Graeme Jenkins, Riccardo Frizza, Willie Anthony Waters, and Patrick Summers.

The production will be directed by up and coming director, Scott Parry. Opera News has hailed Parry's stage direction as "marvelous," "lively," "imaginative," and "spot-on." His productions have spanned an enormous range of repertoire, from *La Bohème* to *La Cage aux Folles*. He conceived of, designed, and directed the world premiere production of *I lavori d'amore persi*, a compendium of Monteverdi's music theatre fragments for the Bloomington Early Music Festival as well as the Newly composed absurdist opera *The Pig, the Farmer, and the Artist* for La Mama's Off-Broadway in New York and makes his debut at the Indianapolis Opera. He spent almost a decade on the staging staff of New York City Opera at Lincoln Center and has worked extensively with Florida Grand Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Boston Lyric Opera,

INDIANAPOLIS OPERA

A VOICE. A STAGE. A STORY.

Michigan Opera Theatre, Santa Fe Opera, The Dallas Opera, Chicago Opera Theatre, Chautauqua Opera among many others.

Brian Banion stars as Emile de Becque. Banion's physical and vocal acting combined with his versatile, warm, well-projected bass-baritone voice are demonstrated in a wide repertory. This season includes a role debut as Ramfis in *Aida* with The Columbus Symphony Orchestra, a return to Piedmont Opera and role debut as Lieutenant Horstmayer in *Silent Night*, and a return to the Lyric Opera of Kansas City as Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Last season included a return to Piedmont Opera and role debut as Mustafa in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, and a debut with Soo Opera as Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. The 2016 season included a return to Piedmont Opera as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, and a debut with the Great Lakes Chamber Orchestra as Escamillo in *Carmen*.

Christina Overton stars as Nellie Forbush. Praised for her "lilting mezzo-soprano combined with a fierce stage presence" (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette), Overton is quickly establishing herself as a dynamic artist in the musical realms of opera, concert, and musical theatre. Overton's 2018-2019 season includes the role of Desireé Armfeldt in *A Little Night Music* with The Natchez Opera Festival as well as Marthe in *Faust*. She was recently a featured artist with the Evansville Philharmonic and performed the title role in *Kiss Me, Kate* with Opera Theater of Pittsburgh, praised for a performance "impeccably sung" (PA Theatre Guide) and a "fine comedic flair in her acting" with "authentic chemistry on stage [...] both genuine and affecting." (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) Other engagements include, Julie LaVerne in *Show Boat* with Opera Naples, Third Lady (*The Magic Flute*) with Chatham Opera and The Orlando Philharmonic, Dorabella (*Così Fan Tutte*) and Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*) with Opera Fusion, Ivey Smith (*On The Town*) with the Klezmer Company Orchestra, and Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*).

INDIANAPOLIS OPERA

A VOICE. A STAGE. A STORY.

The show opens on Friday, March 23, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. and runs Saturday, March 24, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. and closes on Sunday, March 25, 2018 at 2:30 p.m. All performances will take place at the Schrott Center for the Arts on the campus of Butler University. Tickets range from \$40 - \$75 each, and are available at the Clowes Box Office, by phone at (800) 982-2787, or online at indyopera.org.

About Indianapolis Opera: Since 1975, Indianapolis Opera has delivered the passion, excitement and art of opera throughout Indiana with compelling educational, cultural and community activities. Its mission is to educate, inspire and entertain through the creation and presentation of musical storytelling for the Indiana community.

For more information about The Indianapolis Opera and its 2018 season, please visit indyopera.org.

A VOICE. A STAGE A STORY.

CONTACT: Krista Slusser, Marketing and Communications Director, Indianapolis Opera, 317.283.3531 or 574.725.8108, slusser@indyopera.org; David Craig Starkey, General Director, starkey@indyopera.org.

###