



PRESS RELEASE (FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

**Opera Hong Kong Set to Delight with Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*
5-6 May 2017, 7:30pm
7 May 2017, 3:00pm
Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre**

(7 April 2017, Hong Kong) To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Opera Hong Kong presents a series of much-loved operas, beginning with the ever-popular *The Barber of Seville*. From May 5-7, 2017, at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre's Grand Theatre, audiences will enjoy this modern, family-friendly production from the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma. *The Barber of Seville* is piled bouffant-high with laughter, romance and high-energy dancing. There are just three opportunities to see this dazzling production that features brilliant international and local artists, along with the Hong Kong Sinfonietta, under the baton of Maestro Roberto Gianola, and the Hong Kong Dance Company, under the direction of renowned choreographer Luciano Cannito.

Having enchanted audiences worldwide with its witty and lively music, *The Barber of Seville* has stood the test of time and remains the most popular of Rossini's comic operas. Count Almaviva, disguised as the impecunious student Lindoro, woos Rosina, who is kept under lock and key by her guardian Dr Bartolo who wants her – and her fortune – for himself. It is Figaro, the town barber and “factotum” (a marvelous term for “jack-of-all-trades”, but which here means “fixer”) who schemes to wrest Rosina from Bartolo's clutches to bring the two young lovers together. Plans become increasingly ridiculous – Almaviva disguises himself first as a drunken soldier and then as a substitute music teacher, while Bartolo has counter-plans of his own.

The Barber of Seville is not only the archetypal example of Italian *opera buffa* but is also filled with Rossini's sublime and masterful music. Several of the arias have become classic recital pieces, including *Largo al factotum* (Make way for the factotum) which contains the well-known refrain “Figaro! Figaro! Figaro!” and *Una voce poco fa* (A voice not long ago). Written for a contralto or coloratura mezzo-soprano but often transposed for a soprano, *Una voce poco fa* has been sung by the likes of Maria Callas, one of the best-known Rosinas. *The Barber of Seville* also has some of the best lines in all of opera, such as Figaro's spelling out the name of the object of Almaviva's affections letter by letter to an impatient Rosina.

The production's international stars are baritone Steven LaBrie, known for his beautiful timbre and dramatic presence, as Figaro and mezzo-soprano Stephanie Lauricella as Rosina. LaBrie made his Carnegie Hall debut as the soloist in *Songs from Solomon's Garden* and was the baritone soloist in *Estancia* with the New York City Ballet. Lauded by the *Opera News* for her “ringing upper register and immaculate passagework,” Lauricella sang Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* with the Opéra national de Paris and Deutsche Oper Berlin during the 2016-2017 season.

“I have always thought of Rosina as a young girl with a lot of spunk,” Lauricella said. “She is smart, confident and definitely knows what she wants. She has a great sense of humour and really values her friendship with Figaro. I love Rosina's aria *Una voce poco fa*. As an aria alone, it showcases extreme vocal range and fabulous coloratura. From an acting standpoint, you get to express Rosina's many emotional states – strength, sweetness, sassiness and love.”

Edoardo Milletti is Count Almaviva. He made his debut at the Teatro alla Scala in 2015 as the Count in *The Barber of Seville* under the baton of Massimo Zanetti. He has won several important international competitions including the Scuola dell'Opera Italiana in Bologna, Ottavio Ziino in Rome and the Mongini Award in Varese. Basso buffo Kevin Glavin's signature role as Dr Bartolo has brought him to the stages of

the Seattle Opera, the Florida Grand Opera, the Washington Opera and the Opera Company of Philadelphia, among others. Kevin Thompson, as Don Basilio, has performed with many European opera houses including the Staatsoper Hannover, Fundacion Teatro Nacional Sucre in Ecuador and Teatro Verdi Trieste. In the past two seasons, he performed Verdi's *Requiem* with the National Chorale at Avery Fisher Hall and Wagner's *Rienzi* at the Kennedy Center.

Opera Hong Kong will feature up-and-coming local talent on Sunday, May 7. Hailed by the *South Florida Classical Review* for her “sweetly sung portrayal of Suor Genevief a”, soprano Joyce Wong performs as Rosina. Wong was awarded third prize at the 6th Yokohama International Music Competition in 2012 and at Le French May in 2008, she performed as Sophie in *Werther* alongside world-renowned mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves.

Tenor Chen Yong, who performs as the Count, has sung leading roles including Rom e in Gounod's *Rom e et Juliette*, Ferrando in Mozart's *Cos  fan tutte* and Ernesto in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. He graduated from the vocal department of the Universit t f r Musik und Darstellender Kunst Wien with a full scholarship after obtaining a Master's degree from the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts.

Said Opera Hong Kong Artistic Director Warren Mok: “Opera Hong Kong is delighted to present *The Barber of Seville* this May at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. This beautiful comic opera is loved the world over and we look forward to presenting our production as the first in our series celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.”

Ahead of the performances, Opera Hong Kong will host a talk on Monday, April 24 at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. In “Figaro! Figaro! Figaro! An Introduction to *The Barber of Seville*”, Peter Gordon will introduce audiences to Rossini's opera and some of its famous arias. Admission is free and no registration is required.

With support from the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, *The Barber of Seville* will be held on Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6 2017 at 7:30 pm starring world-class international vocalists and on Sunday, May 7, 2017 at 3 pm featuring elite talent from Hong Kong in the Grand Theatre at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. Tickets are available now at URBTIX (www.urbtix.hk). Tickets are priced at HK\$800, HK\$600, HK\$400, HK\$300 and HK\$150 for the performances on May 5 and 6, and at HK\$630, HK\$460, HK\$280 and HK\$90. There is a limited number of half-price tickets for senior citizens aged 60 or above, persons with disabilities and their carers, full-time students and Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information about Opera Hong Kong, please visit www.operahongkong.org or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/operahongkonglimited.

Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* – a comic opera in 2 acts

Music Gioachino Rossini
Libretto Cesare Sterbini, based on Pierre Beaumarchais' French Comedy *Le Barbier de Seville*

Performed in Italian with Chinese and English surtitles

Producer Warren Mok
Conductor Roberto Gianola
Director Lorenzo Mariani
Choreographer Luciano Cannito



Cast

Figaro	Steven LaBrie
Rosina	Stephanie Lauricella (5,6 May)
	Joyce Wong (7 May)
Il Conte D'Almaviva (Count)	Edoardo Milletti (5,6 May)
	Chen Yong (7 May)
Dr. Bartolo	Kevin Glavin
Don Basilio	Kevin Thompson
Bertha	Bobbie Zhang
Fiorello	Zhou Jian Kun
Ambrogio	Frankie Fung

Hong Kong Sinfonietta
Hong Kong Dance Company
Opera Hong Kong Chorus

Programme Details

5-6 May 2017 (Fri-Sat), 7:30pm
\$800 \$600 \$400 \$300 \$150
7 May 2017 (Sun), 3:00pm
\$630 \$460, \$280, \$90
(Early-bird discount at 20% off until 7 April)
Grand Theatre, Hong Kong Cultural Centre

Tickets available at URBTIX

Internet booking www.urbtix.hk
Credit card telephone booking 2111 5999
Ticketing enquiry 3761 6661
Programme enquiry 2234 0303

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About Opera Hong Kong

Opera Hong Kong is the first opera company to have been established in Hong Kong. The company was formed in July 2003 as a non-profit organization. Since its inception, Opera Hong Kong has become a firmly established part of Hong Kong's cultural scene.

Since our establishment, Opera Hong Kong has gone from strength to strength under the artistic direction of Warren Mok, MH, the internationally acclaimed Hong Kong tenor, with grand-scale productions of operas including *Otello*, *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Aïda*,

Werther, Don Carlo, The Magic Flute, Poet Li Bai, Manon, La Bohème, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, The Tales of Hoffmann and The Flying Dutchman. Apart from operas, the company has also presented the musical *Jinsha*, as well as concerts, including *Samson and Delilah*, the *Yellow River Cantata and Opera Highlights, Mozart Requiem and Favourite Arias*, Liao Changyong Recital, Denyce Graves Recital, *Opera Gala Concert, Musical Gala Concert, Verdi's Messa da Requiem, Ode to Beethoven*, Gong Dongjian Recital and *Celebrity Fundraising Concert*; and *Operas and Musicals for Families* as part of the education and outreach programme. Opera school tours, summer schools and master classes are held regularly to reach the young population. Opera Hong Kong Chorus and Opera Hong Kong Children Chorus were established in 2004 and 2008 respectively and are becoming recognized forces in the local choral scene.

Honourary Patron of Opera Hong Kong: K. Wah International Holdings Ltd

Opera Hong Kong is grateful to K. Wah International Holdings Limited (KWIH) for being the Honourary Patron since 2013. Through staging the grand opera productions and organizing educational and outreach programmes including opera tours to schools, opera concerts at tertiary institutions, vocal arts scholarships, summer school and Children Chorus, KWIH helps promote the appreciation of opera to a wider community especially the young generation.

As a longstanding advocate of art and culture in Hong Kong, KWIH actively sponsors various performing arts and educational projects to promote the popularity and diversity of Hong Kong's art scene and create a favourable environment for the budding talents.