

Contact: Edward Wilensky
 Phone: 619.232.7636 x248
Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com
 Afterhours: 619.384.7636

Verdi's *Rigoletto* Returns in a Traditional Staging with an All-Star Cast

Slovakian soprano L'ubica Vargicová makes Company debut as Gilda
Albanian tenor Giuseppe Gipali makes Company debut as Duke of Mantua
Georgian baritone Lado Ataneli returns in the title role

"...in her Met debut, the Slovak soprano L'ubica Vargicová dispatched devilish coloratura with fearless attack, bright tones and impressive accuracy."

- *The New York Times*

"Baritone Lado Ataneli has a booming dark voice and a commanding stage-presence."

- *The Washington Post*

"[Kirstin Chávez is] a compellingly voluptuous Maddalena."

- *Opera Magazine*

San Diego, CA – San Diego Opera's 44th International Season continues with its third opera of the season, Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* which opens on **Saturday, March 28, 2009**. Last seen in San Diego in 2002, this popular tragedy will transport audience members to the Italian Renaissance with its traditional staging. Making exciting debuts are Slovakian soprano **L'ubica Vargicová** as Gilda and Albanian tenor **Giuseppe Gipali** as the Duke of Mantua. Returning to San Diego is Georgian baritone **Lado Ataneli** in the title role, **Kirstin Chávez** as Maddalena, Armenian bass **Arutjun Kotchinian** as Sparafucile, American bass-baritone **Scott Sikon** as Count Monterone, Taiwanese tenor **Joesph Hu** as Borsa, American baritone **Malcolm MacKenzie** as Marullo, American mezzo-soprano **Martha Jane Howe** as Giovanna, American soprano **Crystal Jarrell** as Countess Ceprano/Page and American baritone **Robert Taylor** as Count Ceprano. **Edoardo Müller**, fresh from conducting the season opener, returns to lead the orchestra. Former San Francisco Opera General Director **Lotfi Mansouri** stages the production.

Performed in Italian with English translations above the stage, Verdi's tragic melodrama *Rigoletto* begins in the court of the lecherous Duke of Mantua who spends his time seducing the wives of courtiers. Rigoletto, the Duke's court jester, is a mean-spirited and unscrupulous man

and adds insult to injury by mocking these courtiers. Rigoletto has a daughter, Gilda, whom he lives for and loves dearly. After mocking Count Monterone, whose daughter has been a victim of the Duke, Monterone places a curse on Rigoletto and matters become even more intriguing when Rigoletto discovers the Duke has seduced Gilda, and hires an assassin to kill his own master. As the curse on Rigoletto begins to unfold, he becomes helpless to protect the one thing in the world he loves and learns too late that it was he himself who put into motion the acts that result in his daughter's murder. With the instantly recognizable aria "La donna è mobile" and "Caro nome", *Rigoletto* is a hit parade of operatic tunes.

Rigoletto was last performed by San Diego Opera in 2002. This production is owned by San Diego Opera with sets and costumes by **Carl Toms**.

Pre-production photos can be found online at:

<http://www.sdoopera.com/pressphotos/09Overview.aspx>

Electronic Press Kits for this opera, including multimedia content can be found online at:

<http://www.sdoopera.com/epk/Default.aspx>

The Cast

L'ubica Vargicová, Gilda

San Diego Opera debut. Slovakian soprano L'ubica Vargicová has a long history with the Slovak National Theatre where she has performed The Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, Violetta in *La traviata*, Olympia in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and more recently Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Amina in *La sonnambula*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Ophélie in *Hamlet*. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut as The Queen of the Night in 2005 and debuted with the Salzburg Festival as Olympia in 2003. She made her highly acclaimed debut at the Wiener Staatsoper as Gilda and returned in 2002 and 2003 as Amina. Recent engagements include Marie in *The Daughter of the Regiment* in Bratislava and Lima, as well as Violetta and Marie with Staatsoper Hamburg.

Giuseppe Gipali, Duke of Mantua

San Diego Opera debut. Albanian tenor Giuseppe Gipali was the winner of Plácido Domingo's 2003 Operalia contest. He has sung the role of the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* in Canada, Bologna, London and for Bavarian State Opera. Recent performances include Riccardo in *A Masked Ball* for Covent Garden, Teatro Comunale di Bologna and the Maggicio Musicale, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* for Rome Opera, Gabriele in *Simon Boccanegra* for Reggio Emilia and Bologna and Alfredo in *La traviata* for Teatro alla Scala. He has also sung in opera houses in Hamburg, Genova, San Francisco, Venice, Marseille, Paris, Lausanne, Palermo, Monte Carlo and Madrid.

Lado Ataneli, Rigoletto

Georgian baritone Lado Ataneli made his San Diego Opera debut singing the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* in 2005. Recent performances include Renato in *A Masked Ball* for Wiener Staatsoper, the title role of *Macbeth* at the Metropolitan Opera where he also sang Tonio in *Pagliacci*, a role performed for Deutsche Oper Berlin as well. Ataneli made his La Scala debut in the title role of *Macbeth* and his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2002 in the title role of *Nabucco*. Verdi operas in his vast repertory include *A Masked Ball*, *La forza del destino*, *Otello*, *La traviata*, and *I vespri siciliani*. He is also known for his interpretations of Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, *Il tabarro* and *Tosca* as well as Giordani's *Andrea Chenier*, Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* and Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*. He performs regularly at the Wiener Staatsoper,

Staatsoper Hamburg, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Bayerische Staatsoper, the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona. His discography includes *La Gioconda* with Plácido Domingo as well as a newly released CD of opera arias.

Kirstin Chávez, Maddalena

American mezzo-soprano Kristin Chávez made her San Diego Opera debut in the title role of *Thérèse Raquin* in 2003 and returned in 2006 as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Sondra Finchley in *An American Tragedy* and returned to sing Bersi in *Andrea Chenier*. Well known for her portrayal of Carmen she has performed this title role at New York City Opera, Tokyo City Opera, Minnesota Opera and Oper Graz in Austria. Other recent performances include Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* with Florentine Opera, the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* for New York City Opera, Jo in *Little Women* for Opera Pacific, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* for Orlando Opera, Utah Opera and Opera Lenawee, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* for Santa Fe Opera, Orlando Opera and Connecticut Opera and Maddalena in *Rigoletto* for New York City Opera.

Arutjun Kotchinian, Sparafucile

Armenian bass Arutjun Kotchinian made his San Diego Opera debut as Jacopo Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* in 2005. As a member of Deutsche Oper Berlin he performed Ramfis in *Aida*, Ferrando in *Il trovatore*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, Alvisè in *La Gioconda*, Oroveso in *Norma*, Basilio in *The Barber of Seville*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco*, Méphistophélès in *Faust*, Gremin in *Eugene Onegin*, Enrico in *Anna Bolena*, Wurm in *Luisa Miller* and Pimen in *Boris Godunov*. He made his Royal Opera Covent Garden debut as Lodovico in *Otello* and his La Scala debut as Wurm in *Luisa Miller*. Recent engagements include Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Zaccaria in *Nabucco* and Ramfis in *Aida* at Los Angeles Opera, Ferrando at the Royal Opera Covent Garden, the title role of *Don Quixote* in Trieste, Rodolfo in *La sonnambula* with Deutsche Oper Berlin, Seneca in *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with Opera de Toulouse and Pimen with Gran Teatre del Liceu. Kotchinian has appeared at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Oper Frankfurt, Dresden Semperoper and the Bregenz Festival.

Martha Jane Howe, Giovanna

American contralto Martha Jane Howe made her Company debut in 1975 in *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, retuning for *La traviata* and *La Loca* in 1979, *Boris Godunov* in 1989, *Dialogues of the Carmelites* in 1990, *Albert Herring* in 1991, *The Rape of Lucretia* and *The Marriage of Figaro* in 1992, *Eugene Onegin* in 1994, *Romeo and Juliet* in 1998, *Cold Sassy Tree* in 2001 and most recently in *Boris Godunov* in 2007. Ms. Howe has had a long association with the Lyric Opera of Chicago where she appeared in the world premiere of William Bolcom's *McTeague*. Other operas for the Lyric Opera of Chicago include Prokofiev's *The Gambler*, *Elektra*, *Die Walküre*, *Die verkaufte Braut*, *La sonnambula* and the *Ring* cycle. She has performed *Lulu* and *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* with San Francisco Opera, *The Nose* with Santa Fe Opera and *The Rake's Progress*, *Elektra* and *The Flying Dutchman* with the Canadian Opera Company.

Crystal Jarrell, Countess Ceprano/Page

San Diego Opera debut. American mezzo-soprano Crystal Jarrell recently performed Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* and Stephano in *Romeo and Juliet* with Nashville Opera, Olga in *The Merry Widow* with Indianapolis Opera and as The Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with San Antonio Opera. Other roles in her repertoire include Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Olga in *Eugene Onegin*, Emily in *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Mary Stone in *The Devil and Daniel Webster* and Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*. She has performed the music of Bizet and J. Strauss in concert with the Indianapolis Arts Chorale and Bloomington Symphony Orchestra and has

appeared in concert at the Indianapolis Film Festival performing highlight of *Carmen*. Jarrell is an alumna of the young artist program of Nashville Opera, Utah Festival Opera and Indianapolis Opera. She is currently a second year member of the San Diego Opera Ensemble.

Scott Sikon, Count Monterone

Since his San Diego Opera debut in 1991 as Superintendent Budd in *Albert Herring*, American bass-baritone Scott Sikon has sung more than twenty roles here including Schaunard in *La bohème*, Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Dikoi in *Katya Kabanova*, Steve Hubble in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Montano in *Otello*, Morales in *Carmen*, Curio in *Julius Caesar in Egypt*, the Second Philistine in *Samson and Delilah*, the First Journeyman in *Wozzeck*, Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Reinmar von Zweter in *Tannhäuser* and earlier this season as Sacristano in *Tosca*. He has performed throughout the United States with Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, The Dallas Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Cincinnati Opera and Cleveland Opera. His European debut was at the Vienna Volksoper in the premiere of *The Number 11 Bus*. An active concert artist, Scott Sikon has performed with the Spoleto Festival USA, the San Antonio Symphony and the Arkansas Symphony.

Joseph Hu, Borsa

Taiwanese tenor Joseph Hu made his San Diego Opera debut as Arturo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1995. His many performances here include Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, Spoletta in *Tosca*, the Steersman in *The Flying Dutchman*, Roderigo in *Otello*, Pong in *Turandot*, Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*, Count Lerma in *Don Carlo*, the Messenger in *Samson and Delilah*, Ruiz and the Messenger in *Il trovatore*, Don Curzio in *The Marriage of Figaro* and earlier this season as Spoletta in *Tosca*. Among other companies with which he has sung are The Dallas Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera, Nashville Opera, Fort Worth Opera and Dayton Opera.

Malcolm MacKenzie, Marullo

American baritone Malcolm MacKenzie first performed with San Diego Opera as Marullo in *Rigoletto* in 2002, a role he reprises for these performances. MacKenzie returned in 2006 as Escamillo in *Carmen* and last season as Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers*. He was a finalist in Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition, and a winner of the Metropolitan Opera Western Regional Auditions. MacKenzie began his professional career in 1994 as Harlequin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Glimmerglass Opera and has since performed with Washington National Opera, Madison Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Los Angeles Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Sacramento Opera and Opera Pacific. His roles include Donald in *Billy Budd*, Masetto and the title role of *Don Giovanni*, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, Marcello and Schaunard in *La bohème*, Albert in *Werther* and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. He has also appeared with the San Diego Symphony, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Mozart Orchestra, Pacific Chorale and Savannah Symphony.

Edoardo Müller, conductor

Italian conductor Edoardo Müller has led more than 30 productions in San Diego, beginning in 1980 with *Giovanna d'Arco*. Last season he conducted *Mary, Queen of Scots* and *Cavalleria rusticana / Pagliacci* and earlier this season he conducted *Tosca*. Known worldwide for his mastery of the Italian operatic repertoire, he has enjoyed a long association with the Teatro alla Scala in Milan where he conducted *Aida*, *I due Foscari*, *Il trovatore*, *I masnadieri*, *La forza del destino*, *Ernani*, *The Barber of Seville* and *Anna Bolena*, among others. His career has taken him to the Metropolitan Opera, Teatro Municipal in Santiago, Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Seattle Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, The Dallas Opera, Cincinnati Opera as well as companies in Paris, Rome and Tokyo.

Lotfi Mansouri, Director

A native of Iran, director Lotfi Mansouri is the former General Director of San Francisco Opera and the Canadian Opera and made his San Diego Opera debut in 1973 directing *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Recent productions here include *Cavalleria rusticana / Pagliacci* in 2008, *Boris Godunov* and *Samson and Delilah* in 2007, *The Barber of Seville* in 2006, *Die Fledermaus* and *Simon Boccanegra* in 2005 along with *Don Carlo*, *Turandot*, *Otello* and *Idomeneo* in previous seasons. He attended UCLA and took U.S. citizenship before becoming resident stage director at Opernhaus, Zürich in 1976. He has directed at many opera houses throughout Italy including Teatro alla Scala, Milan. In North America, his work has been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera and in Chicago, Houston, Santa Fe, Philadelphia, Dallas and many other cities, and he has a lengthy association with Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House. Six of his productions have been videotaped for telecast and commercial sale: *Mefistofele*, *Orlando furioso*, *Capriccio*, *Turandot*, *The Dangerous Liaisons* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Keturah Stickann, Choreographer

San Diego Opera debut. American choreographer Keturah Stickann was trained as a classical dancer at the State Ballet of Missouri, DanceAspen and the Jacob's Pillow School. She holds a degree in Choreography from Columbia College Chicago. During her performing career she danced with Danny Grossman and Dancers, Malashock Dance, the Wally Cardona Quartet, Daniel Pelzig, New York City Opera, San Diego Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Chicago Opera Theater, and was the Associate Artistic Director of Cerulean Dance Theatre for three years. Her work as an opera director and choreographer has taken her to companies around the United States and Europe including New York City Opera, L'Opera National Du Rhin, Glimmerglass Opera, Opera Theatre St. Louis, Dallas Opera, Chicago Opera Theater, Florida Grand Opera, Virginia Opera and Opera Pacific.

Carl Toms, Scenic and Costume Designer

British Scenic and Costume Designer Carl Toms many designs have been seen at San Diego Opera since 1976, including *Peter Grimes*, *The Merry Widow*, *Norma*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *La traviata*, *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. A set and costume designer for theatre, opera, ballet and film for over 40 years, Toms designed *Susanna's Secret* for Glyndebourne Festival, the world premiere of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Provok'd Wife* (Laurence Olivier Award winner) and the musical *Sherlock Holmes* (Tony Award and Drama Desk Award winner), among many others. Toms also designed for the Royal Ballet, Welsh National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, Old Vic, National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, English Stage Company as well as London and New York plays and several film projects. He was appointed consultant to the Prince of Wales and commissioned to redecorate several West End Theatres including the Theater Royal in Bath.

Michael Whitfield, Lighting Designer

Canadian Michael Whitfield made his company debut in 2006 designing *The Barber of Seville* and returned last season for *Cavalleria rusticana / Pagliacci*. He has designed for many prestigious opera companies including L'Opera de Montreal, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, The Dallas Opera and Los Angeles Opera. He has designed over 70 productions at the Canadian Opera Company since 1979, including *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Queen of Spades* and *Death in Venice*. During his over 25 years as Resident Lighting Director for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada he has lit over 100 productions including *The Trojan Women*, *Fuente Ovejuna*, *King Lear*, *Othello* and *The Mikado* (including the 1984 engagement of London's The Old Vic). Whitfield has also designed for numerous theatres, ballet companies and for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

About the Producers' Circle Sponsors

These performances of *Rigoletto* are made possible by **Supervisor Pam Slater-Price and the County of San Diego (Title Sponsors), Barbara and Neil Kjos (Producers' Circle) and Ellen Scripps (Producers' Circle).**

Performance Schedule

Saturday	March 28, 2009	7 PM
Tuesday	March 31, 2009	7 PM
Friday	April 3, 2009	8 PM
Sunday	April 5, 2009	2 PM
Wednesday	April 8, 2009	7 PM

Educational Events Surrounding *Rigoletto*

Artists' Roundtable

Meet the singers, conductor and director of *Rigoletto* in this free and informal panel discussion on **Thursday, March 19, 2009 at 5:30 PM** in the Beverly Sills Salon, Civic Theatre. Free.

Pre- Opera Lectures

These 30-minute informative lectures take place in the Civic Theatre one-hour prior to every performance and offer wonderful insight into the production audience members are about to see. These lectures are free to all ticket holders and are generously sponsored by *The San Diego Union-Tribune*.

San Diego OperaTalk! with Nick Reveles

Join Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education, for a fascinating half-hour television program on *Rigoletto*. Viewers will learn about the story, music and history of each opera and will pick up rich insight into the structure and composition of the music. *OperaTalk! with Nick Reveles* airs on UCSD-TV. For a complete listing of schedules and where to view it visit: <http://www.sdopera.com/education/operatalk.aspx>

San Diego Opera Spotlight

Produced by San Diego Opera and UCSD-TV, the award-winning *San Diego Opera Spotlight* gives viewers a unique and entertaining look behind-the-scenes of each of San Diego Opera's five main-stage productions. Viewers will see how the singers, directors, conductor and crew work together to create each opera, get a sneak peak at rehearsal footage and hear exclusive interviews with the stars. *San Diego Opera Spotlight Rigoletto* airs on **Friday, March 27 at 9:00 PM on UCSD-TV** and repeats daily throughout the run of the production. For a complete listing of schedules and where to view it visit: <http://www.sdopera.com/education/spotlight.aspx>

Purchasing Tickets

Three, four or five-opera subscriptions for the 2009 International Season are now available. Regular subscriptions range from \$87 - \$850 (some Saturday subscriptions slightly higher) and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com.

Weekday Super Savings Subscription Packages are also available which offer a full series of five operas for the price of four and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com.

For information about single tickets please visit www.sdopera.com or call (619) 533-7000 to speak to an opera representative.

\$20 rush tickets, subject to availability, are available 2-hours prior to performances. There is a one-ticket per person limit. Cash only.

The 2009 International Season

<i>Tosca</i>	Giacomo Puccini	January 24, 27, 30 February 1 (mat) and 4, 2009
<i>Don Quixote</i>	Jules Massenet	February 14, 17, 20 and 22 (mat), 2009
<i>Rigoletto</i>	Giuseppe Verdi	March 28, 31, April 3, 5 (mat) and 8, 2009
<i>Peter Grimes</i>	Benjamin Britten	April 18, 21, 24 and 26 (mat), 2009
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Giacomo Puccini	May 9, 12, 15, 17 (mat) and 20, 2009

General Information

A widely respected member of the international opera community, *San Diego Opera* brings the world's finest artists to San Diego. Founded in 1965, and led for the last 25 years by General Director and Artistic Director Ian D. Campbell, San Diego Opera produces performances of the highest artistic quality while remaining financially stable. San Diego Opera is also home to one of the most extensive, diverse opera education and outreach programs in North America, reaching over 70,000 schoolchildren and 20,000 adults in San Diego County and Baja California.

www.sdopera.com