

PRESS RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

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FORT WORTH OPERA TO CANCEL SCHEDULED PERFORMANCES OF RICHARD WAGNER'S DAS RHEINGOLD DURING THE 2018 FESTIVAL SEASON DUE TO HIGH PRODUCTION COSTS

Company to maintain a three-production Festival season in 2018, with performances of Donizetti's bel canto classic *Don Pasquale*, the surrealistic tango opera, *María de Buenos Aires*, a trio of chamber operas entitled *Brief Encounters*, and the sixth year of new works showcase *Frontiers*.

FORT WORTH, TX – Fort Worth Opera (FWOpera) announced today that the organization is cancelling all planned performances of *Das Rheingold* scheduled for the 2018 Festival season due to high production costs.

Opera and the arts are an integral part of Fort Worth's cultural identity, and as the company embarks upon its 72nd season, it is crucial that it operate in a responsible manner out of respect for its devoted patrons and supporters. Fort Worth Opera has looked at every possible option to present Richard Wagner's epic fantasy next spring, but in order to preserve the company's financial integrity and continue to grow, it is unable to take on a production of this size at this time.

"The decision to remove *Das Rheingold* from the 2018 Festival was difficult, but the Board of Trustees, Maestro Illick and I have listened to our donors and community partners regarding fiscal accountability and prudence," said FWOpera's General Director Tuomas Hiltunen. "While it is unfortunate that we had to cancel this fine production next season, we want our patrons to know that going forward our efforts will be attuned to the community's needs as we rebuild the company into a vital cultural force that is sustainable here in North Texas."

Fort Worth Opera's previously scheduled three-opera season will remain next spring with the addition of *Brief Encounters*. This trio of fifteen-minute operas about life, love, and marriage is written by Mark Adamo (*Avow*), Jake Heggie (*Again*), and Joe Illick (*Feel The Tango*). In addition to the recent appointment of Tuomas Hiltunen as General Director, Joe Illick as the company's Artistic Director, and the newly formed National Artistic Council, the organization is shifting its focus towards expanding educational outreach, fostering collaborative partnerships, strengthening its diverse programming in the years ahead, and bringing opera to more of Tarrant County and areas outside of downtown Fort Worth.

Artistic Director Joe Illick is optimistic about Fort Worth Opera's decision: "Due to the costly production value of *Das Rheingold*, the opera is being removed from the 2018 schedule to ensure that we are in a strong financial position. Meanwhile, we will offer our Festival audiences a sensual and passionate production of *María de Buenos Aires*, and Donizetti's hilarious bel canto gem *Don Pasquale*, both with show-stopping casts. Additionally, we are thrilled to continue showcasing new operas with two nights of *Frontiers* and the Texas premiere of *Brief Encounters* - a whole new genre of short and lively operas, and a wonderful theatrical experience."

ABOUT FORT WORTH OPERA: Founded in 1946, Fort Worth Opera is the oldest continually performing opera company in Texas, and one of the 14 oldest opera companies in the United States. The organization has received national attention from critics and audiences alike for its artistic excellence.

FWOpera has taken a leadership role in engaging audiences beyond the operatic stage, while producing cutting-edge, contemporary operas. Beginning in 2017, FWOpera launched the second phase of its landmark, 10-year *Opera of the Americas* initiative with *Noches de Ópera* (Nights of Opera), a groundbreaking campaign which introduces powerful operas, each reflecting the diverse cultures of new American audiences.

Fort Worth Opera is sponsored in part by awards from **The Arts Council of Fort Worth & Tarrant County, The City of Fort Worth**, and the **Texas Commission on the Arts**. Additional Fort Worth Opera sponsors include: the **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**; the **Amon G. Carter Foundation**; **American Airlines**; **Art & Seek**; **Crystelle Waggoner Charitable Trust**, **Bank of America, Trustee**; **The Pangburn Foundation, J.P. Morgan Chase, Trustee**; the **Sid W. Richardson Foundation**; **Star-Telegram**; and **WFAA Channel 8**.