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Opera Singer Hits High Notes — On Stage & Off

Omaha, NE — In “The Marriage of Figaro,” an Opera Omaha production filled with scandal and gossip, Monica Yunus plays a woman scorned, the clever and playful Countess Almavida. When she discovers that her husband, the Count, has eyes on Figaro’s fiancé, she becomes distraught.

Off stage, Yunus plays a woman equally distraught — at the thought of underprivileged children having little access to the professional arts.

Yunus is one of the founders and co-directors of “Sing for Hope,” a nonprofit organization that maintains a roster of 600 artists, including Opera singers, Broadway actors and other professionals who donate their time in one of three volunteer services programs. The programs include everything from benefit concerts to hospital performances to children’s performing arts classes.

“These are kids who would have no other opportunity to go see a Broadway show, because they can’t afford a \$60 ticket. So we bring it to them,” Yunus said.

Yunus was recently honored for her work with Sing for Hope at the 21st Century Leaders awards ceremony in Doha, Qatar. She is the daughter of Muhammad Yunus, recipient of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for establishing the Grameen Bank, a community development bank that makes small loans to the poor.

When Marriage of Figaro ends, Yunus will return to the Metropolitan Opera as Novice in Suor Angelica and Papagena in Die Zauberflöte, and join the Montana Lyric Opera as Gilda in Rigoletto. Her recent engagements include Poussette in Manon, Zerlina in Don Giovanni, Papagena in Die Zauberflöte, and Yvette in La Rondine, all at the Metropolitan Opera; Norina in Don Pasquale with Syracuse Opera; Zémire in Zémire et Azor with Arizona Opera; Lucia in the North American Premiere of Zandonai's La Farsa Amorosa with Teatro Grattacielo at Alice Tully Hall in New York; and Argentine in the American Premiere of Gluck's L'île de Merlin at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A. Performances on the concert stage have taken her from the Tilles Center in New York, to the University of Francisco Marroquin in Guatemala City, to The Al Bustan International Festival of Music and Arts in Beirut, Lebanon, to The Jordan Festival — where she performed with Placido Domingo — to countless recitals throughout the U.S. and abroad.

Other Marriage of Figaro cast members include:

Shannon Brogan as Marcellina.

Ms. Brogan is pleased to return to the stage after taking a brief respite for the birth of her two daughters. Brogan started her performance career early as a pianist, violinist and actor transitioning to classical vocal music at Northwestern University where she gained a particular love for recital and concert work. Brogan has had the opportunity to sing a variety of operatic roles, recitals and concert engagements in the US and Europe. When not making music, she spends her time sculpting, writing and hamming around with her family. She is thrilled to be making her debut as Marcellina at Omaha Opera.

Mark Calvert as Basilio I Curzio.

American tenor Mark Calvert has performed to critical acclaim with numerous European opera companies, including productions with the Stadttheater Gießen, the Schloßfestspiele Heidelberg, the Theater der Stadt Heidelberg, and the Kammeroper Konstanz. Between 2006 and 2009, he was an ensemble member of the Landestheater Linz (Austria), where his repertoire ranged from baroque to contemporary operas. He made his Italian debut with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi in Kurt Weill's The Seven Deadly Sins, and more recently, he sang Vašek in The Bartered Bride with the Aargauer Symphonie Orchester in Switzerland. A native of Wichita, Kansas, Calvert earned his degrees from Yale University School of Music and Lawrence University in Wisconsin. He received his early training with The Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Seattle Opera, Aspen Music Festival, and Pittsburgh Opera, where he was awarded the 2000 Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Shoshana Foundation.

Maureen Francis as Susanna, Figaro's fiancé.

Francis is fondly remembered for her Mabel in The Pirates of Penzance. Following Omaha, Francis travels to Italy where she takes on the role of Morgana in Handel's Alcina followed by operetta concerts in Asheville, NC and concerts throughout New

Jersey and Pennsylvania. As a frequent guest of Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, she recently added the role of Musetta in *La Bohème*. Other roles include Oscar in *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Bergen Opera in Bergen, Norway, the title role in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, Julie Jordan in *Carousel*, and Gretel in *Hänsel and Gretel*. She has debuted with Los Angeles Opera in the world premiere of Elliot Goldenthal's opera *Grendel* singing the role of Dargonette directed by the world-renowned Julie Taymor. Her signature role, Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, became the vehicle for her European debut at the Festival Lecco, Italy.

Jason Hardy as Figaro.

In the 2009-2010 season, Jason Hardy returns to New York City Opera as Leporello in their new production of *Don Giovanni*, to Atlanta Opera as the Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*, to Opera Birmingham as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* and as the King in *Aida*, and makes his debut with Opera Omaha and Madison Opera as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Next season he returns to the Atlanta Opera as Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*. In concert he will be seen with both the Richmond Symphony and Kansas City Symphony for Handel's *Messiah*.

Maria Lindsey as Barbarina.

Maria Lindsey, soprano from Fort Collins, Colorado, received her BMA degree in Voice from Brigham Young University-Idaho and is currently working on her MM degree in Voice at the University of Colorado. For the BYU-Idaho opera, she sang Pamina in *The Magic Flute* and Yum Yum in *The Mikado*. She has participated in scenes from *Roméo et Juliette*, *Rigoletto*, and *Die Fledermaus*. Most recently she was Adina in the Loveland Opera Theatre's *The Elixir of Love*, and Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring* with CU Opera. This summer Maria was an apprentice with the prestigious Santa Fe Opera where she covered Coryphée in their production of *Alceste*, as well as sang Juliette from *Roméo et Juliette* in the Santa Fe Opera's Apprentice Opera Scenes.

Daniela Mack as Cherubino.

In the 2009-2010 season, mezzo-soprano Daniela Mack, a native of Buenos Aires, will return to the San Francisco Opera for her second and final year in the Adler Fellowship Program, where she will participate in *Suor Angelica* and sing the role of Siebel in *Faust*. Previous performances in San Francisco include *Idamante in Idomeneo*, and *Lucienne in Die Tote Stadt*, which was her house debut. Additional engagements for the 2009-2010 season include a debut with the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, as well as with Opera Omaha. In concert, she will make her Canadian debut with the Edmonton Symphony in performances of *Messiah*. Recent notable engagements include her debuts with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Tamiri in *Il Re Pastore*, and with Opera Cleveland as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, both in 2009, as well as a recital sponsored by the Shoshana Foundation, and concerts with the EOS ensemble. In 2007, as a member of the Merola Opera Program, Ms. Mack performed the title role of Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

Kelly Markgraf as Count Almaviva.

Praised by the New York Times for his "charismatic" and "heart-stirring" singing, Baritone Kelly Markgraf makes his Opera Omaha debut with this season's *Nozze di Figaro*. This past Fall brought his debut with New York City Opera as Masetto in their new production of *Don Giovanni*. Recent successes include Mamoud in a staged concert version of John Adams' *The Death of Klinghoffer*, conducted by the composer, and Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff* (Juilliard Opera Center), as well as his Carnegie Hall debut in the West

Side Story portion of the all-Bernstein program that opened the 2008-09 season and was nationally televised, under Michael Tilson Thomas. Also in the 2008-09 season, Mr. Markgraf debuted with Pittsburgh Opera as Ragged Man in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Grapes of Wrath* (a role he created in the World Premiere at Minnesota Opera in 2007), and sang the role of the Bosun in Paul Curran's production of *Billy Budd* at Santa Fe Opera, under the baton of Edo de Waart. In March 2010 he returns to Pittsburgh Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*, and will return to Opera Omaha in 2011 for the title role in *Don Giovanni*.

Kevin Short as Bartolo.

Versatile bass-baritone Kevin Short is thrilling audiences around the globe in a vast amount of repertoire ranging from Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and Monteverdi's *Coronation of Poppea* to Verdi's *Attila*, *Amonasro* in *Aida*, and *Escamillo* in *Carmen*. In North America Kevin has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera, Canadian Opera, Vancouver Opera, and Edmonton Opera. His European credits include performances with Paris' Opera Comique, Oper de Stadt Koeln, Staatstheater Stuttgart, Teatro di San Carlo, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, and important festivals in Aix-en-Provence, Bregenz, Austria, Matsumoto, Japan (Saito Kinen) and Valencia, Granada, and Santiago di Compostela, Spain. Kevin also enjoys an active concert schedule and has sung with the Boston Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Czech Philharmonic, Holland Radio Philharmonisch Orkest, Swiss and Italian RAI Orchestra, Radio France Orchestra, New Japan Philharmonic, and Hiroshima Symphony. Kevin received his training at Morgan State University, the Curtis Institute of Music, and the Juilliard School of Music.

Stephen Hargreaves — Conductor.

Stephen Hargreaves is fortunate enough to divide his professional work between conducting and solo performance. He possesses a particular love for the old and the new specializing in baroque and contemporary music. Hargreaves believes the vitality of these genres allows for a particular spontaneity and personal imprint from the musician. As a pianist, Stephen recently performed Rachmaninoff's 3rd piano concerto with the Marion Philharmonic, as well as the world premiere of the Parmentier 3rd Piano Concerto with the Green Bay Symphony. He has also performed at the Maverick Concerts in upstate New York and various other venues including the Macau International Music Festival, Wigmore Hall, and the Bonn Beethoven Festival. As a harpsichordist, Stephen performed Rameau's *Platée* and Handel's *Radamisto* with Santa Fe Opera and was heard at the Inaugural Gala of the Harris Theater in Chicago which was subsequently broadcast on WFMT. As a conductor, Hargreaves has worked in both Assistant and Principal Conducting positions with Chicago Opera Theater, Festival Lyrique de Belle-île-en-mer, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Santa Fe, Des Moines Metro, Union Avenue, Pamiro and Washington National Operas and is pleased to be making his debut with Opera Omaha. In May, Hargreaves will be conducting the Chicago premiere of Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* with Fredericka von Stade for whom the role was written.

Garnet Bruce — Stage Director.

Garnett Bruce will direct *Pagliacci* and *The Marriage of Figaro* for Opera Omaha where he serves as Artistic Adviser and Principal Stage Director. Bruce returns to the Lyric Opera of Chicago to direct *Tosca* for the opening of their 2009-10 season. Other productions will include *Madama Butterfly* for Dallas Opera, *Carmen* for Utah Symphony

& Opera, *La Bohème* for Austin Lyric Opera and *Rigoletto* for Lyric Opera of Kansas City. A snapshot of highlights from his past seasons include *La Traviata* and collaborating with Peter Sellars for *Doctor Atomic* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Tosca* (Opera Pacific, Houston, Denver, Cleveland); *Turandot* (San Francisco, Dallas, Cleveland, Louisville); his own production of *La Cenerentola* (Kansas City, Austin and Orlando); *Aida*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Vanessa* for San Diego Opera; new productions of *La Clemenza di Tito* and *La Cenerentola* for Wolf Trap Opera; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Madama Butterfly* for Utah Symphony and Opera; and Francesca Zambello's productions of *Madama Butterfly* (Houston, Opera Pacific, Pittsburgh) and *Jenufa* (Dallas, San Francisco) and his European debut staging the David Hockney production of *Turandot* for Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Italy.

Opera Omaha presents *The Marriage of Figaro* Friday, Feb. 26 and Sunday, Feb. 28 at the Orpheum Theater. John Wehrle, General Director, Opera Omaha, calls *The Marriage of Figaro* one of Mozart's most successful works, with popular and recognizable music. "It is a cornerstone of the standard repertoire and one of the world's great masterpieces in any form," he said, "but it is also a comedy about the silly things love makes us do. And it's laugh-out-loud funny."

Performances are Friday, Feb. 26th at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Feb. 28th at 2 p.m. at the Orpheum Theater. Tickets are on sale now, just in time for Valentine's Day. Single ticket prices start at just \$19 and can be purchased through ticketomaha.com, by calling 345-0606 or at the Ticket Omaha box office at 13th and Douglas streets.

For more information on the performance, visit operaomaha.org.