



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **THE MERRY WIDOW AND MIKADO WALTZ THROUGH AMORE OPERA IN MARCH**

*New York, N.Y.* — The Amore Opera Company will continue its season on March 12, 2010 with a fully staged production of Lehar's romantic operetta, "The Merry Widow." Amore Opera will also be delivering performances for kids and the whole family, entitled "Opera-in-Brief" of Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera, "The Mikado." All performances are taking place at the Connelly Theater (220 East 4th Street) from March 12 through March 28 with performances being presented on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Maestro Raymond Calderon is the Music Director. Tickets for the Operas are \$35.00 for general admission and \$30.00 for Students and Seniors. Tickets for the Opera-in-Briefs are \$15.00. Tickets are accessible by visiting the Amore Opera website at [www.amoreopera.org/tickets](http://www.amoreopera.org/tickets) or by calling their toll-free hotline at 1-888-811-4111.

### **About Amore Opera**

New York Times critic, Steve Smith, stated, "Patrons of the Amato Opera, the scrappy, beloved company that mounted homegrown opera in New York for six decades before closing in June, surely feel right at home at the inaugural presentation by the Amore Opera, a new company established by Amato veterans."

When the closing of Amato Opera was announced, performers and a group of former Amato board members - all passionate opera lovers- were determined not to let Anthony Amato's dream die. They moved quickly to form a new opera company, Amore Opera. With Amato's blessing, Amore Opera was able to secure sets, costumes and props from the Amato Opera Theater. The Amore Board of Directors, whose members boast credentials from New York University, the New York Philharmonic, the Opera Orchestra of New York, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, developed its premiere season and established a performance venue, the Connelly Theater. Nathan Hull, a frequent Amato Opera performer, was elected to the helm of the fledgling company as it strives to develop and grow while maintaining the great principles established by Anthony Amato over 60 years ago.

### **The Merry Widow**

Premiered on December 30, 1905, Vienna

Libretto by Victor Leon and Leo Stein after Henri Meilhac's *L'attache d'ambassade*

This charming and very relevant love story still entertains and delights audiences a century after it debuted. The operetta opens at a soiree at the Parisian embassy of Pontevedro, a fictional Eastern European kingdom, hosted by Baron Mirko Zehta, the Pontevedrian Ambassador, for his high society friends. Everyone is anxious as they await the arrival of Hannah Glawari, the recent widow of the owner of the Bank of Pontevedro. Zeta's ambition is to prevent Hannah from marrying a foreigner, which would leave the Bank in financial ruin. He makes sure that Prince Danilo, the country's most eligible bachelor, is available to woo Hannah. What he doesn't know is that Hannah and Danilo are not exactly strangers. Years earlier, they had met and fallen in love when Hannah was a poor farm girl but his aristocratic Opera rejected her and they couldn't marry. The party moves to Maxim's, a cabaret bar in Paris, and Zeta continues to convince Danilo that it is his patriotic duty to marry the widow. Meanwhile, Hannah is courted by many suitors whom she knows really only want her money. As Hannah and Danilo dance and reminisce, their feelings for each other return. Hannah is stubborn and suspicious; she tests Danilo to determine his love is true. All ends well, and the reunited couple joyfully waltz their way to a happy ending.

## **The Mikado**

Premiered on March 15, 1885, London

Libretto by W.S. Gilbert

The opera opens in the town of Titipu where Nanki-Poo, the son of the Mikado, has escaped in order to avoid an arranged marriage to Katisha, whom he doesn't love. Unfortunately for the disguised Nanki-Poo, the girl he does love, Yum-Yum, is engaged to be married to her guardian, the tailor Ko-Ko. Yum-Yum finds Nanki-Poo with her sisters, Pitti-Sing and Peep-Bo. He reveals to them that he is the son of the Mikado, the ruler of Japan. Yum-Yum tells him she does not love her guardian but is forced to marry him. The fiancé, Ko-Ko, held the title of Lord High Executioner, a rank awarded to him by powerful people who wanted to slow down the rash of executions. It seems that Ko-Ko had been sentenced to death himself for the crime of flirting, but, as Lord High Executioner, he would have had to execute himself before he could execute anybody else! The Mikado notices the lack of executions and declares that, if no executions take place within a month, he would take matters into his own hands. Ko-Ko vows to find a substitute for him and encounters Nanki-Poo who is determined to take his own life rather than live without Yum-Yum. The two men strike a bargain: Ko-Ko agrees to let Nanki-Poo marry Yum-Yum for one month and in return Nanki-Poo agrees to have himself beheaded at the end of the month so Ko-Ko can marry his widow. The wedding plans are disrupted when Ko-Ko discovers that, under Mikado's law, when a married man is beheaded, his wife must be buried alive. As the Mikado approaches, Ko-Ko realizes that he cannot face having to bury Yum-Yum alive. Instead, he sends Yum-Yum to marry Nanki-Poo. The Mikado is seeking his son, the son that Ko-Ko and his accomplices just testified to beheading. They confess the truth and vow to find Nanki-Poo alive and well. Nanki-Poo returns with his new bride and the Mikado converts Ko-Ko's death sentence to one of life with Katisha.

## **Performances of *The Merry Widow***

March 12, 7:30 p.m.

March 13, 7:30 p.m.

March 14, 2:30 p.m.

March 18, 7:30 p.m.

March 19, 7:30 p.m.

March 20, 7:30 p.m.

March 21, 2:30 p.m.

March 24, 7:30 p.m.

March 25, 7:30 p.m.

March 26, 7:30 p.m.

March 27, 7:30 p.m.

March 28, 2:30 p.m.

## **Performances of *The Mikado***

March 20, 11:00 a.m. (Opera-in-Brief version)

March 20, 3:00 p.m. (Opera-in-Brief version)

March 27, 11:00 a.m. (Opera-in-Brief version)

## **Admission**

Single tickets for the Operas are \$35.00 for general admission and \$30.00 for Students and Seniors. Tickets for the Opera-in-Briefs are \$15.00. Tickets can be purchased directly on the Amore Opera Website or by downloading an order form at their website, <http://www.amoreopera.org>. Tickets are also available on the OvationTix website, <https://www.ovationtix.com> or by calling their toll-free hotline at 1-888-811-4111.

The Connelly Theater is located on the South Side of East 4th Street between Avenues A & B. The closest subway is the F train at 2nd Avenue-Houston Street. Exit 1st Avenue. Walk north on 1st Avenue to East 4th Street, then east to the theatre. You can also take the M9 bus from East 14th Street and 3rd Avenue to Avenue B and East 4th Street Stop.

## **Biographies**

**RAY CALDERON, CONDUCTOR** – Ray Calderon has made appearances with Connecticut Opera, Connecticut Concert Opera, Great New Britain Opera, Berkshire Opera, Bardavon Opera, Jacksonville Lyric Opera, Opera Ischia, Berkshire Chorale Festival, Bechstein Hall, Belleayre Music Festival and at Lincoln Center. Noted as a “wonderful pianist, overall incredible musician and a distinguished real leader”, he has worked with Dave Brubeck, Kent Tritle, Willie Anthony Waters, Mignon Dunn, Martina Arroyo, Jerry Steichen, Joan Dorneman, Bruno Rigacci, Cynthia Lawrence, Elena Doria, Celia Cruz, Johnny Pacheco and Ray Barretto. Mr. Calderon holds a B.M. in Vocal Performance and a B.M. in Music Education from the Hartt School of Music as well as a M.M. from Manhattan School of Music. He currently serves as General and Co- Artistic Director of Grandview Opera, General and Artistic Director of the Light Opera Company of Salisbury and was appointed Associate Conductor to Martina Arroyo’s, “Prelude to Performance” in 2009. [www.raycalderon.net](http://www.raycalderon.net)

**MARK BENTLEY, STAGE DIRECTOR, THE MIKADO** – Mark Bentley has been singing and performing since childhood and is a recovering choirboy, one day at a time. From September 2000 thru June 2009 Mark performed many roles at The Amato Opera, his favorites include Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, Goro in *Madama Butterfly*, Incredible in *Andrea Chenier*, Spalanzani, Franz/Cochenille/Pittichinaccio, & Nathanael in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*, El Remendado in *Carmen*, Kaspar in *Amahl & The Night Visitors*, and Sir Joseph Porter, KCB in *HMS Pinafore*. Mark also served as assistant director and stage manager for Tony Amato on a number of occasions. Prior to his work for Tony, Mark performed solo work with the Metro-Lyric Opera and the Monmouth Civic Chorus, both in New Jersey, as well as for The New York City Gay Men’s Chorus, for which he did the tenor solo work in the New York premiere of Daniel Pinkham’s *Fanfares* at Carnegie Hall. Mark is an enthusiastic supporter of The Amore Opera and is currently serving on its Board of Directors.

**RICHARD CERULLO, DESIGNER** – Richard Cerullo was the scenic designer for the Amato Opera for over 38 years and it is his collective work of over thirty productions, which has been presented to the Amore Opera by the Amato Opera. For this current production, Richard has redesigned his original conception. Richard got his early training at the Manhattan School of Art and Design, but first became interested in designing for the stage at the Jean Cocteau Repertory Company on the Bowery. His designs for the Amato Opera were regularly greeted with high praise by the press. “Richard Cerullo’s scenic designs delightfully overflow the bounds of the tiny stage,” said the New York Times about his “Die Fledermaus” set. Richard has also designed for Belle Canto Opera, the Theater for the New City, and Theater for American Actors, and Studio Danté.

**NATHAN HULL, STAGE DIRECTOR, MERRY WIDOW** – Nathan Hull, the President of the Amore Opera, has directed shows for many New York companies including the Amato Opera, Village Light Opera, Actors Opera and others. Favorite opera productions include “Carmen” and “The Barber of Seville.” Nathan also has extensive directing credits in operetta including “Ruddigore” and “Princess Ida” for Village Light Opera, “The Merry Widow” for College Light Opera and “The Mikado” for various companies in New York, Florida and Indiana. His production of “A Sullivan Trilogy” was recently presented at the International G&S Festival in Buxton, England. In addition, Nathan is a baritone who has sung such roles as Dr. Bartolo in “The Barber of Seville” with the Bronx Opera, Barnaby in “Babes in Toyland” at Avery Fisher Hall with the Little Orchestra Society, and Marcello, both Figaros, Escamillo, Papageno and many others with the Amato Opera.

**JANET JOHNSON, CO-PRODUCER** – Janet Johnson played clarinet with the Amato Opera Company for twenty years. Devastated by Amato’s closing Janet quickly became involved with forming Amore. She developed a passion for opera as a clarinet student in Kansas City and later as a graduate student at Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with the principal clarinetist of the Metropolitan Opera. In Kansas City Janet performed with the Kansas City Lyric Opera and did a concert version of Elektra with the Kansas City Philharmonic. In New York she played with the Opera Orchestra of New York, when it was first formed, and has performed with the Ruffino, Long Island, Brooklyn Lyric, Stamford Lyric, Adelphi University, Young Artists, and various other opera companies. Elected to the Board of Directors of Amore, Janet headed the committee that found the wonderful Connelly Theatre. Janet has also been involved in numerous orchestral and chamber music performances here and in Europe.

**MARLENE WILLIAMS, CO-PRODUCER/BOX OFFICER MANAGER** – Marlene Williams is an accomplished actress and has been very active in the New York theatre scene, most recently she was seen at Symphony Space’s Thalia Theatre in Lisa Morgan’s “Black Mother Funny”. She was also seen recently in commercials for the New York Times and Johnson & Johnson and in print for Merck pharmaceuticals. Marlene is very excited to be producing the Merry Widow after successfully managing the box office for Amore’s La Boheme. She wishes the best of luck to all the spring performers.