



CAPE TOWN
OPERA



21 September 2016

***Magic flute* production postponed as a result of university fees protests**

A five-day opera production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, involving music students from the University of Cape Town's Opera School, the South African College of Music (SACM) and Cape Town Opera (CTO) singers, has been postponed as a result of the temporary suspension of classes and tests at UCT.

This year, an unprecedented movement by university students across South Africa, including students in the SACM, has resulted in the need to postpone production of *The Magic Flute*, which was scheduled to open on 27 September 2016. We acknowledge that the production has been eagerly awaited by audience members and students alike. However, we also acknowledge the importance of the issues that are being addressed by students, including some who are involved in *The Magic Flute* production.

Due to classes, lectures and tutorials being suspended at UCT following student protests on campus, musicians and singers involved in the production have already missed a few important rehearsals.

CTO enjoys a long-standing partnership with UCT and the South African College of Music (SACM). For the past 17 years, CTO has mounted two productions annually with the UCT Opera School and the UCT Symphony Orchestra. CTO provides professional staging for these productions – the director, sets, costumes, props and stage management - while the majority of the singers and orchestral players are UCT students performing in the opera as part of their academic work.

This partnership affords young, talented singers invaluable experience performing in professional productions with a full orchestra, preparing them for a career on the stage. Recently, in a Carte Blanche interview, tenor Sunnyboy Dladla identified playing the role of Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, a UCT/CTO collaboration, as giving him a huge advantage when starting his international career.

Professor Rebekka Sandmeier, Director of UCT's College of Music, said: "We have already lost five rehearsals since Friday. We could not rehearse last night (Tuesday, 20 September 2016) so we won't be able to take part in the production". She said the rehearsals for the shows are like lectures to the students while the shows themselves act as examinations.

Associate Professor Farida Bacharova, Head of Orchestral Studies at the college, said the UCT Symphony Orchestra has a history of collaboration with the CTO and UCT opera productions, and the quality of those productions has always been professional.

"The collaboration is also extremely valuable to us as it gives an opportunity to the orchestra students to gain experience in the opera genre. The Orchestra was looking forward to this year's production of *The Magic Flute*, and the members had prepared their parts. We have already done a lot of rescheduling in order to accommodate the protests, but the protests have disrupted the rehearsal and preparation of the opera to such an extent that we are currently in a position where, if we are not allowed to rehearse further, the production will not be adequately prepared. We would like to proceed with this project, however, we feel that this decision lies beyond our control," says Bacharova.

George Stevens, a lecturer at the college, said: "For the singers, it means great disappointment after having spent hours of musical preparation and language coaching that needs to be memorised before the first production rehearsal."

CTO Managing Director Michael Williams says: "This is an unprecedented situation for CTO which, in 17 years of staging operas locally and internationally, has never had to postpone a production. CTO assures all our valued ticket holders that the company exhausted all avenues in an effort to keep the show on stage next week. Cape Town Opera offers sincere apologies to patrons who were looking forward to attending Matthew Wild's magical new production of the work."

Wild, who is also Artistic Director of CTO, added: "We are very disappointed that we are unable to share our work with audiences next week. My creative team has been crafting the production for over a year, and the students have been doing beautiful work in rehearsals. It's also been a great pleasure to create the staging with artists including conductor Jeremy Silver and choreographer Joshua Beamish. Our focus now is on securing dates to premiere the production in the first half of 2017, and I hope patrons will find that it was worth the long wait."

CTO will publicise dates for the postponed run as soon as they are finalised. Ticket holders can contact Computicket for a full refund, or call CTO for more information. At Cape Town Opera, they can speak to John on (021) 410 9919, Masixole on (021) 410 9960 or Alicia on (021) 410 9807.

ENDS

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