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# PENSACOLA OPERA

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## **For Immediate Release**

### **Pensacola Opera opens 36<sup>th</sup> Season with Gounod's *Romeo & Juliet* Shakespeare's tragic love story debuts at Pensacola Saenger Theatre**

On January 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, the Pensacola Saenger Theatre will come alive with the sights and sounds of fair Verona, where we lay our scene. One of the most requested titles from Pensacola Opera audiences, *Romeo & Juliet* was selected to open what Pensacola Opera is calling "a season of firsts." This production of *Romeo & Juliet* is the first presentation of this world-wide favorite in the company's 36-year history. Pensacola Opera's second production of the season, *Florencia in the Amazon*, will also make its Saenger stage debut in March.

Based on the writings of William Shakespeare, *Romeo & Juliet* has seen myriad adaptations, with Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* as the most famous operatic rendition. The story of the young star-crossed lovers from feuding families also provided the inspiration for the Tony award-winning Broadway musical *West Side Story*. Even if you think you know the story, you haven't heard *Romeo & Juliet* like this, with the true stars of the opera: Gounod's beautiful sweeping melodies and the talented voices of the production's soloists.

Sung in the original French with projected English translations, performances of *Romeo & Juliet* will be presented in the historic Saenger Theatre on Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 7:30PM and Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup> at 2:00PM. Ticket prices range from \$30.00-\$120.00, and may be purchased from the Opera Center at 850.433.6737 or online at [www.pensacolaopera.com](http://www.pensacolaopera.com).

Celebrating his 18<sup>th</sup> season as Music Director and Principal Conductor, Jerome Shannon conducts *Romeo & Juliet*, leading an all-star cast with international and national performing credits. North Carolina native soprano Melinda Whittington and lowan tenor Mackenzie Whitney will sing the title roles of the young star-crossed lovers. While Melinda last portrayed the role of Juliet in Opera Birmingham's 2018 season, Mackenzie is making his debut in the role of Romeo. The two leads are joined in this production by tenor Alex DeSocio, bass Matthew Fleisher, bass-baritone Zachary Owen, and mezzo soprano Camille Sherman (a former Pensacola Opera Artist in Residence).

Stage Director Scott Skiba makes his Pensacola Opera debut, leading a production which features scenery by Virginia Opera's Peter Dean Beck, lighting design by Charles Houghton, and newly created costumes designed especially for this production by Glenn Avery Breed. Members of the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra, Ballet Pensacola, Pensacola Children's Chorus, and Pensacola Opera Chorus are also featured in the production.

The mission of Pensacola Opera is to enrich the culture of Northwest Florida by producing professional opera performances, educational programs, and other opera-related community

events for people of all ages, interests, and backgrounds. Pensacola Opera is a member of OPERA America.

### **LOVE OPERA PATRON LOUNGE**

Friday, January 25 & Sunday, January 27 | Open pre-show and during intermission

**At Saenger Theatre Mezzanine Lobby | Free event for ticketholders**

Visit us on the Mezzanine before the show and during intermission for drinks, additional show information, and photo opportunities. This experience is generously sponsored by idGroup.

### **OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION**

Friday, January 25 | Immediately following the production

**At Saenger Theatre | Tickets are \$50; \$40 for Subscribers**

Celebrate opening night with the stars! Immediately following the production, you can enjoy a catered reception and have the chance to meet the cast, directors, and conductor involved with the opera.

**Reservations must be made in advance by calling 850.433.6737.**

### **OPENING NIGHT PRIX FIXE DINNER**

Friday, January 25 | 5:00 PM

**At V. Paul's Italian Ristorante | \$35 plus tax and tip per person**

Make your dinner reservation for Opening Night at V. Paul's Italian Ristorante. This prix fixe meal will include short presentation from Maestro Jerome Shannon about the upcoming performance. Price is \$35 plus tax and tip, excluding alcohol. Guests can choose between Caesar or house salad; entrees of seafood risotto, chicken piccata, lasagne bolognese, or cast iron hanger steak; and salted caramel cheesecake or tiramisu.

**Reservations must be made in advance by calling 850.466.5855 by mentioning "Opera Dinner".**

### **PRE-SHOW TALKS WITH CODY MARTIN**

Friday, January 25 | 6:30 PM and Sunday, January 27 | 1:00 PM

**At Saenger Theatre | FREE to ticket holders**

Taking place in the Saenger Theatre **one hour** before show time for all mainstage performances, our pre-show discussions will give you an in-depth, behind the scenes look into the production you are about to experience.

### **DIRECTOR'S CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH**

Sunday, January 27 | 11:45 AM

**At Jackson's Steakhouse | Tickets are \$50 – Only a few seats remaining!**

Over a gourmet brunch just steps away from the theatre, enjoy a lively and entertaining presentation about the upcoming opera given by Pensacola Opera's Artistic Director, Jerome Shannon.

**Reservations must be made in advance by calling 850.433.6737.**

*Romeo & Juliet* is sponsored in part by Baptist Health Care, Critical Difference Inc., Emerald Coast Hospice, NurseSpring, Polonza Bistro, Justine Simoni, idGroup, Riesberg Institute, Morgan Stanley, Emerald Coast Realty, and Cardon Estate Sales.