

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Modesto, California – January 12, 2010

Townsend Opera presents Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, in collaboration with the CSU Stanislaus Department of Music, January 24-31, at the Gallo Center for the Arts

Townsend Opera presents Franz Lehar's legendary comedic operetta *The Merry Widow*, opening Sunday, January 24 (2:00 pm) with additional performances Friday, January 29 (7:30 pm) and Sunday, January 31 (2:00 pm) at the Gallo Center for the Arts. The production will be sung in English with English supertitles. This production features the return of tenor Vincent Chambers, last seen in the 2009 Opera Gala and as Canio in the November 2008 production of *Pagliacci*, as Count Danilo, as well as baritone Eric Graber, last seen as Tonio in the November 2008 production of *Pagliacci*, as Baron Zeta. Principal Conductor Ryan Murray returns to conduct these performances, and Dr. Joseph Wiggett, director of the recent production of *The Barber of Seville* and newly appointed Artistic Director of Townsend Opera, directs this new production.

This production of *The Merry Widow* is presented in collaboration with the Department of Music at CSU Stanislaus. This is the second collaboration between Townsend Opera and CSU Stanislaus, the first being the January 2009 production of *The Magic Flute*, which was recently selected the #2 staged production in the region by the arts critic of the Modesto Bee. In this collaborative production, vocal performance majors will be featured in secondary and ensemble roles. In addition, three students are covering principal roles, and will perform the role twice in special all-student cast performances. This collaboration offers students a rare opportunity to gain professional experience while still undergraduates, learning vital lessons about the profession they are preparing to enter.

There will be two additional performances of *The Merry Widow*, featuring an all-student cast, on Thursday, January 28 (7:30 pm) and Saturday, January 30 (7:30 pm). These performances are open to the public, and tickets are \$10 general admission. Tickets for the all-student performances can be purchased at the Gallo Center Box Office and online at www.galloarts.org.

By far the composer's most famous work, Franz Lehar's romantic comedy *The Merry Widow* tells the story of a recent widow whose wealth keeps her small country from bankruptcy and the grand scheme that her countrymen devise to marry her off to a fellow countryman to keep her wealth in the country. Along the way, there are multiple love stories, cheating wives, and hilarious twists and turns that are guaranteed to keep you laughing throughout the show.

Designed by Corey Strauss, with costumes from West Bay Opera, this production is set in a fictional country in eastern Europe.

Tickets and Information

Tickets for *The Merry Widow* range from \$10 to \$53 each, and may be purchased online at www.galloarts.org or by calling the Gallo Center Box Office at 209.338.2100. The Gallo Center is located at 1000 I Street, Modesto, CA 95354.

Production Information

The Merry Widow

Die Lustige Witwe

Libretto by Viktor Leon and Leo Stein, based on a play by Henri Meilhac

New dialogue by Dr. Joseph Wiggett

First performance: Theater an der Wien, Vienna on December 30, 1905

First Townsend Opera performance:

Most recent Townsend Opera performance:

Approximate running time: 2 hours 30 minutes, with two intermissions

Sung in English with English supertitles

Cast:

Hanna Glawari

Carrie Hennessey

Courtney Nance (1/28, 1/30)

Count Danilo

Vincent Chambers

Max Hosmer (1/28, 1/30)

Baron Zeta

Eric Graber

Camille

Owen McIntosh*

Valencienne

Ani Maldjian*

Vanessa Rosas (1/28, 1/30)

Njegus

Donn Bradley

Production Team:

Conductor

Ryan Murray

Director

Dr. Joseph Wiggett

Production Designer

Corey Strauss

Costumes

Megs Lydon*

Lighting Designer

Erik Vose

* Company debut

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