



Falstaff Takes Center Stage At Union Avenue Opera

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ST. LOUIS - Critics are hailing Union Avenue Opera's Twenty-Eighth Festival Season opener *Eugene Onegin* as "super," "excellent," and "an intense production filled with incredible performances." Amidst the excitement the cast of UAO's production of *Falstaff* have begun staging Verdi's riotous Italian romp based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The production is helmed by director Jon Truitt and conductor Stephen Hargreaves who previously paired together for last summer's critically acclaimed *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Big Top.

"This is one of my all-time favorite operas because of the extraordinary quality of the music, the libretto, and the story," said Truitt. "We are seeing Verdi here at the height of his powers writing to an excellent 'better than the original Shakespeare' libretto by

Arrigo Boito – a great composer in his own right. There’s just so much to love in the orchestration, the creativity of the text setting, the way the music underscores the characters, and so much more. This show is a masterpiece like Michelangelo’s ‘David’ is, a truly spectacular piece of art.”

“*Falstaff* is a great introduction to opera because it’s a super funny show with beautiful music that’s really accessible. Spoiler alert: nobody dies, so a fun evening everyone will enjoy! Not to mention, this is one of the strongest casts for an opera that I’ve worked with in my career. It is truly a ‘dream team’ both in terms of the length of the friendships we’ve had as well as the incredible quality of their work,” Truitt continued.

Leading the talented cast as Sir John Falstaff is Robert Mellon who made his company debut last summer as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. St. Louis-based husband and wife duo Jacob Lassetter and Karen Kanakis portray Ford and his wife Alice while Brooklyn Snow (the Heroines, *Les contes d’Hoffmann*, and Cunegonde, *Candide*) is reunited with her *Candide* co-star, Jesse Darden (Candide) as the two young lovers, Nannetta and Fenton. Joining them are returning artists Janara Kellerman (Rosina, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*) as Dame Quickly, and Melody Wilson (Olga, *Eugene Onegin*) as Meg Page. A trio of St. Louis based artists round out the cast with Marc Schapman as Bardolfo, Mark Freiman as Pistola, and Anthony Heinemann as Dr. Caius.

Falstaff will be presented in its original Italian, with projected English supertitles and is accompanied by a full union orchestra, all members of the American Federation of Musicians.

Single tickets range from \$35 to \$55 and are available at unionavenueopera.org or by calling 314-361-2881. Discounts are available for Seniors (65+), Military/Educator, and Young Audiences (under 18). All performances start at 8:00PM and free parking is available in the lots behind the venue and overflow parking is available on the street.