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DICAPO OPERA THEATRE CELEBRATES 30th ANNIVERSARY

WITH FIVE PRODUCTIONS FOR THE 2011-12 SEASON

*New Productions of Puccini's "Tosca," Tchaikovsky's "Iolanta," Frank Loesser's "Most Happy Fella,"
Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Consul," & Verdi's "La Traviata"*

To celebrate the founding of Dicapo Opera Theatre in 1981, General Director **Michael Capasso** has programmed five main-stage opera productions for next season.

To open the season, Dicapo Opera Theatre will present a new production of Giacomo Puccini's "Tosca," to be directed by Mr. Capasso and conducted by Pacien Mazzagatti. (October 6, 8, 14, & 16). "Tosca" was the very first opera Mr. Capasso produced professionally—thirty years ago in October 1981—in New York City. Maestro Mazzagatti, Dicapo's Principal Conductor for several seasons, has now been appointed Music Director.

Launching a return to regular opera presentations, the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts has invited Dicapo Opera to bring this new production of "Tosca" to Long Island on October 22, 2011. Tilles, located at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University, will also present Dicapo's production of Verdi's "Traviata" later in the season, on May 5, 2012.

Not seen in New York since 1997, when Dicapo produced it last, the rarely performed "Iolanta" by Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky is the poignant story of a blind medieval princess who does not know she is blind. Mr. Capasso will direct and Semyon Vekshtein will conduct this new production. Performances will take place December 8, 10, 16, & 18, 2011.

Following the critical success of Gian-Carlo Menotti's "The Saint of Bleeker Street," praised by Steve Smith of *The New York Times*—"not only one of the most ambitious projects the company has undertaken, but also among its most accomplished," Dicapo will mount a production of the highly dramatic opera "The Consul," conducted by Maestro Mazzagatti, to be performed January 26, 28, February 3 & 5, 2012.

In keeping with the company's tradition of presenting the occasional musical theatre work which some have deemed opera, Dicapo will present the May-September romance "The Most Happy Fella," with book, music, and lyrics by Tony-Award winner Frank Loesser. Reviewing for the *New York Times*, the legendary theatre critic Brooks Atkinson wrote "Loesser has now come about as close to opera as the rules of Broadway permit." Performances will take place March 8, 9, 10, and 11, 2012.

The season will close with Verdi's beloved "La Traviata," conducted by Maestro Mazzagatti, with performances slated for April 12, 14, 20 & 22, 2012.

Dicapo Opera Theatre will continue its popular “Opera for Kids” series of Saturday morning, Sunday morning, and Sunday afternoon family presentations throughout the 2011-2012 season.

Dubbed “the closest thing New York has to a mini-Met” by Justin Davidson of *New York Magazine*, Dicapo Opera Theatre has built a singular niche for itself among the City’s cultural offerings. Writing in the March 1, 2011 edition of the *Financial Times*, veteran critic Martin Bernheimer declared:

The Dicapo Opera Theatre, brainchild of the dauntless Michael Capasso, occupies a beautifully appointed 200-seat hall in the basement of the Saint Jean Baptiste Church, on the corner of 76th Street and Lexington Avenue. The company currently musters a five-piece season devoted to old favourites as well as relative novelties, and it employs luxurious forces both on stage and in the pit. **Dicapo dares to think big in a small way.**

After the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera, **Dicapo Opera Theatre** is the only opera company in New York to present an entire season of opera productions, musical theatre, concerts, family fare, and other events, and it does so in a gem of a facility tucked away on the Upper East Side.

This season, Dicapo’s productions of *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, *God Bless Us Everyone*, and *The Seagull* were all highly praised by *The New York Times*.

In November 2010, Dicapo competed once again (for the third time) at the Arnel Opera Competition and Festival with Mezzo and Duna, bringing *The Seagull* to Hungary to the Szeged Theater. The competition was televised on Mezzo throughout Europe to millions of subscribers.

The high artistic level of Dicapo’s productions has given rise to a loyal following. Dicapo performs traditional repertoire, rarely-heard operas, and contemporary works each season. These have included the world premiere of Francesco Cilluffo’s *Il Caso Mortara*, the American premieres of Donizetti’s *Il Campanello* and Leoš Janáček’s early opera *Šárka*; the New York premieres of Oscar Straus’s *The Merry Niebelungs*, Wargo’s *Chekhov Trilogy*, Thomas Pasatieri’s *Hotel Casablanca*, Robert Ward’s *Claudia Legare*, and Lehár’s *The Merry Widow*, with a contemporary libretto by the late Wendy Wasserstein. In 2008, Dicapo presented Robert Ward’s *The Crucible*, directed by Róbert Alföldi of the National Theatre of Hungary; it was later taken to Hungary, where it won the Best Production award at the first annual Opera Competition and Festival in Szeged.

Although Dicapo’s early productions were presented in the raw space of St. Jean Baptiste Church basement on East 76th Street, this area was renovated in 1995 under the supervision of **General Director Michael Capasso**, and transformed into a jewel box of an opera house that bore no resemblance to the original space. The theatre features 204 burgundy velvet seats, luxurious carpeting, ebonized oak walls, brass railings, ample wing space, a stage with sprung wood floor, and 38-foot adjustable proscenium, private dressing rooms, box office, bar, commodious lobby areas, quiet air conditioning, computerized lighting, and a state-of-the-art supertitle system. The result has been a superbly elegant opera house rivaling many mightier organizations and offering a degree of intimacy not possible in larger venues.

In 1997-98 Dicapo Opera Theatre established its **Resident Artist Program** to assist aspiring singers to

bridge the gap between their music studies and their professional careers. These artists, who are in residence from September to June, perform all secondary roles, provide covers for leading roles, and make up the ensemble for the main stage productions. They also perform in outreach productions, participating in masterclasses and workshops organized by Dicapo. Resident artists have performed leading and supporting roles with the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, La Scala in Milan, Teatro La Fenice in Venice, the Los Angeles Opera, Washington Opera, and elsewhere. In addition Dicapo's ever-popular **Opera for Kids**, keyed to a young audience, remains a sell-out event, not least because of the participation of emerging singers from the Resident Artist Program.

Founded in 1982 by Dicapo's Co-Founder Diane Martindale, the Dicapo Children's Chorus offers children who love to sing the opportunity to perform in several Dicapo Opera Theatre productions with professional directors, singers, actors and musicians. Since its founding the chorus has performed at Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, The Little Orchestra Society, Merkin Hall, the Rheinman Theater at New York University, and at the Rathaus Palace in Vienna. The Chorus has also appeared on national television in the Juilliard Opera Center's production of *Hansel und Gretel* on "Live From Lincoln Center."

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