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#LyricNorma



PHOTO: Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera

**A timeless tale of passion, betrayal, and redemption –
and brilliant bel canto singing**

Norma

**opens Saturday, January 28, 7:30pm in a new-to-Chicago production
Seven performances through February 24
Starring Sondra Radvanovsky, Elizabeth DeShong,
Russell Thomas, and Andrea Silvestrelli**

CHICAGO (12/07/16) – Lyric Opera of Chicago presents Bellini's riveting bel canto masterpiece **Norma** in a new-to-Chicago production. Vocal pyrotechnics and sumptuous music brilliantly tell the tale of forbidden passion, betrayal, revenge, and, ultimately, redemption.

Norma opens on Saturday, January 28, with seven performances through February 24 at Lyric's Civic Opera House, 20 N. Wacker Drive, Chicago. Tickets are available now at lyricopera.org/Norma or at (312) 827-5600.

Norma (**Sondra Radvanovsky**), the Druids' high priestess, has broken her vows, having had two children in secret by her people's enemy, the Roman proconsul Pollione (**Russell Thomas**/Lyric debut). Now he rejects Norma in favor of another

priestess, young Adalgisa (**Elizabeth DeShong**). When Norma discovers her lover's betrayal, she is enraged. Pollione is eventually captured by the Druids and Norma is about to kill him herself, but she cannot. She admits her own guilt to her father, Oroveso (**Andrea Silvestrelli**) and his fellow priests. Will their lives or their love be saved?

Riccardo Frizza makes his Lyric debut conducting the production created by director **Kevin Newbury**, with set designs by **David Korins**, costume designs by **Jessica Jahn**, and lighting designs by **Duane Schuler**. **Michael Black** is chorus master.

Radvanovsky has triumphed as Norma at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Barcelona's Teatro Real del Liceu, and the Canadian Opera Company, as well as in her role debut at Teatro Campoamor de Oviedo (2011-12). She will portray Norma in a new production to open the Met's 2017-18 season next fall. She calls this her "perfect role vocally and temperamentally."

The Lyric Opera of Chicago performances mark Radvanovsky's seventh portrayal of Norma, and Thomas's fifth. Radvanovsky and Thomas recently earned rave reviews for their performances in this production with the Canadian Opera Company in October.

"As Norma, soprano Sondra Radvanovsky is a force of nature; she handles the demands of the role with an exhilarating combination of bravura and tenderness," declared *The Star*. Russell Thomas used "his tremendous tenor voice to great effect, especially when he muted it to a whisper and revealed his character's most intimate feelings," according to *The Globe and Mail*, which placed Radvanovsky "in the Callas, Sutherland, Cabbale category – an intensely thrilling, spine-chilling demonstration of a great artist at the peak of her powers, an exhilarating, blissful performance."

"**Norma** is one of the most gorgeous and enthralling pieces in the operatic repertoire," says **Anthony Freud**, Lyric's general director, president & CEO. "The role of Norma is one of the most demanding. Sondra Radvanovsky – our magnificent Anna Bolena in 2014/15 – has triumphed as Norma repeatedly, and will do so again at Lyric. Ryan Opera Center alumna Elizabeth DeShong and our debuting tenor, the remarkable Russell Thomas, will bring their special qualities to this production."

Notes Lyric's music director, **Sir Andrew Davis**, "After 21 years, we're thrilled that **Norma** is returning to Lyric. This really is the pinnacle of *bel canto* – I don't think you can find more beautiful melodies in all of Italian opera. When Bellini's music is sung eloquently and with true affinity for *bel canto* style (as it will be in our production), **Norma** is an incomparable experience for any operagoer."

The opening-night performance of **Norma** can be heard live locally on **98.7WFMT** and globally on wfmt.com, beginning at 7:15pm on **January 28**. Listeners will have

access to line-by-line translations in real time online at lyricoperalive.org.

About Lyric Opera of Chicago

Lyric Opera of Chicago's mission is to express and promote the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great opera. Lyric exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to Chicago and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form.

Founded in 1954, Lyric is dedicated to producing and performing consistently thrilling, entertaining, and thought-provoking opera with a balanced repertoire of core classics, lesser-known masterpieces, and new works; to creating an innovative and wide-ranging program of community engagement and educational activities; and to developing exceptional emerging operatic talent.

Under the leadership of General Director, President & CEO Anthony Freud, Music Director Sir Andrew Davis, and Creative Consultant Renée Fleming, Lyric strives to become the great North American opera company for the 21st century: a globally significant arts organization embodying the core values of excellence, relevance, and fiscal responsibility.

To learn more about Lyric's current season, go to lyricopera.org. You can also join the conversation with @LyricOpera on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. #Lyric1617 #LongLivePassion

Lyric Opera's new coproduction of Bellini's *Norma* is generously made possible by **Julie and Roger Baskes**, the **Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation**, and the **Estate of Venice R. Palmer**. Coproduction with San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company, and Gran Teatre del Liceu.

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