

# FLORIDA GRAND Opera

NEWS RELEASE

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Paris Relocates to Miami on November 15, 2008! Florida Grand Opera's Bal à Paris Pays Tribute to the France-Florida Connection and Five Outstanding Miami Fashion Designers**

*Miami, Florida, October 29, 2008.* Florida Grand Opera's Opening Night Gala -- Bal à Paris -- celebrates the opening of the Company's 2008 – 2009 season and its 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, as the City of Light relocates to Miami on November 15 for an unforgettable evening of opera, dining, dancing, and high fashion. The Bal à Paris will be held on the Lynn Wolfson Stage of the Arsht Center's Ziff Ballet Opera House, following the debut performance of the Opera's magnificent new production of Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata*.

Inspired by the Verdi work, set in mid-nineteenth century Paris, the Bal à Paris will feature all things French – including haute couture, gourmet food, and fine wines and champagnes -- and is under the patronage of His Excellency, Pierre Vimont, French Ambassador to the United States of America, and Monsieur Philippe Vinogradoff, Consul General of France in Miami.

“The Bal à Paris also builds on last year's celebration of the important relationship between high fashion and grand opera,” notes Board President Jane A. Robinson. “It proved so successful that we are replicating it this year as we continue to recognize the talents of our own outstanding fashion designers and encourage their collaboration with arts and cultural organizations here.”

Adding a special dimension to the French theme, the Opening Night Gala has once again invited five well-known local couture designers to create unique ball gowns inspired by each of the season's five operas. The five fashion designers participating include Rafael Cennamo; Nicolás Felizola; Ana Maria Guiulfo; Lisbeth Hazoury; and Yoly Muñoz.

The Opening Night Gala is Florida Grand Opera's major annual fundraiser. Ms. Lynn Wolfson, arts philanthropist, Board member and major donor to the Opera, is the **Honorary International Chair**. Mr. Ralph Lutrin, representing the Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, which is funding the new production of *La traviata*, and Mr. A. Allan Lewis, serve as the Gala's **Honorary Chairs**.

**Grand Benefactors** include Ms. Adrienne Arsht; Audre and Donald Carlin; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dascal; Mr. Stephen A. Keller and Ms. Lesleen Bolt; and Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Lopez-Cantera. **Co-Chairs** are Ms. Ruby Bacardi; Ms. Nancy Jean Davis; Mr. and Mrs. Laurans A. Mendelson; Mr. Charles E. Porter, BNY Mellon Wealth Management, and Ms. Rosie Pachon; Dr. and Mrs. Morton J. Robinson; and Mr. and Mrs. Alvaro Varela.

The exclusive creations of the five designers will be worn by professional models and displayed in the atrium-lobby of the Ziff Ballet Opera House prior to the performance of *La traviata*, and in the Opera Club during the two intermissions, allowing patrons to see and appreciate these gowns, which, along with other exclusive, high-end luxury items, will be auctioned during the Bal à Paris, with the proceeds to benefit Florida Grand Opera.

Unique jewelry designs, styled by Jennifer Boin Getz Personal Jeweler, will adorn the professional models. Her collection, in collaboration with the Italian design house, VHERNIER, is a tour de force of contemporary design, using several kinds of gold and platinum, unusual pavé techniques, and superb quality precious and semi-precious stones. In the fine jewelry business in South Florida for many decades, Ms. Getz notes that “working in collaboration with talented fashion designers for the Opera gala is my idea of a dream project!”

**Rafael Cennamo**, began his career as a 14-year old prodigy in his native Venezuela designing gowns for “Miss Venezuela” and “Miss Universe.” He is renowned for his prolific design production and for gowns that combine drama, glamour, and elegance. In choosing Verdi’s *La traviata*, Cennamo stated: “I was inspired by the poignant main character, Violetta, who, in her youth is in love with life, aware of her beauty and desirability. When she enters a room, she totally captivates all who see her. You could say that my gowns are entrance-makers.”

**Nicolás Felizola** chose Rossini’s *La Cenerentola*, a charming retelling of the classic “belle of the ball” Cinderella story, because of its connection to his clients. “My clients are always transformed by my gowns, and this is what I love about designing, the before and after.” Many of his clients are “red carpet” film and television stars, and he is particularly proud of the Best Dressed awards they have received.

**Ana Maria Guiulfo** is an artist who paints her fashion designs on exquisite fabrics while listening to opera. In choosing *Lakmé*, Delibes’ lush romantic work, Guiulfo finds its haunting melodies inspiring and has designed a gown reflective of its exotic South Indian location and oriental beauty. Ana Maria lives between Miami, Paris, and Peru. Her bright, feminine collection is inspired by a great sense of color, style and French joie de vivre.

**Lisbeth Hazoury** was inspired by Mozart’s great comic opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro). Her ball gown is a champagne beige and nude creation, embroidered with silk tulle organza and floral appliqués with Swarovski crystals. Born in the Dominican Republic, she has had a passion for fashion since childhood and was encouraged by her grandmother who taught her about fabrics and tailoring.

**Yoly Muñoz**, one of Miami’s best-known fashion designers, chose Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, and identifies with Cio-Cio-San, the opera’s tragic heroine, because “she was passionate and suffered for her passion.” Her gown alludes to the Asian influence without falling into a conventional kimono-styled garment. Muñoz’ son has been fascinated with Japanese culture for many years and speaks the language, adding a personal and family connection to her design.

**For tables, tickets, underwriting, sponsorship, and other information concerning the Bal à Paris, please contact Denise Courshon at (305) 854-1643, ext. 1202.** Individual tickets range from \$750 to \$1,000 and \$2,500. Patron levels include: Grand Benefactor (\$25,000 per table/\$2,500 per person; Benefactor (\$10,000 per table/\$1,000); Grand Patron (\$7,500 per table/\$750 per person); and Patron (\$750) per individual ticket.

**About Florida Grand Opera**

**Florida Grand Opera** was formed in June 1994 by the merger of Greater Miami Opera, founded in 1941, and The Opera Guild Inc., of Fort Lauderdale, founded in 1945. Celebrating its 68th season of continuous performances, Florida Grand Opera stands as one of the oldest performing arts organizations in Florida. In addition to producing standard repertoire, Florida Grand Opera also presents lesser known operas, as well as commissions and produces new operas. Annually, performances are attended by over 110,000 people, and education and outreach programs serve over 50,000 students. FGO offers several highly successful outreach and educational programs, including its internationally-recognized Young Artist Studio. Founded in 1984, the program attracts young singers who train and enhance their professional skills during a 35-week Miami residency.

Florida Grand Opera is sponsored in part by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding for this organization is provided, in part, by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and by the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau. Additional support is provided by the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners. Program support is provided by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council. Florida Grand Opera is a Resident Company of the Carnival Center for the Performing Arts and a member company of OPERA America.

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