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Opera theater plans announced for season

Michigan Opera Theatre will open its eighth season at the Music Hall Center with Bizet's "The Pearl Fishers" on Sept. 29.

Soprano Leigh Munro will alternate the role of Leila with Carmen Balthrop. Rico Serbo will alternate the role of Nadir with John Sander, and Jake Gardner will portray Zuriga.



CATHERINE MALFITANO

Also highlighting the season will be Catherine Malfitano performing her first Violetta in "La Traviata"; 14 performances of "Show Boat" and "I Pagliacci" in a double bill with the American Opera. "The Emperor Jones" based on the Eugene O'Neill play.

The Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra will make its debut with Tark D. Flint, resident music director, conducting "The Pearl Fishers."

Leigh Munro, whose career started in musicals, proved an overnight sensation when she sang the role of Lina in Sarah Caldwell's production of Verdi's "Stiffelio." With one day's notice, and no orchestra or stage rehearsal, Miss Munro took over for the ailing Anna Moffo. Facing an audience that expected Moffo and not Munro was challenge enough. But by the end of her performance, she had won a standing ovation.

Alternating the role of Leila will be Carmen Balthrop, nationally acclaimed for her performance of the title role in Scott Joplin's "Treemonisha" in Houston, Kennedy Center and on Broadway.

MISS BALTHROP, who made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Pamina in "The Magic Flute" por-

trayed Micela in MOT's "Carmen" last season. The lush batik designs of artist Dennis Cigler will provide the inspiration for set and costume designs by Robert Joel Schwartz, who recently executed sets and costumes for MOT's production of "The Tender Land."

Dominic Missimi, who directed last season's "Carmen" and Bernstein's "The Mass" for Music Hall, will direct.

MOT will present the original "Show Boat" opening on Oct. 22. This will mark the 50th anniversary year of this great music and the Music Hall Center (where it played in 1933). This was the first of a new breed of musical which dealt with serious subjects such as interracial marriage and desertion.

Catherine Malfitano will return to MOT to sing Violetta in Verdi's "La Traviata" opening on Jan. 12, 1979. Her previous roles at MOT were Lucia in "Lucia Di Lammermoor" and as Catherine Sloper in the premier of "Ashington Square."

Alternating in the role will be Pamela Myers, and also appearing as Germont, will be Brent Ellis who portrayed Morris Townsend in "Washington Square." Tenor Barry McCauley will make his MOT debut as Alfredo and the production will be directed by Christopher Alden.

The fourth offering of the season is the combination of "I Pagliacci" and "The Emperor Jones" set to open on Feb. 9, 1979.

SOPRANO Marianna Christos will return to MOT in the role of Nedda. She has performed major roles with the Boston and San Francisco operas.

John West, last season's Don Jose in "Carmen," returns to portray Canio, Charles Long, New York City Opera baritone, makes his MOT debut as Tonio.

The double bill closes with "The Emperor Jones" a rarely seen theatrical tour-de-force that premiered with the Metropolitan Opera in 1933.

Donnie Ray Albert will do the title role, his MOT debut, as the self-proclaimed emperor who takes over a West Indies island. Rhoda Levine will direct both "I Pagliacci" and "Emperor Jones." Sets and costumes for the double bill will be designed by Neil Jampolsky.

David DiChiera, general director of Michigan Opera Theatre, said the new orchestra will add an exciting element to the season.

"The artistic quality of all our productions will no doubt be greatly enhanced," he said. "We're also very pleased to continue to delve into the French repertoire and to expand our commitment to American opera."

Season tickets, priced from \$9 to \$50, are available by calling 963-3737 or writing Michigan Opera Theatre, 350 Madison Ave., Detroit 48226. Student and group discount rates are available.

WSU alumni slate trips

Former students of Wayne State University may attend a series of special events planned by the university's alumni association.

On Friday, Aug. 18, an excursion to Meadow Brook for the Geo Laine concert will include a catered box lunch with champagne, bus transportation and lawn seating.

September events include a black history tour to "Uncle Tom's Cabin" in Dresden, Ontario on Sept. 24 and a Sept. 30 dinner theater trip to the Black Sheep Tavern in the Irish Hills.

On Oct. 7, the association will sponsor its third

annual Michigan Wine Tour—an all-day trip to the Paw Paw area.

Nov. 17 has been set for Harvest Hoedown, which includes a hayride, spaghetti supper and square dance at Hayride Lodge in Rochester.

Two December events will celebrate the holidays. On Dec. 8, the association has booked Meadow Brook Hall for a dinner party and tour. On Dec. 15, the Clinton Inn has been reserved for a Yuletide Evening in Greenfield Village.

For more information call Alumni House on the WSU campus at 577-2166.

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