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CONTACT

Kimberly Barber, Associate Professor, Voice
Faculty of Music
519-884-0710 ext. 2505 or kbarber@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director, Communications & Public Affairs
Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

Opera producer Michael Cavanagh to direct Laurier production of *The Magic Flute*

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University’s Faculty of Music presents a wintery, Inuit-themed rendition of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute* as its annual opera, with opera producer Michael Cavanagh directing. Laurier is staging four performances of the popular opera: March 4, 5 and 6 in Waterloo and March 11 in Brantford.

Cavanagh’s vision for Opera Laurier’s *The Magic Flute* is the fascinating, mysterious and dangerous far north. The story is about a society dedicated to the protection of the greater good, which selects two candidates who are then examined, tested and purified. The candidates struggle to survive rigorous trials: they must vanquish monsters real and imagined, cope with tragedy and grapple with the absurd. They tread on thin ice, literally and metaphorically, in their personal ordeals.

“Weaving together elements of Inuit mythology, historical figures, archetypes of various cultures and figments of pure imagination, this is a production both traditional and topical,” said Cavanagh. “It projects the redemptive themes of this playful and profound masterpiece onto a harsh, icy landscape that is in urgent need of salvation. It does so, however, with a warmth that will thaw the frostiest of hearts.”

Winnipeg-born Cavanagh has directed scores of successful productions for every professional opera company in Canada. Recent highlights include: *Tosca* with L’Opéra de Montréal, a new production of John Adam’s *Nixon in China* for Vancouver Opera and a new production of Mozart’s *Abduction from the Seraglio* for Edmonton Opera – all of which won rave reviews. Cavanagh studied at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany, and served as Artistic Director of the Edmonton Opera from 1998 to 2001.

Conducted by Laurier Music Professor Leslie De’Ath, *The Magic Flute* orchestra features 40 Laurier students. Several Laurier alumni are also joining the 25-person cast: Associate Professor and alumnus Daniel Lichti will be featured as Sarastro, alumna Nicole Dubinsky sings the fiendishly virtuosic Queen of the Night and alumnus Joseph Schnurr, now based in Berlin, Germany, takes on Tamino, one of his signature roles.

Performances in Waterloo take place in Laurier’s Theatre Auditorium in the John Aird Centre, March 4 and 5 at 8 p.m. and March 6 at 3 p.m. An introductory lecture by Languages and Literatures professor Alexandra Zimmermann will take place half an hour before each of the Waterloo performances.

For the first time, Opera Laurier will perform at the Sanderson Centre for the Performing Arts, 88 Dalhousie St. in Brantford, on March 11 at 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for students and seniors. For the Waterloo performances, tickets are available at the C-Spot at Laurier’s Waterloo campus or by calling 519-884-0710 ext. 2150. For the Brantford performance, tickets are available through the Sanderson Centre box office or by calling 519-758-8090.