

BILLINGS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & CHORALE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 9, 2018

The Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale presents our season finale, *Carmen*

BILLING MT- The Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale presents a semi-staged production of the world's most popular opera, ***Carmen***, Saturday, April 21 at 7:30 pm. Concert Cues with Tom Singer begins at 6:45 p.m. ***Carmen*** at the Alberta Bair Theater features the Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale and local performers: Bret Weston, Amy Logan, Janie Sutton, Geneva Copeland, Eric Hodgson, Carrie House and NOVA's Rock Choir, along with national artists: Kristee Haney (*Carmen*), Christie Conover (*Micaëla*), Ben Cleveland (*Don José*), and Gregory Gerbrandt (*Escamillo*.) ***Carmen*** is directed by Susan Sommerfeld.

Carmen was written by French composer Georges Bizet and first premiered at Opera-Comique in Paris on March 3, 1875. It is based on a novella by Prosper Mérimée. It wasn't until after Bizet unexpectedly passed away after its 33rd performance, did it gain popularity for its risky storyline.

Carmen has been adapted onto the silver screen in many variations since 1915. It has also been adapted to ballets, Broadway, and even an ice show in 1990, featuring Katrina Witt and Brian Boitano.



Susan Sommerfeld has been a part of the music and theater community in Billings for many years as a singer, actor, director, and choreographer. Some of her favorite roles include Lady of the Lake in Billings Studio Theater's *Spamalot*, as Frau Blucher in *Young Frankenstein the Musical*, and as *Norma Desmond* in *Sunset Boulevard* with Venture Theatre at NOVA Center for the Performing Arts. Her memorable works as a director include: *Chicago*, *Forever Plaid*, *Les Misérables*, and *It's a Wonderful Life*. Susan has also been a guest vocal artist with the Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale. When not at the theater, she spends her time at her glass studio, Kennedy's Stained Glass. She has a BFA in Musical Theatre from the United States International School of Performing and Visual Arts.

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Kristee Haney (Carmen) is a mezzo-soprano and a rising artist in opera, concert, and recital engagements. She makes strong impressions as a versatile performer in the varying genres of opera, oratorio, musical theater, and recital/cabaret repertoire. Haney is known for her performance of Carmen. She has performed throughout North America and Europe, most notably

with the New York City Opera.

randzman.com/kristee-haney



Christie Conover (Micaëla) is a soprano and a Billings native who has received national attention through esteemed competitions. Conover's performances of Micaëla have garnered her critical acclaim. She made her international debut with Komische Oper Berlin during the 2015-2016 season.

She has performed with symphony orchestras all over the

nation, including the Billings Symphony Orchestra & Chorale's 15-16's season finale, *Resurrection*.

christieconover.com



Gregory Gerbrandt (Escamillo) is a baritone who has performed over 70 principal roles with top opera, musical theater, and symphonic organizations on five continents, singing for ambassadors and other officials from all over the world.

Gerbrandt has created the lead role in four world premiere operas and is constantly in high demand to perform the

prominent standard of Italian, French, and Russian opera.

gregorygerbrand.com



Ben Cleveland (Don José) is a tenor from Spokane, WA. He has worked as an apprentice artist at the Lyric Opera of Kansas City and was an Emerging Artist at Opera New Jersey. He is currently performing with Seattle Opera's touring production of *Cinderella en Espana* and recently sang the role of Don José in the Pacific Northwest Production of **Carmen**. Other recent

performance credits include: Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, Boris in *Katya Kabanova*, Sam in *Susannah*, and Tamino in *Di Zauberflöte*.

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Master Classes will be held on Wednesday, April 18th in Hardin, Thursday, April 19 at the Women's Prison, and Friday, April 20th at West High School. Student Specials for **Carmen** are available by calling 252-3610.

Carmen is proudly sponsored by: Rockwood Brown, Scott & Deb Brown, and USBank. The guest artists are sponsored by: John & Pat Burg, Lloyd Mickelson, Sig & Bev Ross, and Tom Singer & Evey LaMont. The 2017-2018 season is proudly sponsored by The Oakland Companies. Our 2017-2018 Host Hotel is The Northern Hotel.

For more information about the BSO&C's season finale **Carmen**, visit billingsymphony.org/carmen/

For more information:

Michelle Dawson

Manager of Marketing and Public Relations

406-294-3712

michelle@billingsymphony.org