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The University of Florida Opera Theatre Presents *The Phantom of the Opera* by Andrew Lloyd Webber in Ocala November 19-21

Gainesville, Fla., October 9, 2015 — Andrew Lloyd Webber's masterpiece, *The Phantom of the Opera*, will come to the stage of the beautiful, newly renovated Reilly Arts Center in Ocala, Florida, Nov. 19-21, 2015. Talented vocal performers from the University of Florida (UF) College of the Arts and the School of Music and School of Theatre + Dance graduate and undergraduate programs make up the cast and orchestra for this gala concert. Performance times are 7:30 p.m. November 19-20, and 3 p.m. November 21.

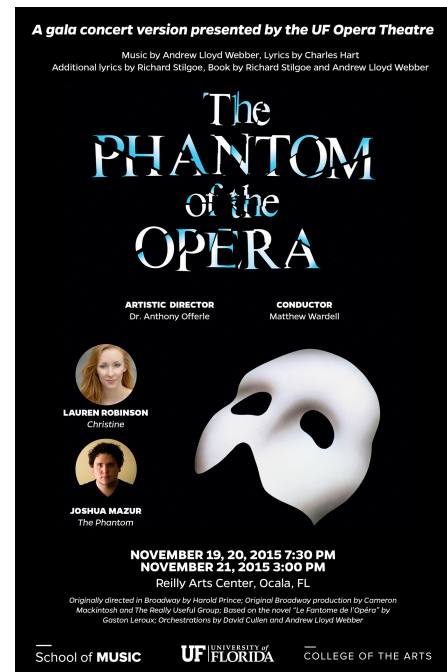
The gala concert features the same great singers and orchestra members from the college's sold-out semi-staged performance that took place in University Auditorium in Gainesville, Florida, in January. UF Opera Theatre, under the direction of Dr. Anthony Offerle, has a long, successful history of bringing great musical dramas to the stage in North Florida. Other recent productions include the world premiere of *The Red Silk Thread* in April 2014.

"This *Phantom* will be a beautiful gala concert production with a fantastic cast of singers and actors, and a full onstage orchestra under the baton of Maestro Wardell," said Offerle. "The exquisite architecture of the Reilly Arts Center with its rich acoustics and regal ambiance makes for a perfect backdrop for this tale of mystery and love within the Paris Opera house."

UF alumnus Matt Wardell, conductor of the Ocala Symphony Orchestra, will lead the full orchestra of UF students in *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Graduate student of voice and choral conducting Joshua Mazur who will be singing the challenging role of the Phantom leads the cast onstage. Mazur was the winner of the 2014 State of Florida Artist Award Competition for advanced classical singers sponsored by the National Association of Teachers of Singing. A veteran cast of performers with numerous national credits and a strong ensemble of accomplished vocal musicians join Mazur.

Wardell is an award-winning conductor and graduate of the UF School of Music Master of Music program and the prestigious Pierre Monteux School for Conductors. *The Ocala Star-Banner* noted upon Wardell's appointment as music director and conductor of the Ocala Symphony



School of MUSIC

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Orchestra that, “Wardell brings an impressive resume of musical and conducting training ...Maybe more important than his musical credentials is Wardell’s youthful enthusiasm and unabashed zest... Wardell is not only a daring and dynamic choice as the Ocala Symphony Orchestra’s new conductor, but a smart one.”

The UF Opera Theatre’s mission is to continue the School of Music’s rich tradition of opera performance by offering students numerous stage opportunities in a variety of operatic styles and performing venues. In addition to the educational and performing opportunities available to its students, one of the UF Opera Theatre’s foremost goals is to introduce the exciting world of opera to the regional community by producing musical dramas that appeal to a wide range of audiences. Recent performances include *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, *The Mikado*, *The Magic Flute*, *Susannah*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Impresario* and *Dido and Aeneas*.

Offerle brings many years of experience in the direction of both professional and university opera and musical theatre productions to UF. In addition to directing the Opera Workshop and Opera Outreach, he is the artistic director of the prestigious *Operafestival di Roma* in Italy and was part of their award winning production of Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, which garnered the National Opera Association Award for Best Opera Production by a university or regional opera company.

Performance and Ticket Information

The Reilly Arts Center is located at 820 E. Fort King Street in Ocala, Florida. Tickets, which are on sale now, range from \$15-\$35 and can be purchased at www.ocalasymphony.com, by phone at (352) 351-1606 or at the Reilly Arts Center.

About the School of Music

The School of Music is one of the University of Florida College of the Arts’ three institutionally-accredited schools. The School of Music plays an important role in the academic life of the University and the community. The school’s programs provide broad-based instruction in performance, composition, history and literature and music disciplines, through a strong curriculum as well as through professional experiences such as ensembles and internships. UF students also have the opportunity to join more than a dozen music ensembles, including jazz bands, the University Choir, the University Symphony Orchestra and the “Pride of the Sunshine” Fightin’ Gator Marching Band. To learn more, visit www.arts.ufl.edu/music.

About the College of the Arts

The College of the Arts is one of the 16 colleges and more than 150 research centers and institutes at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. The College of the Arts offers baccalaureate, master’s and Ph.D. degree programs in its three institutionally-accredited schools — the School of Art + Art History, School of Music and School of Theatre + Dance. The college is home to the Center for Arts in Medicine, Center for Arts and Public Policy, Center for World Arts, Digital Worlds Institute, University Galleries and the New World School of the Arts in Miami. More than 100 faculty members and approximately than 1,200 students work together daily to engage, inspire and create. The college hosts more than 300 performances, exhibitions and events each year. Faculty and students also exhibit and perform at other local, national and international venues. To learn more, visit www.arts.ufl.edu.

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