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## Chelsea Opera presents *Suor Angelica* by Giacomo Puccini

SYRACUSE, NEW YORK – Continuing its 19th Season, Chelsea Opera will present Giacomo Puccini's beloved one-act opera, *Suor Angelica*. There will be two performances with a 14-piece chamber orchestra, led by Maestro G. Roberts Kolb, on **Friday, May 5 and Saturday, May 6, both at 8:00pm**, at **Inspiration Hall**, 709 James Street, Syracuse, NY. Stage direction is by Garrett August Heater. Presented in Italian with English supertitles. Tickets: \$35 General Admission, \$30 Seniors, and \$20 Students. Visit [ChelseaOpera.org](http://ChelseaOpera.org) for info and advance tickets.

Puccini's classic opera of faith and redemption is a treasured favorite among opera-goers throughout the world. *Suor Angelica* must don the nun's veil after she bears a son out of wedlock. Her background is the subject of hearsay at the convent, where gossip is frequent. When her estranged aunt suddenly appears at the convent with an ultimatum in hand, Angelica takes the opportunity to seek news of her son, with tragic consequences.

The opera is a special one for Chelsea Opera, being the very first fully staged production in 2004 in New York City at the company's humble beginning. It would be produced twice more in the city to glowing reviews, in 2009 and 2016, earning the admiration of the New York Times in 2009 for its "gifted singers" and "scrappy" production. This Syracuse presentation also comes in a season following the world premiere of *Puccini*, an original play by *Suor Angelica* stage director Garrett August Heater, featuring music and a behind the scenes look at the life of the titular composer, also at Inspiration Hall in February of 2023.

The production features soprano Julia Ebner in the title role of *Suor Angelica*, and mezzo soprano Leonarda Priore reprising the role of La Zia Principessa that she played in the company's 2016,

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2009, and 2004 productions in New York City. Ebner is an exceptionally talented singer and actress who continues to make inroads in the industry. She has sung with Syracuse Opera, Symphoria, Santa Fe Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and Chelsea Opera, among others. Priore, a native of Utica and the company's co-founder and president, is a mezzo-soprano whose voice has drawn accolades as a singer in New York City, nationally, and beyond. The cast is rounded out by promising talents of the Syracuse and Central New York vocal community including soprano Mary E. Molnar, Melanie Brunet Relyea, Kristina Abbott, and Nora B. Strong, as well as current students at Syracuse University and Le Moyne College pursuing careers in the industry. Stage direction and set design by Garrett August Heater, music direction and conducting by G. Roberts Kolb. Produced by Leonarda Priore and Chelsea Opera.

**Chelsea Opera** is a professional company presenting fully staged operas with chamber orchestra and other musical endeavors covering a variety of genres. The company provides opportunities for professional singers to advance their careers while making opera affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of the community. Chelsea Opera was co-founded by former Utican and accomplished mezzo soprano, Leonarda Priore and Lynne Hayden-Findlay. The fine acoustics of the venue provide an intimacy and proximity allowing the audience to feel involved and a part of the opera's story. Of Chelsea Opera's sustainability, Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* noted: "With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, [Chelsea Opera is] a patch of encouraging news..." Following its production of Aaron Copland's *The Tender Land*, writer Jon Sobel declared: Chelsea Opera "certainly ranks as one of the country's preeminent 'small' opera companies."

Formed in 2004 by singers, Leonarda Priore and Lynne Hayden-Findlay, Chelsea Opera was launched with an all-volunteer production of *Suor Angelica*. Initially, Ms. Priore and Ms. Hayden-Findlay intended to produce only this one opera. However, artist and audience response was so compelling they agreed to incorporate and obtained their IRS non-profit designation in a record eight days. They have produced extensive standard and contemporary operas, garnering critical acclaim at each outing. Despite its size, Chelsea Opera is the recipient of two grants from the National Endowment for the Arts – ArtWorks program, most recently for its production of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*.

Chelsea Opera has received funding from The Baruch Foundation, The Good News Foundation, The Music Performance Trust Fund, The Alice M. Ditson, The Amphion Foundation, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and sponsorship support from JetBlue Airways and Community Bank, N.A. This production has also received a CNY Arts Individual Artist Grant.

For further information, visit [ChelseaOpera.org](http://ChelseaOpera.org) or write to: [kenos@chelseaopera.org](mailto:kenos@chelseaopera.org)

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