FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 13, 2004

WHAT: Opera Verdi Europa performs I Pagliacci and Cavaleria Rusticana

WHEN: Sunday, March 7, 2004 at 7:30 pm

WHERE: Fine Arts Center Concert Hall
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or
go on-line to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets

 Passion, Betrayal and Murder take Center Stage at FAC with Opera Verdi Europa

Opera is very popular, not only in big urban areas, but right here in the Pioneer Valley. That’s why the Center Series tries to make sure that there’s one good, grand opera on its bill each season. On Sunday, March 7 at 7:30 in the Concert Hall, the series presents Opera Verdi Europa in Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci, two short, one-act, compatible operas, generally performed together.

Cavalleria Rusticana and Pagliacci, - affectionately known as 'Cav' and 'Pag', were first performed in the 1890s and later became a double bill. Both one-act operas are set in rural Italian villages, one in Sicily and the other in Calabria and both are about passionate love and violent revenge: inspired by real-life headlines of the time. Both operas are full of glorious music. Cav & Pag are prime examples of verismo opera: each presents a "slice of life" of the poor and down-trodden peasant class, and chronicles a dramatic conflict that incites intense, violent passions.

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Established in 1996 by Ivan Kyurkchiev, Opera Verdi is based on the great traditions of the art of opera in Bulgaria and presents unique productions combining the best of the opera worlds of Bulgaria and all of Europe. The rapid artistic and professional development of the company was mostly due to the direction from the beginning of distinguished conductors and a roster of distinguished singers, its impressive choir, ballet and orchestra. It has obtained an interpretive maturity in many different styles. The members of the orchestra, choir and ballet were carefully selected from among the best Bulgarian musicians, singers and dancers.

Rich in its genre, the repertoire of Opera Verdi includes a wide spectrum of opera works: Otello, Nabucco, Aida, Turandot, Il Trovatore, Tosca, La Boheme, Rigoletto, Gioconda, Carmina Burana (in a staged production), Don Carlo, La Traviata, Lucia di Lammermoor, Un Ballo in Maschera and productions of the Mozart and Verdi Requiems, among other works.

The international stature of Opera Verdi is demonstrated by the company’s participation in the thrilling “super-productions” of La Traviata at the München Olympiahalle in December 2001, Carmen in Arnhem, Nabucco and Rigoletto in Rotterdam and Aida at the Arena auf Schalke in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, as well as acclaimed productions at the Stade de France in Paris in September 2001, and the Grosse Festspielehalle in Salzburg in January 2002.

The creative achievements of Opera Verdi have also gained international recognition on many more of the world’s most prestigious opera stages, including The Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Portugal, and Spain. The company is currently on its first tour of the United States.

An added program to the evening is Bella Notte, an Italian-themed pre-opera dinner being held at the Hickory Ridge Golf Course at 5pm. Call the Box Office for menu and details. This performance is sponsored, in part, by TIAA-CREF.

Tickets are $40, $30, $15; 17 and under $10. Five College Students $15, $10, $7. For tickets and information, call the Fine Arts Center Box office at 413-545-2511 or 1-800-999-UMAS, or go online to www.fineartscenter.com/centerseries.

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