FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 13, 2004

WHAT: Salzburg Marionette Theater

WHEN: Wednesday, March 3, and Thursday, March 4, 2004 at 7:30 pm

WHERE: Bowker Auditorium
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Call 1-800-999-UMAS or 545-2511 for tickets or go on-line to www.fineartscenter.com/tickets
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Two Fine Arts Center Opera Performances Come with Strings Attached

Once you have entered the fascinating world of the Salzburg Marionettes, it is easy to forget that the characters are puppets on strings rather than live characters. On Wednesday, March 3rd they will perform the company’s signature piece, Mozart’s The Magic Flute. Thursday night’s performance, March 4th, is the popular Barber of Seville by Rossini.

The operas, operettas and ballet performed on the small stage by marionettes never fail to enchant audiences. Once you have entered this fascinating world, it is soon easy to forget that the characters are puppets on strings. You are captivated by the illusion and imagine you are seeing life-size performers.

Anyone who believes that the Marionette Theatre is only for children are mistaken because here the great operas found in the repertoires of real opera houses are performed. World-class artists, especially stage-directors and designers, come back again and again to work for the Salzburg Marionettes. In 1996 the Salzburg marionettes participated in performances of Weber’s opera Oberon at the Salzburg Festival, an indication of the high reputation enjoyed by the Salzburg Marionettes. Timelessly classical stage designs oriented towards conveying the period of the story provide the scenery here rather than modern, contemporary sets.

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The Magic Flute begins in a lush, enchanted land, where three fairies free Prince Tamino from the clutches of a deadly dragon. In return, he offers to rescue their Princess, Pamina. With one glimpse—it is love at first sight. Armed with a magic flute and the fairies as their guides, Tamino and his friend Papageno resolve to rescue Pamina from the clutches of the “evil” Sarastro. In the end, light triumphs over darkness, and a love at first unspoken—is finally given breath.

The Barber of Seville takes place in 18th century Seville. Rosina is kept under lock and key by her crusty old guardian Bartolo, who intends to marry her (for her dowry) with the aid of the unscrupulous priest Don Basilio, Rosina's music teacher. Count Almaviva, disguised as Lindoro, a student, woos her with the aid of the cunning local barber and general busybody, Figaro. Almaviva gains entry to the house, first as a drunken officer and secondly as a priest, managing to cause total confusion each time, but also to speak to Rosina. Figaro and Almaviva plan Rosina's escape and after various confusions and misunderstandings the lovers are wed.

The Salzburg Marionettes enchant audiences of all ages, giving the impression of being delicate and feathery light; the force that lifts them through the air is greater than the force that binds them to the ground. A performance by the Salzburg Marionettes is an ideal way of introducing children to opera. Its specialty is Mozart operas but their repertoire includes operas by W.A. Mozart, J. Offenbach, G. Rossini, E. Humperdinck; ballet by P.I. Tschaikowskij; operettas by J. Straub; and drama by W. Shakespeare.

The Marionette Theatre has now been in existence for more than 85 years and has become world famous not only through its 160 annual performances in Salzburg but also through its countless international tours. The Salzburg Marionette Theatre makes regular tours and guest appearances in Paris, New York, Tokyo, in Italy, Switzerland, Germany and South Africa.

Tickets are $30, $15; 17 and under $15. Five College Students $15. 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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