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LA Opera Presents Opera Camp Production of Hans Krása's *Brundibár*

Four Free Performances at Walt Disney Concert Hall's REDCAT of Inspiring Children's Opera

LA Opera Music Director James Conlon to Conduct

Saturday, August 23 and Sunday, August 24

(Los Angeles, CA) August 13, 2008 – **Plácido Domingo**, LA Opera's Eli and Edythe Broad General Director, has announced that the children participating in the Company's annual Opera Camp will present four public performances of Hans Krása's touching children's opera *Brundibár*. These performances will be the culmination of an intensive two-week educational summer program. "*Brundibár*, an enchanting tale of tolerance and hope, is a work that is historically significant, for it had been performed by Jewish children imprisoned at the Terezín concentration camp during the Holocaust," said Mr. Domingo. "I am especially honored that **Ela Weissberger**, a Holocaust survivor, will join us for these performances. Mrs. Weissberger, who had been transported to Terezín as a child with her Czech family in 1942, performed the role of the Cat in those performances of *Brundibár*, and she will share her extraordinary experiences with both participants and audience members after each performance." The first three performances of *Brundibár* will be conducted by LA Opera Music Director **James Conlon**, and **Daniel Faltus** will conduct the final performance. The production is directed by **Eli Villanueva**. This is presented as a community event for Los Angeles families. There will be a total of four performances, with show times at 11:30am and 2:00pm on Saturday, August 23, and at 11:30am and 2:00pm on Sunday, August 24. Admission is free of charge and tickets are limited.

"*Brundibár* reflects LA Opera's desire to participate in the community at large in different ways outside the traditional opera house," Mr. Domingo continued. "A diverse repertory and a creative use of alternative performing spaces help us reach out to new audiences, a crucial aspect of opera's future. While *Brundibár* is not technically a part of *Recovered Voices*, our acclaimed multi-year project devoted to reviving the works of

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composers affected by the politics of Nazi Germany, this production dovetails perfectly with our commitment to those composers whose careers or lives were destroyed by the Holocaust. It also gives us the young Opera Camp participants an enviable opportunity to work with Music Director James Conlon, and I hope that everyone involved will enjoy this experience.”

“Opera Camp is a great part of LA Opera’s outreach program, and I am very happy to be able to participate in it this year,” said Mr. Conlon. “In the past, working with our city’s young people in our productions of *Noye’s Fludde* and *Judas Maccabaeus* at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels was particularly rewarding. It is one of my goals to present important works of composers banned by Nazi Germany. *Brundibár* is no less musically and artistically significant for being a ‘children’s opera.’ Its historical importance as a courageous act of defiance is indisputable. The fact that some who sang in the performances in Terezín are still alive underscores the proximity of that era. And I am particularly happy to welcome Ela Weissberger, who performed the work in a concentration camp in 1944. This is a marvelous way for young people to simultaneously study history and music and for me to collaborate with them.”

Opera Camp, one of the Company’s many Education and Community Outreach programs, brings together more than 40 children from all over Los Angeles County, ages 9 to 17, for two intensive weeks each summer to work with professional opera artists, culminating in public performances of a children’s opera. *Brundibár* will be performed at REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, 631 West 2nd Street, Los Angeles CA 90012.

Brundibár tells the story of a young brother and sister trying to buy milk for their sick mother. After watching an organ grinder named Brundibár earning money by making music in the town square, they decide to do the same thing, but the greedy and unkind organ grinder drives them away. A friendly cat, bird and dog encourage the siblings to enlist the help of the town’s other children and to try again. Together, the children and their animal friends return to the town square where they sing a beautiful lullaby, win over the townspeople and triumph over Brundibár.

Created in 1938 by Hans Krása and Adolf Hoffmeister, *Brundibár* is a 35-minute children’s opera that is historically and socially significant for its role in the Terezín concentration camp. Following the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Jews were banned from gathering in public. As a result, the Jewish community began to hold cultural events in private homes and institutions. One of the works that came out of this cultural underground was *Brundibár*, which began rehearsals in 1941 in Prague’s Jewish orphanage. Rehearsals were

briefly interrupted when the conductor and music director Rafael Schächter was sent to Terezín, but the opera continued under the guidance of the orphanage director's son and was eventually performed three times. The piano score for *Brundibár* was subsequently smuggled into the Terezín camp where it was performed at least 55 times by the children interned there, including one performance for International Red Cross inspectors on June 23, 1944.

Opera Camp, originally created in partnership with The Madison Project of Santa Monica College, represents just one facet of LA Opera's internationally recognized Education and Community Programs, which have served well over one million students, senior citizens and other audiences since the Company's inception.

Brundibár will be performed on Saturday, August 23 at 11:30AM and 2:00 PM and on Sunday, August 24 at 11:30am and 2:00pm. All performances will be held at REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, 631 West 2nd Street, Los Angeles CA 90012. Admission is free of charge and seating is limited. For additional information about *Opera Camp* please visit www.laopera.com or call LA Opera's Education and Community Programs Department at 213-972-7252.

Photos from *Brundibár* can be found in the LA Opera Press Gallery:
<http://media.laopera.com/photo/?level=album&id=43>

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