DETROIT, February 7, 2023—The sensational American countertenor Key’mon W. Murrah sings the title role in Detroit Opera’s March 4 to 12 performances of Xerxes, George Frideric Handel’s tongue-in-cheek 1738 masterpiece, led by renowned conductor and scholar Dame Jane Glover. James Blaszko directs this revival of Tazewell Thompson’s vivid, color-soaked production, which debuted at the Glimmerglass Festival in 2017. The opera tells the story of the ancient King Xerxes, who may be the most powerful man in Persia but can’t get Romilda to marry him.

These will be Detroit Opera’s first performances of Xerxes (Serse), which is best known for the aria "Ombra mai fu," commonly known as "Handel’s Largo." Xerxes will be performed in Italian with English translation. The stellar cast includes soprano Lauren Snouffer as Romilda, mezzo
The role of Xerxes represents a major debut for Key’mon Murrah, a native of Louisville, Kentucky who is rapidly gaining notice in the U.S. and internationally for his stunningly wide range and vocal agility. Recent career highlights include Leonardo in San Diego Opera’s world premiere of El último sueño de Frida y Diego (The Last Dream of Frida and Diego) by Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz; Orfeo in Gluck’s Orfeo and Eurydice at Seattle Opera; and the Sorceress in Purcell’s Dido and Aeneas at the Bavarian State Opera. In 2021, he won first place in Houston Grand Opera’s 33rd Annual Concert of Arias and was a finalist in the Operalia Competition. His 2019 performances as Aspro in Vivaldi’s Montezuma at American Baroque Opera Company were "astounding—equal in both technical prowess and drama" (Theater Jones). As Bertarido in Aspen Music Festival’s 2021 performance of Handel’s Rodelinda, “Murrah traced a remarkably vivid dramatic arc" with "ringing high-C’s that would do a dramatic soprano proud" (Aspen Times).

Xerxes promises an evening of glorious singing in an opera that includes satirical elements (like Xerxes singing an aria to a plane tree) but also offers a more serious reflection on love and the limits of power. The production features stunning sets by John Conklin, costumes by Sara Jean Tosetti, and lighting by Robert Wierzel. "The sharp abstraction of this production’s design is the perfect fit for an opera that defied so many constructs of its time," says revival director James Blaszko. “What could have become a standard dramatization of an obsessive King and his court was transformed by Handel through the use of humor and musical brevity. There's a unique balance of beauty, brutality, and wit to Xerxes that I think this production emphasizes so well with its vivid costumes and striking stage pictures."

**PERFORMANCE DETAILS**

Music: George Frideric Handel  
Libretto: Silvio Stampiglia  

Xerxes (Serse): Key’mon W. Murrah (countertenor)  
Romilda: Lauren Snouffer (soprano)  
Atalanta: Elizabeth Sutphen (soprano)  
Arsamene: Sun-Ly Pierce (mezzo-soprano)  
Amastre: Vanessa Cariddi (mezzo-soprano)  
Ariodate: Nicholas Newton (bass-baritone)  
Elviro: Michael Sumuel (bass-baritone)  

Conductor: Dame Jane Glover  
Director: Tazewell Thompson
Revival director: James Blaszko
Set designer: John Conklin
Costume designer: Sara Jean Tosetti
Lighting designer: Robert Wierzel

Saturday, March 4, 7:30pm
Friday, March 10, 7:30pm
Sunday, March 12, 2:30pm
Run time: two hours and 30 minutes, with one intermission
Pre-concert talks will take place at Detroit Opera House one hour before each performance.

Detroit Opera House
1526 Broadway Street, Detroit
Tickets from $29 at detroitopera.org or 313.237.7464
Group sales: groupsales@detroitopera.org

For images of Xerxes cast members, click here.

For images from 2017 Glimmerglass Festival Xerxes presentation, click here (photo credit: Karli Cadel).

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit the Detroit Opera website.

About Detroit Opera
Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theatre), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, aspires to influence the future of opera and dance with a goal of invigorating audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera and dance that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration. Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. David DiChiera, Detroit Opera is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown; Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; and Board Chairman Ethan Davidson. For more information, visit www.detroitopera.org. Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), as well as Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

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