



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Viva la Vivandiere!
***The Daughter of the Regiment* comes to the Hudson Valley**

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NEW WINDSOR – Opera Company of the Highlands brings Gaetano Donizetti's *The Daughter of the Regiment* to five Hudson Highlands stages from **March 3 to 19**.

A comic opera in two acts, the story centers around Marie, a boisterous young woman raised from infancy by her father's French army regiment after he was killed in battle. The soldiers love her as their own daughter, and Marie becomes the company's 'vivandiere,' accompanying the troop into battle, acting as its drum major.

The opera opens in a village near Tyrol, as the peasants prepare to battle the French. Marie has recently been rescued from a fall by Tonio, a Tyrolean local, who falls in love with her and joins the regiment just to be near her.

When her aunt, the Marquise of Berkenfield, discovers her by chance while traveling in the region, she demands that Marie be returned to her family to take her rightful place as a noblewoman, married to a nobleman. An unraveling chain of family secrets and the sudden appearance of Tonio and the entire regiment on her wedding day scandalize Marie's stuffy in-laws-to-be and derail her arranged marriage.

The Daughter of the Regiment is sung in English under the musical direction of **Claudia Cummings**, and stage direction of **Michael Shell**. Cummings sang the role of Marie and appeared as many other leading ladies with New York City Opera, and other noted companies, during her 25-year career as a soprano. Shell's credits include roles with New York City Opera and the Opera Music Theater Institute of New Jersey, and he comes to Opera Company of the Highlands to direct his first opera, as the protégé of noted director-choreographer Dorothy Danner.

Opera Company of the Highlands aims to provide emerging professional singers an authentic and challenging setting to hone their skills as they strive for careers with major companies. *The Daughter of the Regiment* is the company's second venture in its premiere season, and it has attracted an international cast of emerging and seasoned professionals for the opera's principal parts.

Marie is sung by **Kinga Stretkowicz**, a native of Lodz, Poland, who comes to the Hudson Highlands by way of Indiana University, where she recently completed advanced vocal training. She is also a Soros Foundation Fellow who has toured Europe and South America as a soloist. Also singing Marie is **Jeanai Ratcliffe**, an award-winning soprano whose credits include the Bronx Opera; a world premiere at Manhattan Opera Theatre and a stint with Patty LuPone and Audra McDonald in *Anyone Can Whistle* at the Ravinia Festival.

Sulpice, one of Marie's surrogate fathers, is sung by Canadian baritone **Giuseppe Spoletini**, who performs regularly throughout Canada and the United States, and who teaches at Manhattan School of Music. Among his leading roles was an appearance in the title role of the American Musical Theater Ensemble's "September Songs... The Legacy of Kurt Weill."

Tonio, Marie's love interest, is performed by **Luke J. Grooms**, a University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music graduate who has appeared with several distinguished companies, including Glimmerglass Opera, Chautauqua Opera, and Sarasota Opera.

The Daughter of the Regiment travels to five different locations for this production, and two of the performances are sponsored by the SUNY Orange Arts & Communications Department. Opening night is **8 pm March 3** at the United Church of Christ in Blooming Grove. **All tickets are \$25. Call 562-5381.**

Complete Performance Schedule:

March 3-5: United Church of Christ, **Blooming Grove**, 8 pm Fri./4 pm Sat./3 pm Sun.

March 10-11: Calvary Presbyterian Church, **Newburgh**, 8 pm Fri.-Sat.

March 12: Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center, **Poughkeepsie**, 3 pm Sun.

March 17-18: Orange Hall at SUNY Orange, **Middletown**, 8 pm Fri.-Sat.

(Sponsored by SUNY Orange Arts & Communications Department)

March 19: Pavilion Theatre/Lycian Centre, **Sugar Loaf**, 3 pm Sun.