**THE BRONX OPERA CELEBRATES ITS 50th SEASON**

BxO will present two versions of the adventures of John Falstaff, Vaughan Williams’ *Sir John in Love* in January and Verdi’s *Falstaff* in April/May

*For Immediate Release –* Bronx, New York – The Bronx Opera will celebrate its 50th season in 2017 with two different takes on the story of William Shakespeare’s lovable rogue knight, Sir John Falstaff: the rarely-performed *Sir John in Love*, by English composer Ralph Vaughan Williams (January 14, 15, 21, 22); and Verdi’s *Falstaff*, the final, miraculous opera by the Italian master (April 29, 20, May 6, 7). Each production will be performed both in the Bronx, at Lehman College’s Lovinger Theatre, and in Manhattan, at Hunter College’s Kaye Playhouse. This will be BxO’s third presentation of *Sir John in Love* (they gave the U.S. Premiere in 1978) and their first of *Falstaff,* and both operas will be performed in English.

The second-oldest continually presenting opera company in New York, the Bronx Opera has become a cultural staple of the city and the borough, supplementing its full productions with concerts and community outreach initiatives that bring opera to many of the underserved communities in the Bronx. In addition to the two “Falstaff Fiftieth” productions, they will also present concerts throughout The Bronx and Westchester, work with community members at the Kingsbridge Heights Community Center, bring music into the lives of senior citizens at the Riverdale Y Senior Center, and continue their Opera-in-the-Schools program which introduces 1000 children each year to Bronx Opera’s productions and the operatic art form.

Speaking of the season, and of the company’s mission of presenting one unusual opera and one repertory staple each year, Founder and Artistic Director Michael Spierman says: “While these two works have many things in common – the principal characters and the setting, especially – they couldn’t be more different musically. Vaughan Williams is one of the most English composers imaginable – he even works folk tunes like ‘Greensleeves’ into the opera – and he largely uses Shakespeare’s own text for his libretto. Verdi loved Shakespeare, composing three operas based on his plays; but he and Boito, his librettist, though they veer further from the original, capture Shakespeare’s spirit with extraordinary fidelity.”

Spierman concludes, “We present them together on equal terms, for the audience to compare and evaluate. I’m not sure I can say which is my favorite…I love them both.”

**The Bronx Opera**

***50th SEASON***

***“THE FALSTAFF FIFTIETH”***

**SIR JOHN IN LOVE**

Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams

Libretto by Vaughan Williams, based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare, with additional text by Philip Sidney, Thomas Middleton, Ben Jonson, and Beaumont and Fletcher

Saturday, January 14, 2017 at 7:30 pm • Sunday, January 15, 2017 at 3:00 pm

Lehman College’s Lovinger Theatre

250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY

Saturday, January 21, 2017 at 7:30 pm • Sunday, January 22, 2017 at 3:00 pm

The Sylvia & Danny Kaye Playhouse

Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue (entrance on 68th Street), New York, NY

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**FALSTAFF**

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Arrigo Boito

Saturday, April 29, 2017 at 7:30 pm • Sunday, April 30, 2017 at 3:00 pm

Lehman College’s Lovinger Theatre

250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, Bronx, NY

Saturday, May 6, 2017 at 7:30 pm • Sunday, May 7, 2017 at 3:00 pm

The Sylvia & Danny Kaye Playhouse

Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue (entrance on 68th Street), New York, NY

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Tickets start at $20 and are available at [www.bronxopera.org](http://www.bronxopera.org/%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank),

and will also be sold at the box office.

Presented with the generous support of the New York State Council on the Arts; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs; State Assembly member Jeffrey Dinowitz; and City Council member Andrew Cohen.

**About The Bronx Opera**

The Bronx Opera Company (BxO) is currently the second-oldest continually presenting opera company in New York City. Since its founding in 1967, the BxO's mission has been to broaden the audience for the art form by keeping ticket prices low (no ticket costs more than $45); by performing all operas in English; and by bringing opera to schools in the Bronx through its Opera-in-the-Schools (OitS) Program.

BxO regards opera as the perfect art form, intended to be understood by its audiences. the original,  All productions are performed with full orchestra and chorus, fully staged and costumed, and are sung in English. The company is open to all individuals to participate based on their talents and availability. In the words of *Opera News*, “The Bronx Opera’s crowd, like the company’s enthusiastic, sonorous chorus, is (hearteningly) among the most racially integrated to be seen in New York; encouraging the attendance of so many young people marks a positive contribution to the art form.”

**For additional information, photos and interview requests, please contact**

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