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La Bohème – the New Film Adaptation – Makes its U.S. Broadcast Premiere on THIRTEEN'S ***Great Performances***

Opera's Golden Couple, Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón,
Star in Puccini Favorite Debuting on PBS in December

(New York, NY – November 13, 2009) The pairing of one of the most beloved operas of all time with a contemporary “dream team” of singers sets the stage for a silver screen romantic blockbuster. Released theatrically in October, the lush new film version of ***La Bohème*** makes its U.S. television debut on ***Great Performances*** during the holiday season – a perfect fit, given the first two acts of the plot unfold on Christmas Eve. “My principal motivation in filming the opera ‘La Bohème’ is to set a memorial to the singers Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón,” says Austrian director Robert Dornhelm, adding: “I think that this film, this music, this story will beguile not just opera lovers.” ***Great Performances*** viewers will remember Netrebko and Villazón from last season’s telecast of *Three Stars in Vienna* with superstar tenor Plácido Domingo, as well as Netrebko’s starring appearances on ***Great Performances at the Met*** (*I Puritani*, *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*). Now, the two take their on-stage chemistry to American television viewers when ***La Bohème*** makes its broadcast premiere on THIRTEEN’s ***Great Performances*** series on PBS in HD on Wednesday, December 23 at 9 p.m. EST (check local listings).

Great Performances is a production of THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG – one of America’s most prolific and respected public media providers.

A stellar review in *Opera News* raves: “It’s probably fair to say that this *Bohème* is one of the best filmic realizations of an opera since Francesco Rosi’s 1984 *Carmen*. Although the entire production was filmed within the confines of studio sound-stages, it is very much a movie, rather than an embalmed theater presentation. [The] camera sweeps the viewer right into the center of the action with decisive tracking shots and intimate close-ups; languid dissolves, superimpositions and subtle split-screen effects emphasize the sensuality of the plot, and of Puccini’s score.”

Discussing the differences between live performance and film, Netrebko remarks, “...the camera is very intimate. It’s coming really close to you. Your expressions...the eyes opening, the mouth, it’s reduced here to minimal. But instead of that, you have to put a lot inside your eyes, so you have the expression inside yourself.”

The theatrical film is helmed by director Robert Dornhelm, Oscar nominee for *The Children of Theater Street* and more recently *Karajan, or Beauty as I See It*, which aired on **Great Performances** in August 2009, offering a fascinating career retrospective of the great conductor Herbert von Karajan on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

Produced by Jan Mojto, Kurt J. Mrkwicka and Jeffrey D. Vanderveen, with Andreas Kamm and Oliver Auspitz as executive producers, **La Bohème** is a production of Unitel Classica and MR-Film Production, with the support of ORF Film-/Fernsehabskommen, Österreichisches Filminstitut, and Filmfonds Wien, in association with IMG and Deutsche Grammophon in co-production with ZDF.

Great Performances is funded by the Irene Diamond Fund, the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Arts Fund, Vivian Milstein, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, public television viewers and PBS.

For **Great Performances**, John Walker is senior producer, Bill O’Donnell is series producer and David Horn is executive producer. Visit **Great**

Performances Online at www.pbs.org/gperf for additional information about this and other programs.

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