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Wolf Trap Opera Company Gives Audience Final Say in 2010 Season-Opening Opera *Zaide*

Eighteenth century opera gets a new twist with audiences determining the ending each night of this new production at The Barns at Wolf Trap on June 11, 13(m), 15 & 19

Vienna, VA—The GRAMMY-nominated **Wolf Trap Opera Company**, one of the nation’s most highly regarded opera residency programs, will breathe new life into the 18th century Mozart opera *Zaide*, by putting the characters’ fates into audience hands each night of the performance. In a bold, first-of-its-kind approach to the unfinished masterpiece, audiences will select one of three plot twists to determine the ending for each performance.

“There are arguments to support a variety of endings for this opera,” says Wolf Trap Opera Company Director Kim Witman. “Scholars and musicologists speculate endlessly over Mozart’s original intent. In discussing what honored the existing piece and what would satisfy both artists and audience, we felt that allowing uncertainty a place in the performance was ideal.”

Zaide is an unfinished opera by Mozart, written in 1780, and lost until his wife discovered the fragments in his manuscripts in 1799. This new production designed and built for The Barns at Wolf Trap, frames the piece in what director James Marvel calls “classical futurism.” The inclusion of audience input is a natural outgrowth of this particular approach, and it allows the company a unique opportunity to turn theatrical convention on its head.

Whether the main characters, *Zaide* and *Gomatz* live happily ever after or meet a tragic fate, will be determined by which lockbox theatergoers drop their key cards into at intermission of each performance. This also provides an interesting challenge and opportunity for the performers, who will be left in the dark about the direction of the story until the second act.

“For those of us onstage, it’s exciting to give the audience the power to choose the direction of the story,” said Nathaniel Peake, a tenor who is making his Wolf Trap Opera Company debut in *Zaide*.

“It’s exhilarating that no one in the theatre – on either side of the footlights – knows how each performance is going to end. We’ll learn the outcome as we begin Act II, and it will inform our whole performance of that act, not just the ending,” explains conductor Gary Wedow.

The two-act opera, performed in German with English dialogue and supertitles, tells the story of a man and woman who fall in love while held captive in a foreign land. Their story of their struggle for freedom from a powerful sultan unfolds against a frank and realistic depiction of their lives as slaves. Because some scenes are violent in nature, the content of the performance may therefore be more ideally suited to more mature audiences.

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About the Wolf Trap Opera Company

Established in 1971, the Wolf Trap Opera Company continues to earn national and international recognition for its mission to discover and encourage outstanding emerging talent in the opera field, serving singers of exceptional achievement and potential who are ready to make the transition to full-time professional careers. In addition to the young professional singers, the company also features the work of emerging designers, directors, and conductors; and provides opportunities for aspiring stage managers, administrators, coaches, and technical theatre professionals.

Tickets for Wolf Trap Opera Company performances can be purchased at the **Wolf Trap Box Office** located at Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts at 1551 Trap Road, Vienna, Virginia; by calling **1(877) WOLFTRAP**; or online at **www.wolftrap.org**. For more information, call Wolf Trap at (703) 255-1868.

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