

MEDIA ALERT

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FLORIDA GRAND OPERA PRESENTS THE SOUTH FLORIDA PREMIERE OF ROBERT XAVIER RODRÍGUEZ'S BIOPIC OPERA, "*FRIDA*", MARCH 16 – 30, 2019

Based on the legendary life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, and
Rated R for sexuality, nudity, and drug reference.

"An exciting, long overdue musical biography of Frida Kahlo" – USA Today

"The opera is bold, colorful, and full of life and passion" – Opera Lively

"Courage, determination, and passion at every moment" – Opera News

"A compelling production of Frida" – Classical Voice North America



Photo: Soprano Catalina Cuervo as Frida Kahlo and Ricardo Herrera as Diego Rivera at Michigan Opera Theatre

Miami, February 12, 2018 – *Frida*, Robert Xavier Rodríguez's biopic opera about Frida Kahlo, is the third production of Florida Grand Opera's 78th Season and a company premiere. Rodríguez's colorful and passionate R-rated operatic story of Mexico's legendary artist is scheduled for two performances at the Miramar Cultural Center in West Broward on March 16 and March 17, three performances at the Miami-Dade County Auditorium from March 21 through March 24, and two performances at the Parker Playhouse in Fort Lauderdale on March 28 and March 30.

Her soul yearned for freedom.

Frida is the story of renowned Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, wife of the great muralist Diego Rivera. Her tortured life unfolds in a flowing succession of scenes, acted and sung by six women and five men in a variety of guises, masked, plain-faced, and as two- or three-dimensional puppets; shadow puppets and projections are involved. Diego's preoccupation with art and other women shrivel Frida's soul, and her demands for love drain him; they need one another desperately. Divorce is imminent. Frida's health deteriorates; only painting permits emotional release, translating her agonies into a series of canvases. Her fate is to live alone, engulfed by pain, but her paintings live forever, reflecting hidden dreams and inspiring courage to transcend conventional boundaries.

As a student, Frida spurned the taunts of other girls, turning instead to the politics of the revolutionaries. When a near-fatal bus accident kept her bedridden, she found her own path to freedom in her paintings. Through love, pain, tragedy, and ultimately death, Frida's identity and art remain a fierce cry of independence.

Robert Xavier Rodríguez's 1991 opera is as "emphatic and bold" (*Opera News*) as the artist herself. The production from Michigan Opera Theatre was praised by the *Detroit Free Press* for its "dramatic intensity and immediacy."

Rodríguez describes *Frida* as being "in the Gershwin, Sondheim, Kurt Weill tradition of dissolving the barriers and extending the common ground between opera and musical theater." In keeping with the Mexican setting of *Frida*'s life, the score features mariachi-style orchestration with authentic Mexican folk songs and dances and the composer's own "imaginary folk music," tangos and colorations of zarzuela, ragtime, vaudeville, and 1930s jazz — "romantically dramatic" (*The Washington Post*) and full of "the composer's all-encompassing sense of humor" (*The Los Angeles Times*).

Rodríguez says, "You learn much more about people by watching them not alone, but in conflict with others. Frida and Diego have two powerful love scenes,

one at the beginning and one at the end, with one fight after another in between. It's that fascinating and unpredictable through-line of their relationship that drives the action." In a musical metaphor for Frida's unique persona, her vocal line is scored with its own characteristic rhythms. As Rodríguez observes, "Frida sings as she lived — against the tide from the very first note."

The colorful score is a perfect match for Frida Kahlo's passionate art, conducted by **Roberto Kalb** with the **Florida Grand Opera Orchestra***. This opera reflects Frida Kahlo's hidden dreams and inspiring courage to transcend boundaries.

- Directed and Choreographed by **Marco Pelle** from the *New York Theatre Ballet*, and previous director of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* (2017, *A Masked Ball*), as well as Ballet Choreographer on Ryan Murphy's *Pose* (FX Television Network)
- Featuring Colombian soprano **Catalina Cuervo** (2013, *Maria de Buenos Aires*) as Frida Kahlo
- FGO debut by Bass-baritone **Ricardo Herrero** as Diego Rivera.
- Sung in English and Spanish, with projected translations in English and Spanish
- Run time is two hours, 30 minutes, including one intermission

About Frida Kahlo:

Frida Kahlo de Rivera, born Magdalena Carmen Frieda Kahlo y Calderón, was a Mexican painter known for her self-portraits. Kahlo's life began and ended in Mexico City, in her home, which is known as "La Casa Azul," the Blue House. Her work has been celebrated internationally as emblematic of Mexican national and indigenous traditions, and by feminists for its uncompromising depiction of the female experience and form.

Mexican culture and tradition are important in her work, which has been characterized as naïve art or folk art. Her work has also been described as surrealist, and in 1938 André Breton, a principal initiator of the surrealist movement, described Kahlo's art as a "ribbon around a bomb"- Frida rejected the "surrealist" label imposed by Breton - as she argued that her work reflected more of her reality than her dreams.

Kahlo had a volatile marriage with the famous Mexican artist Diego Rivera. She suffered lifelong health problems, many caused by a traffic accident she survived as a teenager. Recovering from her injuries isolated her from other people, and this isolation influenced her works, many of which are self-portraits. Kahlo

suggested, "I paint myself because I am so often alone and because I am the subject I know best."

Frida Kahlo	Catalina Cuervo
Diego Rivera	Ricardo Herrera*
Cristina Kahlo	Jessica E. Jones+
Mrs. Ford	Evan Kardon+
Dimas' Mother/Lupe Marín	Zaray Rodriguez+
Mrs. Rockefeller/Natalia Trotsky	Mariya Kaganskaya+
Alejandro/Leon Trotsky	Dominick Corbacio+
Mr. Ford	Dylan Morrongiello+
Petate Vendor/Mr. Kahlo/Mr. Rockefeller	Benjamin Dickerson+
Barker	Sean Galligan+*
Calavera/Edward G. Robinson	Simon Dyer+
Calavera	Laura Leon
Calavera	Stephany Peña
Conductor	Roberto Kalb*
Revival Director and Choreographer	Marco Pelle
Production	Jose Maria Condemi
Production provided by	Michigan Opera Theatre
Set and Costume Designer	Monika Essen*
Wig and Make-Up Designer	Sue Schaefer
Assistant Conductor	Gordon Schermer*

Production Stage Manager	Megan Bennett
Projected English Titles	Dee Dorsey*
Projected Spanish Titles	Dreambay Enterprises
*FGO debut +FGO Studio Artist	

Performance Dates and Times:

Miramar Cultural Center

Saturday, March 16, 2019, at 7:30pm

Sunday, March 17, 2019, at 3pm

Miami-Dade County Auditorium

Thursday, March 21, 2019, at 8pm

Saturday, March 23, 2019, at 7pm

Sunday, March 24, 2019, at 3pm

Parker Playhouse

Thursday, March 28, 2019, at 7:30pm

Saturday, March 30, 2019, at 7:30pm

Tickets and Subscriptions:

Tickets are on sale now. Tickets start at \$35, and can be purchased in person at the Florida Grand Opera Box Office at the Doral Center at 8390 NW 25th Street, Miami, FL 33122, online at www.FGO.org, by phone at 1.800.741.1010, or email at Sales@FGO.org.

Tickets can also be purchased through the venue box offices onsite and online at the Miramar Cultural Center at www.MiramarCulturalCenter.org, Miami-Dade County Auditorium at www.MiamiDadeCountyAuditorium.org, Parker Playhouse at www.ParkerPlayhouse.com, and on www.Ticketmaster.com

ABOUT FLORIDA GRAND OPERA

FLORIDA GRAND **opera**

Florida Grand Opera (FGO), the oldest performing arts organization in Florida, celebrates its 78th Season in 2018-19. The mainstage operas of the season include Giacomo Puccini's *La bohème* (Nov. 3-17), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (Jan. 26-Feb. 9), Robert Xavier Rodríguez's *Frida* (Mar. 16-30), and Jules Massenet's *Werther* (Apr. 27-May 11).

FGO's Box Office is located at the Doral Center on 8390 NW 25th Street, Miami, FL 33122, and is open from 10 am to 4 pm, Monday through Friday during the season. Tickets may be purchased online at www.FGO.org or by phone at (800) 741-1010.

Founded in 1941 as Greater Miami Opera and later merging with The Opera Guild Inc. in 1994, FGO presents a mixture of standard repertoire and contemporary works as well as commissions and new productions — all featuring projected translations in English and Spanish. FGO is recognized for funding by the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Funding is also provided, in part, by the Broward County Board of County Commissioners as recommended by the Broward Cultural Council and the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners and the Miami-Dade County Tourist Development Council. Program support is provided by the City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, and the Cultural Arts Council. Florida Grand Opera is a Resident Company of the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County and a member company of OPERA America. Steinway & Sons is the Official Piano of Florida Grand Opera.

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