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NEWS

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The Dallas Opera Presents the World Premiere of *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly*

Based on the Memoir by Jean-Dominique Bauby

Composed by Joby Talbot to a Libretto by Gene Scheer
Directed by Leonard Foglia | Commissioned by The Dallas Opera

November 3, 5, 8, and 11 at the Winspear Opera House



Baritone Lucas Meachem Photo: Kyle Flubacker

(DALLAS, October 10, 2023) The Dallas Opera presents the highly anticipated world premiere of ***The Diving Bell and the Butterfly***, starring baritone **Lucas Meachem** and mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke**, on Friday, November 3 at 7:30pm at the Winspear Opera House in Dallas. Three additional performances take place on November 5(mat), 8, and 11, with the final performance also being livestreamed on YouTube via digital.dallasopera.org.

"*The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* is the remarkable true story of a man whose determination leads to one of the most poignant memoirs ever written," said The Dallas Opera Kern

Wildenthal General Director and CEO Ian Derrer. “We are honored to bring this story to our stage for the first time anywhere, as well as to audiences around the globe with our livestream.”

The Diving Bell and the Butterfly was originally scheduled to premiere in the 2020/2021 season but was postponed due to the pandemic. The Dallas Opera-commissioned work reunites the creative team of composer Joby Talbot and librettist Gene Scheer—who collaborated previously on *Everest* at The Dallas Opera—to bring to life the autobiographical memoir of Jean-Dominique Bauby. Leonard Foglia, who directed both *Everest* and *Moby-Dick* at The Dallas Opera, returns to direct this world premiere production.

In addition to Meachem and Cooke, the cast also includes tenor Richard Croft, soprano Deanna Breiwick, bass Kevin Burdette, soprano Andriana Chuchman, tenor Andrew Bidlack, soprano Jocelyn Hansen, and Martin Luther Clark in his TDO debut.

The Dallas Opera’s production features set and projection design by Elaine J. McCarthy, costume design by David Woolard, and lighting by Russell Champa. The Mrs. Eugene McDermott Music Director Emmanuel Villaume conducts The Dallas Opera Orchestra.

Synopsis *(Excerpted from a note by librettist Gene Scheer)*

Our opera *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* tells the story of Jean-Dominique Bauby, the celebrated editor of *Elle* magazine. Husband and father, he’s a major contributor to the cultural and intellectual scene in Paris and throughout France. But his life shatters when a devastating stroke leaves him paralyzed and unable to speak—“locked in”—like a diver at the bottom of the sea. Yet Bauby’s spirit is indomitable, and he finds a way—by blinking with the only muscle he can still control to “write” a book about his extraordinary life.

Although physically incapacitated, Bauby has a brilliant mind that can wander and fly like a butterfly, freeing him to travel through time and space where nothing is impossible. Confronted with the brutal reality of his condition, Jean-Dominique must find meaning in what remains. Ultimately, it is his love for his children and his love for life itself, which allow him to persist. As he employs his powerful imagination and reflects on the life he has lived, he finds the strength to leave a lasting and meaningful legacy for those he loved.

Jean-Dominique’s true story of strength, determination, and the desire for connection comes to life.

The Dallas Opera continues to offer FREE pre- and post-opera discussions:

- Joy and Ronald Mankoff Pre-Opera Talk: Hosted by composer Joby Talbot, this interactive 30-minute lecture begins one hour before the start of each opera in the Margaret McDermott Performance Hall. Admission is free with your ticket to a Dallas Opera performance.

- Sunday Post-Opera Talkback: Immediately following the Sunday matinee performance from the stage, this brief and casual Q&A session with members of the cast gives audience members an opportunity to ask questions about the performance. Hosted by Kristian Roberts, Director of Education at The Dallas Opera.

About the Cast and Creative Team

Performance Details

Friday, November 3, 2023, at 7:30pm
Sunday, November 5, 2023, at 2:00pm
Wednesday, November 8, 2023, at 7:30pm
Saturday, November 11, 2023, at 7:30pm (*also livestreamed*)
Emmanuel Villaume, conductor
The Dallas Opera Orchestra

WORLD PREMIERE
The Diving Bell and the Butterfly
composed by Joby Talbot to a libretto by Gene Scheer

Lucas Meachem, baritone	Jean-Dominique Bauby
Richard Croft, tenor	Abbé Faria
Sasha Cooke, mezzo-soprano	Sylvie
Deanna Breiwick, soprano	Claude
Kevin Burdette, bass	Papinou
Andriana Chuchman, soprano	Sandrine/Mercédès
Andrew Bidlack, tenor	Doctor
Jocelyn Hansen, soprano	Lea
Ava Jafari*	Céleste
Austin Howarth*	Théo
Martin Luther Clark*	Orderly

Leonard Foglia	Director
Elaine J. McCarthy	Set & Projection Designer
David Woolard	Costume Designer
Russell Champa	Lighting Designer

A new production from The Dallas Opera
Sung in English with English Titles
Approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes including one 20-minute intermission

*The Dallas Opera debut

Tickets to all performances can be purchased online at dallasopera.org or by calling 214.443.1000 (Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm).

Programs and artists subject to change.

About The Dallas Opera

One of the leading opera companies in the country, **The Dallas Opera** (TDO) has an extraordinary legacy of world-class productions and thrilling premieres featuring the greatest operatic artists of our time. Inaugurated in 1957 with a concert featuring the incomparable Maria Callas, TDO is known for the notable U.S. debuts of a host of legendary artists including Plácido Domingo, Dame Joan Sutherland, Jon Vickers, Franco Zeffirelli, and Sir David McVicar. The company has long been an industry leader and innovator through groundbreaking initiatives including the Hart Institute for Women Conductors, free and low-cost digital streaming, public simulcasts, acclaimed art song recitals, the national vocal competition, special concerts, and outstanding family and award-winning education programs. TDO's home is the Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House in the Dallas Arts District. As one of the largest performing arts employers in North Texas, TDO is proudly committed to diversity, both onstage and off, and is a major contributor to the economic vitality and international cultural reputation of this region.

For more details, visit **dallasopera.org**

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