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**Lyric Opera of Chicago announces cast change for
Verdi's *FALSTAFF*:
Italian baritone Ambrogio Maestri withdraws from title role
because of family death.**

**Renowned English baritone Andrew Shore will portray Falstaff
in all nine performances Jan. 28 through Feb. 23**

Italian baritone **Ambrogio Maestri** has withdrawn from his scheduled debut at Lyric Opera of Chicago as Falstaff because of the unexpected death of his father in December, Lyric's general director William Mason has announced.

Lyric is fortunate to have engaged Britain's leading *buffo* baritone, **Andrew Shore**, as Maestri's replacement, Mason added. "Andrew charmed Lyric audiences in last season's *Die Fledermaus*. He is a renowned Falstaff in his own right, and we are grateful to have him in place."

As *The Times* of London has declared, "Andrew Shore plays the Fat Knight as a genial, whisky old buffer...to his histrionic and vocal gifts, he adds the feat of downing pints of beer without coming up for breath! Shore was born to sing this role!"

Shore is also engaged to portray Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* this season at Lyric. Mason noted that because the *Falstaff* and *Barber* dates overlap slightly, Shore will not sing the first three performances of *Barber*, but will sing the remaining nine performances Feb. 26 through Mar. 22. An announcement regarding the Bartolo casting for the first three performances will be forthcoming.

According to Ambrogio Maestri's management, the father of the 37-year-old singer died unexpectedly in December at a relatively young age. With regret Maestri has said that he must cancel his Lyric debut in order to care for his mother, a famed restaurateur in their hometown of Pavia, a small city south of Milan. Maestri's only brother died a year ago, and his mother has health concerns that make it difficult to care for herself, according to his management.

"We were deeply saddened to learn of Ambrogio Maestri's loss," said Mason. "We extend our deepest condolences to the singer and to his mother."

Andrew Shore is renowned as an outstanding singer-actor of the lyric stage. He made his Lyric Opera debut as George Wilson in *The Great Gatsby* (2000-01), and returned as Frank in *Die Fledermaus* (2006-07). Among his many recent prestigious engagements have been the *Ring* cycle, Bayreuth Festival; Don Inigo Gomez/*L'heure espagnole*, Royal Opera/Covent Garden; and Baron Zeta/*The Merry Widow*, The Dallas Opera. The English baritone has been heard at all the major British houses, including Covent Garden, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Opera North, Scottish Opera, and Welsh National Opera. Shore has triumphed in such dramatic roles as Alberich (*Ring* cycles at Bayreuth, ENO), Wozzeck (Opera North), and Faber/*The Knot Garden* (Scottish Opera). He repeatedly earns similar acclaim in comedy, including his Metropolitan Opera debut as Donizetti's Dulcamara/*L'elisir d'amore* and recent ENO performances as the Falstaffs of both Vaughan Williams and Verdi. The latter brought Shore to The Santa Fe Opera, where he also sang Don Alfonso/*Così fan tutte*. His Leandro/*The Love for Three Oranges*, originally seen at Opera North, was reprised at the Edinburgh Festival, where he has also sung Beckmesser/*Die Meistersinger*. Recent concert engagements include the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and the Hallé Orchestra. Shore has recorded Falstaff, Don Pasquale, the *Barbiere* Bartolo, Dulcamara, Leporello, and Wozzeck. Forthcoming engagements include a return to Bayreuth as Alberich, the seven baritone roles/*Death in Venice* for La Monnaie in Brussels, and Faninal/*Der Rosenkavalier*, Bartolo/*The Barber of Seville*, and Punch/*Punch and Judy* for English National Opera.

FALSTAFF / Giuseppe Verdi – 9 performances – Jan. 28; Feb. 1, 3 (ma), 6, 9, 12, 15, 20 (ma), 23.
Sung in Italian with projected English titles.

The final stage work written by Giuseppe Verdi, this unforgettable comedy – sparkling, as well as wise and heartfelt – was first heard at Lyric in 1958 and has since been presented four times, most recently in a new production that opened the 1999/00 season. *Falstaff*'s dramatic sources are Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *King Henry IV*. The opera will star English baritone **Andrew Shore** in the title role of the incorrigible seducer, Sir John Falstaff. Soprano **Veronica Villarroel** will portray Alice Ford with baritone **Boaz Daniel** (debut) as her explosively jealous husband Ford. Contralto **Meredith Arwady** will portray the clever Mistress Quickly, who conspires with Alice and their friend Meg Page (mezzo-soprano **Elizabeth De Shong**) to teach both Ford and Falstaff a lesson. Soprano **Stacey Tappan** is the Fords' daughter Nannetta, and tenor **Bryan Griffin** portrays Fenton, the object of Nannetta's affection. Completing the cast are tenor **Rodell Rosel** and bass **Andrew Funk** as Falstaff's cronies Bardolfo and Pistola, and tenor **David Cangelosi** as Dr. Caius, Ford's favored suitor for his daughter's hand.

Sir Andrew Davis will conduct the production. **Olivier Tambosi** is stage director; sets and costumes are by **Frank Philipp Schössmann**. The lighting designer is **Christine Binder**. **Donald Nally** is chorus master. *Falstaff* is **The Abbott Laboratories Production**. The revival is generously made possible by **Brenda and Earl Shapiro, Liz Stiffel, and UBS**.

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