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Every year, thousands of veterans stories go untold... until now.

*Petite Opera Productions presents the Chicago premiere of **The Falling and The Rising**,
featuring a Veterans Chorus*

(PARK RIDGE, IL—Oct 21, 2019) “Just don’t grow up too fast, ok?”, a female soldier begs in the video she sends home to her daughter. Given the distance, it is as happy a mother-daughter moment as they could wish for. Then, tragedy hits. The female soldier is injured and placed into a medically-induced coma. In that dreamscape, she encounters other soldiers, each of whom is trying to find their way to healing, and home.

For the first time, veterans stories are being told—through the new opera ***The Falling and The Rising***. Petite Opera Productions proudly presents the Chicago premiere November 2-24 in Park Ridge.

Conceived by US Army Sergeant Ben Hilgert and brought to life through the libretto of Chicago’s own Jerre Dye, and the magnificent music of Zach Redler, ***The Falling and The Rising*** is a soldier's operatic odyssey that captures the indomitable spirit of our U.S. military. Its purpose is to connect soldiers and civilians using art.

Originally created from interviews with active-duty soldiers and veterans, the opera shines a light on their inspirational and often untold stories of family, service and sacrifice inside a period of great uncertainty.

The Petite Opera Production features professional vocalists and a chorus of military veterans. The stories told in the opera really strike a chord with veterans involved in the show, and those that see it.

"I've been a military veteran for over 60 years, and this is the first production that has truly told the story of what we went through," expressed a veteran from the Battle of the Bulge.

"The different characters in this opera are bringing out all of the different aspects of what veterans are running into, and what is happening in the veterans community right now," said Ron Kobeluch, a veteran who appears in Petite Opera Productions veterans chorus. "The production actually has the power to heal veterans."

John Mundt, PhD, who specializes in treating veterans agreed: "Veterans telling their own stories—*singing* their own stories—to other veterans and the general public is a quintessential example of peer support. It is the best way to convey to veterans that there are people out here who actually get what is happening to them."

"These stories, told through music are just so powerful," said Major Jeremy Haynes, one of the original soldiers whose story inspired the opera. "That part they said about 'right here, right now', that's it."

Veteran Patrick Tobin said, "The emotions evoked from being in Soldiers' shoes bring back a flood of memories. And most importantly, the realization that I did take a vow...not just a promise to lay my life down, not just for my fellow Airman, but for my country."

And the production touches civilians by helping them step into veterans' lives. As veteran John Gordon said, "This production provides a great service to all veterans, their families and communities by this powerful and graphic display of what our military members experience in their daily lives, and more importantly when they are wounded and recovering."

Petite Opera Productions Stage Director Cathy Dunn summed up the civilian patrons perspective: "The entire production is so incredibly moving. When the military chorus appeared, I felt such an overwhelming surge of gratitude and pride, that tears came to my eyes. It was truly an inspirational and life-changing experience, and I knew we needed to bring this to Chicago."

Petite Opera Productions ***The Falling and The Rising*** runs for eight performances November 2-24, 2019 at The Mary Wilson House-Beyer Auditorium, 306 S Prospect Ave at Crescent Ave, Park Ridge, IL. Saturday evening performances at 7:30 PM, and Sunday matinees at 2:30 PM. Tickets: Adults \$30; Seniors \$27; Military \$25; Students \$15; Preschool Children \$5. General admission. Box Office opens one hour before show time. Tickets and information: petiteopera.org. Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes.

Petite Opera Productions Musical Direction by Qiyun Dai. Stage Direction by Cathy Dunn. Directors of Production Steven Arvanites and Susan Baushke. The production features: Carla Janzen and Mary Lutz-Govertsen as Soldier, Sarah Ponder as Toledo; Nathan Oakes as Jumper; Dorian McCall as Colonel; and Brandon Sokol as Homecoming Soldier. Veterans military chorus is comprised of Laura Finnely, Earl Holtz, Ron Kobeluch, Bill Kwaak, Thomas Love, Ramona Pozek, Marvin Schnabel, Rachel Simmons, John Van Alstin.

Petite Opera Productions is a charitable nonprofit company dedicated to creating life-changing experiences for new patrons of live opera and full-scale musical productions in various genres. All productions are presented in English and suitable for new patrons. The company specializes in updates and translations of classical works, and new and topical works that go beyond entertainment. petiteopera.org. 847.553.4442.

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Attachments:

FR_Press Photos-Captions.zip – press photos and captions for this production

More information:

<http://www.petiteopera.org/2019/04/petite-opera-presents-falling-and.html>

Promotional Videos:

Petite Opera Presents The Falling and The Rising: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm0vF9whhNY&t=1s>

The Falling and The Rising – Homecoming Soldiers' Untold Story: <https://youtu.be/PQINluQVU6A>