

PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGO DATE: NONE

CASTLEWARD OPERA LAUNCH NEW EDUCATION PROJECT FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

As a result of sponsorship from Mivan Ltd, through their new housing development at Ardnalvalley, Comber, and Arts and Business Reach Programme, Castleward Opera are delighted to be offering local schools a chance to take part in an exciting new opera education project.

One of the most exciting elements of the new education project is an opportunity for local students to receive complimentary tickets to attend a live opera during the 2008 Season as a young reviewer, enjoying a complimentary 2-course supper as part of the experience, provided by Yellow Door Catering. A total of 32 tickets have been made available for young people and a teacher, parent or guardian who will be expected to accompany them. In the short review, they will be given the opportunity to give their views and opinions on the opera, the quality of the acting and singing, the quality of the orchestra, the set and costume design, and any other aspect of the opera they wish to comment on. The young reviewers' scheme is to be judged by Wendy Austin, and the winning entries will be broadcast on local radio as well as being published in local papers. Full details of the Young Reviewers Scheme, including different age brackets for the final competition, are available on request from Castleward Opera, and under the press section of the web-site www.castlewardopera.com

In addition to tickets being made available through the Young Reviewers Scheme, there will also be complimentary tickets available for students aged between 18-25 for certain evenings during the 2008 Season. Castleward Opera are keen to encourage a new generation to enjoy the operatic form, and it is hoped this scheme will be instrumental in getting young people who would not otherwise have considered a 'night at the opera' to come along with an open mind, and find out for themselves, in a live experience, if they like opera or not.

The new education programmes also include a series of talks delivered in schools by members of the Castleward Production team, and visits by schools in mid to late May to see the rehearsals in progress at Castleward and meet the directors and other key members of the creative and production teams.

Speaking of the new scheme, Helen McCready, Castleward Opera Manager said:

'Castleward Opera has been at the forefront of creating really top quality opera for many years now, and as a company, we are passionate about sharing those top quality operatic experiences

with as many people as possible. Young people are especially important to the future of our company, not just as future performers, players, designers and technicians, but as audiences who can appreciate and celebrate the joy of opera, and the great skills and talents involved in achieving it. For this reason, projects like this are vitally important. We are grateful to Mivan for their sponsorship of the 2008 Season, which has made this project possible, with assistance from Arts and Business and we would encourage teachers and parents in local schools to grab this opportunity on behalf of their children and add a new dimension to their learning experience.'

Details on all aspects of the Education Programme can be found on the Castleward Opera web-site under the press section. Those interested can also contact Valerie McClintock, Castleward Opera Education Officer on 07505107368 or email mcclintockval@yahoo.co.uk Schools in the Ards Borough Council area and Down District Council area will be given priority under the terms of the sponsorship. Tickets and bookings will be allocated on a 'first come, first serve' basis, so you are advised to contact Castleward Opera as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

Ends

Notes to the Editor

Those requiring further information on this press release should contact Cathie McKimm 028 42729011, 07874023528 cathie@cutluralmanagementservices.com

The main sponsor of this scheme is Mivan Ltd. through its new private housing development at Ardnalvalley, Comber, assisted by Arts and Business Reach Programme.

A photocall for press with representatives from Mivan Development and local schools has been set up for 11.30am at the Ardnalvalley site, Comber. The site is located on the Ballydrain Road, Comber.