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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 7, 2013

***Opera San José presents Puccini's heartbreaking
Madama Butterfly***

SAN JOSE, CA – **Opera San José** (OSJ) continues its 30th Anniversary Season with Giacomo Puccini's ***Madama Butterfly***. Set in 1890s Japan, this tragic story of devotion, sacrifice and betrayal is among the most beloved operas of all time. ***Madama Butterfly*** will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. Eight performances are scheduled from February 15 through March 2 at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José Box Office, online at operasj.org or by phone at (408) 437-4450. The production of ***Madama Butterfly*** is made possible, in part by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José and the Applied Materials Foundation.

Madama Butterfly, with libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, is a haunting love story about an American naval officer who marries a young Japanese girl for convenience, only to leave her while she faithfully awaits his return. Based partly on a short story by John Luther Long, this heart-wrenching opera is best known for its exquisite arias, including the famous "Un bel di."

David Rohrbaugh, Opera San José's founding music director and principal conductor, will conduct ***Madama Butterfly***. **Dr. Rohrbaugh** has conducted more than 60 productions and 600 performances with Opera San José, including company premieres of *La rondine*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Falstaff*, *Un ballo in maschera*, and *Werther*. He is a professor emeritus of voice and opera from San José State University, where he taught for 30 years and co-directed the Opera Workshop with Opera San José General Director **Irene Dalis**.

Joseph Marcheso will conduct the February 23 and 25 performances. **Mr. Marcheso** returns after conducting Opera San José's productions of *Hansel and Gretel*, *Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Faust*, *La traviata*, *La bohème*, *Manon*, *La Cenerentola*, *The Elixir of Love* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Mr. Marcheso is also on the conducting staff of San Francisco Opera where he was assigned the West Coast premiere of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, the San Francisco premiere of Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*, and the world premieres of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, as well as a new production of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*.

International stage director **Brad Dalton** returns to **Opera San José** to direct **Madama Butterfly**. **Mr. Dalton's** previous credits with the company include *Il trovatore*, *Faust*, *Idomeneo*, the West Coast premiere of David Carlson's *Anna Karenina*, *Così fan tutte* and *Madama Butterfly*. He has directed productions for opera companies throughout the United States and abroad, including San Francisco Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, Washington Opera, Opera Boston, San Diego Opera, Barbican in London, and the State Opera of South Australia. In 2004, Dalton received the prestigious Helpmann Award for "Best Director of an Opera" in Australia.

Madama Butterfly features current members of Opera San José's resident ensemble in the principal roles. Alternating in the role of Cio-Cio-san are resident sopranos **Jennifer Forni** and **Cecilia Violetta López**. **Forni** made her debut with OSJ in the role of Alice Ford (*Falstaff*). Recent engagements for **Forni** include her Metropolitan Opera debut as the First Esquire (*Parsifal*) and Micaëla (*Carmen*) for Santa Fe Opera. **López** is in her second season in the resident ensemble and recently performed the role of Nannetta in OSJ's production of *Falstaff*. She appeared last season in the title role of Opera San José's production of *Suor Angelica*, Leonora (*Il trovatore*), Rosalinde (*Die Fledermaus*) and Léïla (*The Pearl Fishers*).

Resident mezzo-sopranos **Nicole Birkland** and **Lisa Chavez** alternate in the role of Suzuki. **Birkland** made her company debut last season and has appeared as Gertrud (*Hansel and Gretel*), Dame Quickly (*Falstaff*), Prince Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Azucena (*Il trovatore*), Principessa (*Suor Angelica*) and Zita (*Gianni Schicchi*). **Chavez** made her debut as Meg Page in *Falstaff*, and most recently performed the role of Hansel in the company's production of *Hansel and Gretel*. Other roles performed by **Chavez** include Dinah (*Trouble in Tahiti*), Geraldine (*A Hand of Bridge*), and Lorca (*Ainadamar*) with Opera Parallèle of San Francisco.

Sharing the role of B.F. Pinkerton are former resident tenor **Christopher Bengochea** and current resident tenor **James Callon**. **Bengochea** returns to OSJ as a guest artist after recently appearing in the title role of the king of Crete in the company's production of *Idomeneo, ré di Creta*. **Callon** previously played the role of the Witch (*Hansel and Gretel*) and Fenton (Falstaff). **Callon** is in his second year in the resident ensemble. Previous credits with OSJ include the roles of Nadir (*The Pearl Fishers*), Eisenstein (*Die Fledermaus*), Manrico (*Il trovatore*), and Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*).

Resident baritones **Evan Brummel** and **Zachary Altman** share the role of Sharpless. **Brummel** returns for a third year as a member of the resident ensemble after appearing in the roles of Peter (*Hansel and Gretel*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Gianni Schicchi (*Gianni Schicchi*), Count di Luna (*Il trovatore*), and Zurga (*The Pearl Fishers*). **Altman** made his company debut as Zurga in OSJ's 2012 production of *The Pearl Fishers*.

Alternating in the role of Goro are tenors **Robert Norman** and **Michael Mendelsohn**. Former resident bass **Silas Elash** plays the role of Commissioner and bass **Matthew Anchel** appears as The Bonze. Rounding out the cast are former resident baritone **Toref Borsting** in the role of Prince Yamadori, and mezzo-soprano **Carin Gilfry** as Kate Pinkerton.

Opera San José's production of *Madama Butterfly* includes set designs by **Kent Dorsey**, lighting design by **Pamila Gray**, and wig and makeup designs by **Jeanna Parham**.

About Opera San José

Opera San José, performing at the historic **California Theatre** in downtown San José, is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of principal artists, **Opera San José** specializes in showcasing the finest young professional singers in the nation. In addition to mainstage performances, **Opera San José** maintains extensive educational programs in schools and in the community at large, and offers *Preview* lectures and *Introduction to Opera* talks for all mainstage productions.

Madama Butterfly In Italian with English Supertitles

<u>Cast:</u>	<u>February 15, 20, 23, 28</u>	<u>February 16, 22, 25, March 2</u>
Cio-Cio-san	Jennifer Forni•	Cecilia Violetta López•
Suzuki	Nicole Birkland•	Lisa Chavez•
B.F. Pinkerton	Christopher Bengochea	James Callon•
Sharpless	Evan Brummel•	Zachary Altman•
Goro	Robert Norman	Michael Mendelsohn
Commissioner	Silas Elash	Silas Elash
The Bonze	Matthew Anchel	Matthew Anchel
Prince Yamadori	Torlef Borsting	Torlef Borsting
Kate Pinkerton	Carin Gilfry	Carin Gilfry

• Resident Company

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

What: **Opera San José** continues its 30th Anniversary Season with Giacomo Puccini's ***Madama Butterfly***. Set in 1890s Japan, an American naval officer marries a young Japanese girl for convenience only to leave her while she faithfully awaits his return in this tragic story of devotion, sacrifice and betrayal. ***Madama Butterfly*** will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. Eight performances are scheduled from February 15 through March 2 at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José Box Office, online at operasj.org or by phone at (408) 437-4450. The production of ***Madama Butterfly*** is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José and the Applied Materials Foundation.

Who: Composer: Giacomo Puccini
Librettist: Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Conductor: David Rohrbaugh
Assistant Conductor: Joseph Marcheso
Stage Director: Brad Dalton
Set Designer: Kent Dorsey
Costume Coordinator: Alyssa Oania
Lighting Designer: Pamila Gray
Wigs/Makeup: Jeanna Parham

Dates: February 15, 16m, 20, 22, 23m, 25, 28, March 2m; 2014

Time: "m" indicates matinee at 3pm; all other performances are at 8pm

Location: California Theatre, 345 South First Street between San Carlos and San Salvador, San José

Tickets: \$51–\$111 (includes city facility usage fee) from Opera San José Box Office, 2149 Paragon Dr., San José, CA 95131; 408-437-4450; 408-437-4455 fax; operasj.org
Available 90 minutes prior to curtain at the California Theatre box office only: Seniors (65 and older) 10% discount; Students 25 and younger (with current student ID) \$11 (cash only)

Photos: www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room/press-photos/2013-2014-season/madame-butterfly/

Press Room: www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room

To learn more about *Madama Butterfly*, please visit operasj.org and consider these opportunities:

Madama Butterfly Special Preview: February 4, 2014 at 12pm, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 150 East Fernando Street, Beethoven Center, 5th floor, downtown San José; Free vocal preview with members of the cast. For information, call 408-437-4450.

Introduction to Opera: Before each performance (except opening night), General Manager Larry Hancock will present a free 45-minute talk about the opera at the California Theatre, beginning at 6:30pm prior to evening performances (except opening night) and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

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