

## N E W S R E L E A S E

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
December 3, 2014**Press contact**  
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*Opera San José presents*  
*the WORLD PREMIERE of Mark Lanz Weiser's*  
***Where Angels Fear to Tread***

SAN JOSE, CA – **Opera San José** continues its 31<sup>st</sup> season with the **WORLD PREMIERE** of ***Where Angels Fear to Tread*** by American composer Mark Lanz Weiser, libretto by Roger Brunyate. This bold new opera, based on the novel by E. M. Forster, unveils a collision of cultures that leads to a misunderstanding of horrific consequences, set in motion when a rich English widow marries a middle-class but handsome young Italian against the wishes of her family. ***Where Angels Fear to Tread*** will be sung in English with English supertitles. Six performances are scheduled February 7 through 22 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](http://operasj.org) or by phone at (408) 437-4450. Performances are supported, in part, by grants from the San José Office of Cultural Affairs and the National Endowment for the Arts.

**Joseph Marcheso**, Opera San José's music director and principal conductor, will conduct ***Where Angels Fear to Tread***. Mr. Marcheso has conducted 12 productions for Opera San José, including, *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi*, *La traviata*, *Faust*, *La bohème*, *La Cenerentola*, *Manon*, *Carmen*, *The Elixir of Love*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Nationally acclaimed playwright, theater director and actor **Lillian Groag** returns to Opera San José as stage director for the World Premiere of ***Where Angels Fear to Tread***. Previously, Ms. Groag directed Opera San José's productions of *Pagliacci* (1996-97) and *Of Mice and Men* (1997-98). Ms. Groag has acted, directed and written for many regional theatres and opera houses throughout the United States.

Creating the roles in this **WORLD PREMIERE** production of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* are current members of Opera San José's resident company in the principal roles, as well as guest artists.

Guest artist **Christie Conover** sings the role of Caroline Abbott. Ms. Conover has performed leading roles with Minnesota Opera for the past three seasons, including Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Musetta (*La bohème*), Liù (*Turandot*) and others. She won Second Place and Audience Choice at the Irene Dalis Vocal Competition in 2013. In 2011, she claimed Third Place in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions followed by Regional Finalist in 2012.

Resident tenor **Kirk Dougherty** sings the role of Phillip Herriton. Mr. Dougherty is a member of the resident ensemble in 2014-2015 and recently made his debut as the Duke in *Rigoletto*, and is scheduled to sing Tamino (*Magic Flute*) in April. Recent engagements for Mr. Dougherty include Manrico (*Il trovatore*) with Sarasota Opera and Baltimore Concert Opera, Pollione (*Norma*), at St. Petersburg Opera, Arturo (*Lucia di lammermoor*) for Anchorage Opera, and Eremita (*Sakuntala*) for Teatro Grattacielo.

Baritone **Matthew Hanscom** sings the role of Gino Carella. Mr. Hanscom made his company debut recently as *Rigoletto* and followed that with Taddeo (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*). Mr. Hanscom has performed six seasons at Sarasota Opera, appearing as Comte de Toulouse in Verdi's *Jérusalem* and Schaunard in Puccini's *La bohème*, Slim in Carlisle Floyd's *Of Mice and Men*, and Ping in Puccini's *Turandot*.

Second year resident mezzo-soprano **Lisa Chavez** performs the role of Harriet Herriton. Ms. Chavez made her company debut last season as Meg Page (*Falstaff*). Other roles performed by Chavez for the company include Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) Maddalena (*Rigoletto*) and Isabella (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*). Awards received by Ms. Chavez include First Place and Audience Favorite in the Irma M. Cooper Competition (2013), and she was named the Third Prize Winner in the 2014 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition.

Resident soprano **Isabella Ivy** sings the role of Lilia Herriton. Ms. Ivy recently made her debut for the company as Gilda (*Rigoletto*), followed by Elvira (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*). Ms. Ivy has repeatedly been a featured artist with the AIMS Festival Orchestra in Graz. She has also premiered several works at the

University of Nevada for both established and emerging composers, most notably *Madame White Snake*, the 2011 Pulitzer prize-winning opera, for the composer of the work, Dr. Zhou Long.

**Jenny Lister** returns to OSJ for the 2014-15 season appearing as the Opera Singer in *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, and is scheduled to sing Papagena (*Magic Flute*). For Utah Opera Ms. Lister took the stage as Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore*, Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, Erste Dame in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and last April debuted the Queen of the Night (*Magic Flute*) with Opera San Luis Obispo.

Resident bass **Silas Elash** sings the role of the Cabman. Mr. Elash recently sang the role of Sparafucile in the company's production of *Rigoletto*, and Haly in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. He has sung more than 25 roles with Opera San José, including appearances last season as the Commissioner (*Madama Butterfly*) and the Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*). Mr. Elash was winner of the "Wagner Society Award" in the 2010 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition.

Opera San José's production of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* includes set designs by **Michael Ganio**, costume designs by **Elizabeth Poindexter**, lighting design by **David Lee Cuthbert**, and wig and makeup designs by **Vicky Martinez**.

### About Opera San José

Opera San José, performing at the beautiful 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.

### *Where Angels Fear to Tread* In English with English Supertitles

**Cast:**

Caroline Abbot  
Philip Herriton  
Gino Carella  
Harriet Herriton  
Lilia Herriton  
Opera Singer  
Padrona  
Perfetta  
Sacristan/Edgardo  
Alessandro/Enrico  
Cabman

**February 7, 8, 12, 15, 20, 22**

Christie Conover  
Kirk Dougherty•  
Matthew Hanscom•  
Lisa Chavez•  
Isabella Ivy•  
Jennie Litster  
Chloe Smart•  
Buffy Baggott  
Michael Boley•  
Brian James Myer  
Silas Elash•

Spiridone Christopher Filipowicz

• Resident Company

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**What:** Opera San José continues its season with the **WORLD PREMIERE** of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* by American composer Mark Lanz Weiser, libretto by Roger Brunyate. This bold new opera, based on the novel by E. M. Forster, unveils a collision of cultures that leads to misguided actions of horrific consequences, set in motion when a rich English widow marries a middle-class but handsome young Italian against the wishes of her family. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* will be sung in English with English supertitles. Joseph Marcheso will conduct, with stage direction by Lillian Groag. Six performances are scheduled from February 7 through 22 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](http://operasj.org) or by phone at (408) 437-4450. Performances supported, in part, by grants from the San José Office of Cultural Affairs and National Endowment for the Arts.

**Who:** Composer: Mark Lanz Weiser  
 Librettist: Roger Brunyate  
 Conductor: Joseph Marcheso  
 Assistant Conductor: Robert Mollicone  
 Stage Director: Lillian Groag  
 Chorus Master: Andrew Whitfield  
 Set Designer: Michael Ganio  
 Costume Designer: Elizabeth Poindexter  
 Lighting Designer: David Lee Cuthbert  
 Wigs/Makeup: Vicky Martinez

**Dates:** February 7, 8m, 12, 15m, 20, 22m.

**Time:** “m” indicates matinee at 3pm; all other performances are at 8pm

**Location:** California Theatre, 345 South 1st Street between San Carlos and San Salvador, San José, CA

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

**Photos:** [www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room/press-photos/2014-2015-season/where-angels-fear-to-tread/advance-photos/](http://www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room/press-photos/2014-2015-season/where-angels-fear-to-tread/advance-photos/)

**Press Room:** [www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room](http://www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room)

To learn more about *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, go to [operasj.org](http://operasj.org) and consider these opportunities:

**Where Angels Fear to Tread Special Preview:** January 27, 2014, at 12:00pm, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 150 East Fernando St., 5th floor, downtown San José; Free vocal preview with members of the cast with comments from Opera San José's General Director Larry Hancock. For information, call 408-437-4450.

**Where Angels Fear to Tread Symposium:** February 1, 2014, 1:00pm to 5:00pm. Featuring the composer and librettist, as well as the conductor, stage director, designers and guest speakers. Petit Trianon Theatre, 72 N. 5th St, San Jose, CA 95112

**Introduction to Opera:** General Director Larry Hancock will present a free 45-minute talk to ticket holders about the opera at the California Theatre before each performance, with the exception of opening night, of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. The talk begins at 6:30pm prior to evening performances and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

**Where Angels Fear to Tread Gala Dinner:** As a tantalizing appetizer before the World Premiere performance of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, listen to the composer, librettist and creative team while dining on Tuscan favorites, created by the Chef to bring you to Tuscany, the region where our World Premiere is set. Enjoy a behind the scenes peek of the costumes, set designs and creation of this magnificent opera. This Gala Dinner is not to be missed! In the Grande Ball Room, Il Fornaio at the Sainte Claire Hotel. This is a black tie event.

4:30pm            Prosecco, Tuscan themed wine and hors d'oeuvres  
 5:00-7:30pm    Tuscan themed three-course dinner  
 8:00pm            Curtain, ***Where Angels Fear to Tread***

Buy it NOW price: \$300.00 per person (after January 7<sup>th</sup>, price increases to \$325.00 per person)

**Where Angels Fear to Tread After Performance Reception:** Grasp the excitement of the World Premiere performance and share it with the artists, stage director, conductor, general manager and fellow World Premiere patrons immediately after the magnificent performance! The reception will be held in the Palm Room of the Sainte Claire Hotel from 11:00pm-1:00am.

Price \$50.00 (ask our Box Office about our special valet parking offer)

**Where Angels Fear to Tread Hotel Discount:** Create a special World Premiere evening and purchase the Gala Dinner, Performance, and After Performance Reception. To make it a perfect evening add a stay at the Hotel Sainte Claire. Opera San José has arranged for a special room rate of \$119.00 plus tax available to those who attend the Gala Dinner.

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