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Opera San José and Starting Arts Team Up To Provide Opera to Bay Area Children

New Partnership Brings Rossini's The Barber of Seville To Local Elementary Schools

SAN JOSE, CA (September 16, 2015) – Opera San José, a professional regional opera company, today announced it has partnered with Starting Arts, an organization dedicated to promoting arts education for children in the Bay Area, to bring a condensed one-act touring opera of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* to local elementary schools during the 2015-16 academic school year. The touring opera is appropriate for elementary as well as middle school students, and condensed into a 50-minute performance (including time for Q & A) to easily fit the school's schedule.

The Barber of Seville will be directed by Michael Taylor, a well-known singer, stage director and conductor, and long-time favorite with Bay Area audiences. Over the past 25 years, Mr. Taylor has appeared as a soloist with many local companies including Opera San José, San Francisco Opera Center, West Bay Opera, Berkeley Symphony, Vallejo Symphony, Fremont Symphony, Schola Cantorum, Reno Symphony and the San Francisco Ballet.

Opera San José's professional singers and pianist will perform some of Rossini's best known arias and ensembles in full costume with sets for the children to enjoy. Students will have the opportunity to be part of the ensemble or chorus, and will also be assigned small speaking roles.

"The *Barber of Seville* is a perfect introductory opera for students of all ages," said Jake Lake, Artistic Administrator for Opera San José. "The music is iconic, the story is enjoyable and I'm sure it will have an impact on those that may be new to the art form. I'm confident by offering this fantastic production with singers from Opera San José's main stage productions, it will be the perfect introduction to opera's unique storytelling through music and voice."

Lake goes on to say, "It is our hope that students will find an appreciation for opera they never knew they had and that their newly found enthusiasm will have a trickle-down effect to their fellow siblings and family members, which in turn will foster an all-around growing appreciation for the art form and encourage people to come and see one of Opera San José's main stage productions."

“The arts are an important part of education and children need to be exposed to it to understand how it has helped shape culture and society,” said Ann Watts, Executive Director of Starting Arts. “I think that Mr. Taylor is going to do a fine job creating an exciting and educational production for students to help them grasp the beauty of opera.”

A study guide will be available prior to the performance to enable teachers to better prepare their students. One performance is available for \$850 or two back-to-back performances for \$1,275. For those schools that can’t afford the price there are opportunities to receive assistance. Performances can be requested by filling out this [online form](#) at the Opera San José website or by calling Outreach Coordinator Lettie Smith at (408) 437-4464.

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. www.operasj.org

About Starting Arts

Starting Arts is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit arts organization, founded in 2000, with a mission to make arts education accessible to all Bay Area students. Starting Arts provides hands-on arts education in four disciplines – dance, music, theatre and visual arts – in classes taught by skilled professional artists eager to share their expert knowledge and passion with students. Starting Arts is currently working in over 100 schools and serving over 30,000 students. <http://www.startingarts.com/>

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