

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Opera San José Presents Mozart's Hilarious Comedy*  
***The Marriage of Figaro***

**SAN JOSE, CA (October 14, 2015)** – Figaro's world is going mad. On the morning of his wedding, he discovers that Count Almaviva's wandering eye has landed on Susanna, the lovely bride-to-be. Servant and master go head to head, and even the Countess herself springs into battle when she learns of her husband's plans. Through the Countess, Figaro, and Susanna's feverish manipulations, the Count's love for his Countess is finally restored.

This production of *The Marriage of Figaro* will not be typical. It will be surprisingly comical, with meticulously crafted chaos and a great deal of physical comedy, but a subtly dark undercurrent eventually makes its way to the surface. Still, however human, *The Marriage of Figaro* is a comedy, and it will end in a knowing smile that could have all too quickly fallen into tragedy. Like life itself, it will walk the edge.

*The Marriage of Figaro* will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. Six performances are scheduled from November 14<sup>th</sup> through 29<sup>th</sup> 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) and by phone at (408) 437-4450. Performances are supported, in part, by a grant from the San José Office of Cultural Affairs.

**Andrew Bisantz** makes his Opera San José debut as conductor for Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Recent engagements for Mr. Bisantz include conducting performances of *The Elixir of Love* for Eugene Opera where he currently serves as Music Director, *La traviata* (Virginia Opera), *Rigoletto* (Tri-Cities Opera), and *The Consul* (Florida Grand Opera). **Lillian Groag** returns to Opera San José to direct the *The Marriage of Figaro*, following her critically acclaimed production of Opera San José's world premiere of *Where Angels Fear to Tread*. Previously, Ms. Groag directed Opera San José's production of *Pagliacci* (1996-97) and *Of Mice and Men* (1997-98).

Bass-Baritone **Ben Wager** makes his company debut singing the role of Figaro. Engagements for Mr. Wager during the 2014-15 season included an anticipated debut in Oslo with the Den Norske Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*, and the roles of Taddeo (*L'italiana in Algeri*) and Angelotti (*Tosca*) for Lyric Opera of Kansas City. He concluded the season with Washington D.C.'s Cathedral Choral Society, in a concert of opera favorites.

Resident baritone **Matthew Hanscom** will sing the role of Count Almaviva. Mr. Hanscom most recently sang the role of Scarpia in *Tosca* and made his company debut as Rigoletto, followed with Taddeo (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*) and Gino Carella (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*) and Papageno (*The Magic Flute*). Baritone **Eugene Brancoveanu** will return to sing the role of the Count during the final performance.

Mr. Brancoveanu made his company debut during Opera San José's 2013-14 season, appearing as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. Recent engagements for Mr. Brancoveanu include Lancelot in *Camelot* with Virginia Opera and "Songs of a Wayfarer" in a return to Peninsula Symphony Orchestra

Resident soprano **Isabella Ivy** sings the role of Countess Almaviva. Ms. Ivy recently sang Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*. She made her debut for the company as Gilda (*Rigoletto*), followed by Elvira (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), and Lilia Herriton (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*). Making her company debut and singing the role of Countess Almaviva during the final performance will be guest soprano **Jungwon Choi**. Ms. Choi's operatic debut was as Azema in *Semiramide* at the Seoul Art Center Opera House. Other engagements include performances with the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra, KBS Symphony Orchestra, and the Seoul Metropolitan Music Orchestra.

Guest soprano **Amina Edris** makes her Opera San José debut singing the role of Susanna. A member of the prestigious Merola opera program, Ms. Edris appeared as Norina in their production of *Don Pasquale* in Summer 2015. Her repertoire includes Adina (*The Elixir of Love*), Norina (*Don Pasquale*), Madame Herz (*Der Shauspieldirektor*), Juliette (*Roméo et Juliette*), and Gilda (*Rigoletto*). Singing the role of Cherubino, mezzo-soprano **Karin Mushegain** also makes her company debut. Recent engagements for Ms. Mushegain include the title role in *El Gato Con Botas* for New York City's Gotham Chamber Opera, Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Paquette (*Candide*), and Daphnis (*Daphnis et Chloe*) for various opera companies.

Resident bass **Silas Elash** will perform the role of Dr. Bartolo. Last season, Mr. Elash appeared as Sparafucile and Monterone (*Rigoletto*), Haly (*The Italian Girl in Algiers*), the Cabman (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*), and Sarastro (*The Magic Flute*). Former resident tenor **Michael Dailey** returns to sing the role of Don Basilio. Most recently, Mr. Dailey appeared as Lindoro in Opera San José's 2014-15 production of *The Italian Girl in Algiers* and Alfredo in the company's 2012-13 production of *Die Fledermaus*.

Mezzo-soprano **Anna Yelizarova** also returns to perform the role of Marcellina. Ms. Yelizarova made her Opera San José debut last season, appearing as Giovanna in *Rigoletto*. Some of her recent roles include Angelina and Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*) and Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*). Tenor **Mason Gates** makes his company debut as Don Curzio. Recent roles include the title role in *Albert Herring*, El Remendado (*Carmen*), and The Man with Old Luggage (*Postcard from Morocco*).

Opera San José's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* includes set designs by **Steven Kemp**, lighting design by **Sean A. Russell**, costumes coordinated by **Alyssa Oania**, 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.

### ***The Marriage of Figaro***

**Cast:**

Figaro  
 Count Almaviva  
 Count Almaviva  
 Countess Almaviva  
 Countess Almaviva  
 Susanna  
 Cherubino  
 Marcellina  
 Dr. Bartolo  
 Don Basilio  
 Don Curzio  
 Barbarina  
 Antonio

**November 14, 15, 19, 22, 24, 29**

Ben Wager  
 Matthew Hanscom • (14, 15, 19, 22, 24)  
 Eugene Brancoveanu (29)  
 Isabella Ivy • (14, 15, 19, 22, 24)  
 Jungwon Choi (29)  
 Amina Edris  
 Karin Mushegain  
 Anna Yelizarova  
 Silas Elash •  
 Michael Dailey  
 Mason Gates  
 Jennifer Mitchell  
 Erik Kroncke

• Resident Company

**Dates:** November 14, 15m, 19, 22m, 24, 29m

**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 by phone, online, and at the Opera San José Box Office, 2149 Paragon Dr., San José, CA 95131; \$51–\$151 (includes city facility usage fee). Students 25 and younger (with current student ID) \$10; 408-437-4450; 408-437-4455 fax; [operasj.org](http://operasj.org).

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

To learn more about *The Marriage of Figaro*, please visit [operasj.org](http://operasj.org)

**The Marriage of Figaro Special Preview:** November 3, 2015, at 12 p.m., 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:** General Director Larry Hancock will present a free 45-minute talk to ticket holders about the opera at the California Theatre before each performance of *The Marriage of Figaro*. The talk begins at 6:30pm prior to evening performances and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

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