

Press Contact:
Bryan Ferraro
408.437.2229
ferraro@operasj.org

Opera San José presents Rossini's Hilarious Comedy
The Barber of Seville

SAN JOSE, CA (October 11, 2016) – *The Barber of Seville* is one of the most sparkling, effervescent comedies ever created and Opera San José is pleased to observe the 200th anniversary of this richly entertaining comedy by making it our second production of the 2016-17 season. This joke-a-minute masterpiece spread across the world like wildfire from its 1816 premiere, and it remains among one of the most popular works for the stage today. Charged with vocal fireworks, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* received 989 performances in 227 productions at 154 cities across the globe in the past two years alone. It made Rossini world famous and has become the most popular comic opera of all time.

Layna Chianakas, director, plans on adding current emotions and depicting the characters in a manner that is relatable to society today saying, "We will be using an existing production but I feel I have an obligation to give it current sensibilities and humor. Staying true to Beaumarchais' characters, we can still depict them in a way that is relatable to us now. The details, dramatically and physically, are graciously handed to us by Rossini."

The Barber of Seville will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. Six performances are scheduled from November 12 – 27 at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Performances are supported, in part, by a generous gift from Jean Brandt, and by a grant from the San José Office of Cultural Affairs.

Andrew Whitfield returns this season to conduct *The Barber of Seville*. Mr. Whitfield has conducted Opera San José's productions of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, and Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Last season he served as the assistant conductor for Puccini's *Tosca*, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and Bizet's *Carmen*.

Layna Chianakas, a former member of Opera San José's resident company, returns to direct *The Barber of Seville*. Ms. Chianakas directed last season's production of Bizet's *Carmen* in which she was praised by Michael Vaughn of *Operaville* who said "With a single split-second action, she changed the entire discourse of the story. I, for one, enjoyed the move, but then it neatly agrees with my take on the character..." She is also the director of this season's One-Act Touring Opera: *Hansel and Gretel*, being performed at K-6 schools throughout San José, and she is the director of OSJ's Opera Summer Training Program for young singers.

The role of Almaviva will be sung by resident company member, tenor **Kirk Dougherty**. Mr. Dougherty most recently appeared as Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* for which he was praised by Elijah Ho of *The Mercury News* for "wearing his heart on his sleeve," and "bringing the house down with closing statements "Fra poco a me ricovero" and "Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali" – a testament to his vocal technique and dependable stamina." Mr. Dougherty appeared last season as Mitch (Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*), Don José (Bizet's *Carmen*) and Cavaradossi (Puccini's *Tosca*).

Brian James Myer, Opera San José's newest baritone and member of the resident company, will sing the role of Figaro. Mr. Myer most recently appeared at Opera San José in the roles of Angelotti (Puccini's *Tosca*), Alessandro/Enrico and Gino (Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*) and 2nd Armored Man (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*). He made his company debut during the 2013-14 season, performing Masetto (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*). Other recent engagements include Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*) with Florida Grand Opera, Silvio (Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*) with Sarasota Opera, and Masetto (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*) with Opera Las Vegas.

Resident baritone **Matthew Hanscom** will sing Figaro on November 13 and 27. Mr. Hanscom recently appeared as Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for which Elijah Ho of *The Mercury News* commended him by saying, "The booming, towering Hanscom portrayed the more determined, egotistical Enrico to a T." Mr. Hanscom appeared in every production last season, singing Escamillo (Bizet's *Carmen*), Count Almaviva (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), and Scarpia (Puccini's *Tosca*). He debuted with Opera San José during the 2014-15 season in the title role of Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

Resident bass-baritone **Colin Ramsey** will appear as Basilio. He made his company debut as Raimondo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and was praised by Jim Sohre of *Opera Today* as a "beautifully calibrated Raimondo. His majestic, orotund, ravishing bass and sincere acting made as good a case for this part as I imagine is possible." Mr. Ramsey has performed with many companies including Seattle Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, and Sarasota Opera.

Mezzo-soprano **Renée Rapier** makes her company debut appearing as Rosina. Ms. Rapier recently performed Cherubino in both John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at LA Opera, Mrs. Bass (Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*) with Opera Theatre St. Louis, and Cornelia (Handel's *Giulio Cesare*) at Wolf Trap Opera, as well as covering the title role of Arden Scott in Jake Heggie's *Great Scott* in both Dallas and San Diego. Upcoming engagements include a debut with Seattle Opera and a return to San Francisco Opera as Mercédès in Calixto Bieito's provocative production of *Carmen*.

Soprano **Teressa Foss** returns to Opera San José as a guest artist to sing Berta. Ms. Foss appeared with the company last season as the Nurse and Old Relative in Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Marcellina in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. She has also appeared with the Bay Area company Verismo Opera, singing the title roles of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and Bellini's *Norma*.

Valerian Ruminski, bass-baritone, makes his company debut performing the role of Dr. Bartolo. Mr. Ruminski has performed many roles including Figaro and Bartolo (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), Ferrando (Verdi's *Il trovatore*), Sparafucile (Verdi's *Rigoletto*), Colline (Puccini's *La bohème*), Commendatore (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), Sarastro (Mozart's *The Magic Flute*), Sam (Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*), among many others.

Baritone **Babatunde Akinboboye** appears as Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville*. A native of Nigeria, Mr. Akinboboye is known for his enthralling stage presence. He has performed with the Los Angeles Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Long Beach Opera, and Center Stage Opera, and has sung Guglielmo (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*), Bartolo (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), and Sharpless (Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*).

Opera San José's production of *The Barber of Seville* includes set designs by **Matthew Antaky**, costumes coordinated by **Alyssa Oania**, lighting design by **Kent Dorsey**, and wig and makeup designs by **Christina Martin**.

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.

Dates: November 12, 13m, 17, 20m, 22, 27m

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

The Barber of Seville Preview: November 1, 2016, 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 Barber of Seville*. The talk begins at 6:30pm prior to evening performances and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

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

To learn more about *The Barber of Seville*, please visit operasj.org

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