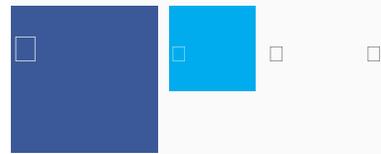


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Community News

Rossini's 'Barber of Seville' with comedic twist comes to Opera San Jose



Mezzo-soprano Renée Rapier performs the role of Rosina in Opera San Jose's production of 'The Barber of Seville,' playing Nov. 12-27 at the California Theatre.

By **KHALIDA SARWARI** | ksarwari@bayareanewsgroup.com
November 9, 2016 at 3:14 pm

HIGHLIGHTS

Under the direction of Layna Chianakas, Rossini's two-act Italian opera, "The Barber of Seville," will get a treatment that reflects current sensibilities while staying true to the original production.

When 'The Barber of Seville' premiered at Rome's Teatro Argentina in 1816, it was met with the kind of response no composer wants to see, at least none on the caliber of Gioachino Rossini. His biographer, Richard Osborne, recounts audiences hissing and jeering throughout the opera that late February evening. Fortunately, theater-goers eventually wised up and made both the opera and its composer a worldwide

success. In commemoration of the comic opera's 200th anniversary, Opera San Jose will present a two-week run of "Barber" at the California Theatre Nov. 12-27.

Under the direction of Layna Chianakas, the two-act Italian opera by Rossini and librettist Cesare Sterbini will get a treatment that reflects current sensibilities while staying true to the original production.

"It's a traditional production, but we are updating the comedy," Chianakas said. "I don't want to give away our secrets, but we are certainly being mindful that we are playing to a modern-day audience and modern-day sensitivities."

She said this production will also be harking to Bugs Bunny in a way that fans of "The Rabbit of Seville" are sure to notice.

"He is, in some ways, throughout the entire opera," she said. "If they've seen Bugs Bunny, they'll recognize some of the tunes, and I think the music itself is very, very accessible."

The opera is based on a comedy by French playwright Pierre Beaumarchais and revolves around a character named Figaro; Brian James Myer and Matthew Hanscom are double-cast in the role for Opera San Jose's production. In her company debut, mezzo-soprano Renee Rapier stars as Rosina, a young orphan from Seville whose large inheritance attracts the attention of her uncle, Bartolo (Valerian Ruminski), while her beauty catches the eye of a Spanish aristocrat, Count Almaviva (Kirk Dougherty). With Figaro's help, Almaviva uses his charm and wit, rather than money, to win Rosina's heart.

Rapier, whose recent stage credits include parts in John Corigliano's "The Ghosts of Versailles" and Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" at LA Opera, said she enjoys playing Rosina.

"She is not quite the damsel in distress; she's the spunky girl," Rapier said. "I was lucky enough to have done her before, so I knew her pretty well. It's been fun to take what I had done before or what I had thought about doing and interact with what (Chianakas) had in mind and change it up a bit."

A former member of Opera San Jose's resident company, Chianakas last directed Bizet's "Carmen." She is the director of this season's "Hansel and Gretel," being performed at K-6 schools throughout San Jose, and of the company's summer training program for young singers. Chianakas is also the head of the voice program at San Jose State University.



While she has experience singing in the lead role, this is her first time directing “Barber.” Working with a talented cast of actors with a wealth of experience made all the difference, she said.

“I’m very, very lucky, because I have a cast of world-class singers,” Chianakas said. “They are singing music that’s written for virtuosic singing, so I’m really blessed that I have them, but also they’re all really, really terrific actors. When I have that as my baseline to start with, that makes my job easy.”

Chianakas will be supported by conductor Andrew Whitfield and set designer Matthew Antaky. “Barber” is Opera San Jose’s second production of the 2016-17 season.

Chianakas and Rapier both recommended “Barber” for opera virgins.

“I think this is going to be a really great show for anybody who’s ever been interested in opera,” Rapier said. “It’s really fun; people will recognize a lot of the music even if they don’t think they will.”

General director Larry Hancock will give a 45-minute talk to ticket holders about the opera at 6:30 p.m. prior to the evening shows and at 1:30 p.m. prior to the matinees.

“The Barber of Seville” will be presented in Italian with English supertitles. The opera runs Nov. 12-27 at the California Theatre, 345 S. First St., San Jose. Tickets are \$55-\$175 at operasj.org.

Tags:
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Dungeness crab lovers rejoice! Commercial season cleared to start next week

November 10, 2016, 11:48 am

This year's commercial Dungeness crab season is going to start on time in the Bay Area, as the harmful algae blooms that marred the 2015-16 season have retreated to normal levels along most of the California coast.

Milpitas: Council expected to choose solid waste collector Monday

November 10, 2016, 11:18 am

After multiple delays from the two contenders for waste collection and from the Milpitas City Council to continue the item from the original September selection date to Nov. 14, the council will review the two collection contracts and decide which one to move forward with starting in fall of next year.

Milpitas: First-time candidates elected to mayor, council

November 10, 2016, 11:11 am

Residents also vote to approve four initiatives, including one which will uphold city council's decision to haul garbage to Almaden Valley.

Campbell store owners invited to meet with Yelp's top-rated businesses

November 10, 2016, 10:22 am

Owners of Redemption in Campbell, Tammy Liu and partner David MacGregor-Scholes, will spend their time at Yelp's Coast to Coast event, where business owners will be able to share ideas and information of how they keep their business successful.

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