



Opera San José

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*Opera San José Presents the West Coast Premiere of Puts' and Campbell's*

## *Silent Night*

**SAN JOSE, CA (January 16, 2017)** – One of the most inspiring operas in decades, *Silent Night* recounts the miraculous day of peace during WWI when Scottish, French and German soldiers negotiate an unofficial cease fire, a Christmas Eve truce, among themselves. The soldiers, bloodied from battle and mourning their dead, are moved to celebrate Christmas, as a carol begins, floating softly over no man's land to celebrate Christmas.

Composer Kevin Puts and librettist Mark Campbell, who won the 2012 Pulitzer Prize for *Silent Night*, will join Opera San José for the opening, speaking about this brilliant contribution to modern opera at a series of discussions on February 10, and for a reception following opening night on February 11. Opera San José's will be a new production of *Silent Night*, with sets, props, costumes, and projections being created by the company.

"I am thrilled to be creating this new production of *Silent Night* for Opera San José," said director, Michael Shell. "I think the opera's examination of the experiences the men had in the trenches of WWI, poses questions of why we go to war, who benefits, and ultimately, the cost."

The libretto uses English, French, German, Italian and Latin, and all will be translated into English supertitles. Run-time is approximately 2.5 hours. Opera San José presents six performances of this deeply significant opera, opening in San José's California Theatre on February 11, 2017, closing February 26, 2017. The California Theatre is at 345 S. First Street in downtown San José.

**Joseph Marcheso**, Opera San José's music director and principal conductor, will conduct *Silent Night*. Mr. Marcheso most recently conducted last season's *Carmen*, and was commended by Michael Vaughn of *Operaville* for "leading the orchestra in a sumptuous reading of Bizet's score, particularly in the delicate interplay of flute and harp (and later, exquisite swells of strings) in the Act 3 entre'acte." Mr. Marcheso has conducted sixteen productions for Opera San José including the world premiere of Mark Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* during the 2014-15 season.

**Michael Shell** returns this season to direct *Silent Night*. Mr. Shell made his Opera San José debut as the director of Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* during the 2014-15 season. He has directed productions for the Atlanta Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Michigan Opera Theater, to name a few, and has written and directed three cabarets, including *All About Love* and *The Glamorous Life – A group therapy session for Opera Singers*, both for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Resident company member, tenor **Kirk Dougherty**, will sing the role of Nikolaus Sprink, German opera singer in *Silent Night*. Mr. Dougherty most recently appeared as Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of*

*Seville* for which he was praised by Elijah Ho of *The Mercury News* as “singing with his heart on his sleeve, always, and “Ecco ridente in cielo”, with its vast runs and roulades, was a pleasure to hear.”

**Brian James Myer**, a baritone and member of the resident company, will appear as Ponchel, the aide-de-camp to Lt. Audebert of the French army. Mr. Myer appeared as Figaro in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* last November and received wonderful reviews with Jim Sohre of *Opera Today* saying, “I cannot recall encountering anyone in my many years of seeing this piece who exhibited anywhere near such a total command of the role, the style, the joyous abandon.”

Resident baritone **Matthew Hanscom** will sing the role of Lt. Gordon of the Scottish army. Mr. Hanscom recently appeared as Figaro in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* and was hailed by Tad Malone of *The Metro* who said, “The standout performance belongs to Matthew Hanscom as Figaro. Demonstrating easy command over his powerful, yet flexible, voice, Hanscom focuses on channeling the comedy through his face.”

Resident bass-baritone **Colin Ramsey** will appear as Father Palmer of the Scottish army. Mr. Ramsey recently appeared as Basilio in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* and was praised by Jim Sohre of *Opera Today* who said, “His unabashedly youthful voice was an inspired choice, and no comedy was lost by showcasing Mr. Ramsey’s gorgeously rolling tones, with their vibrant young sheen.”

**Ksenia Popova**, soprano and associate member of resident company, will sing the role of Madeleine Audebert, Lt. Audebert of the French army’s wife. This season Ms. Popova covered the title role in Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Berta in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. She recently made her role debut as Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* with Tacoma Opera, for which she was hailed as “a perfect blend of childish enthusiasm and regal composure, singing with a rich, glittery soprano and real conviction.”

Soprano **Julie Adams** will make her Opera San José debut appearing as Anna Sorensen. Ms. Adams is a second-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow and alumna of the 2014 Merola Opera Program, where she recently performed the role of Blanche DuBois in Previn’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Other credits include Lia (Debussy’s *L’Enfant Prodigue*) at the International Vocal Arts Institute in Tel Aviv; Pamina (*The Magic Flute*) at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara; and Magnolia Hawks (Kern’s *Show Boat*) and Rose (Weill’s *Street Scene*) with the Oakland East Bay Symphony.

**Ricardo Rivera**, baritone, will sing the role of Lt. Audebert and made his company debut last September singing Enrico during the September 25 performance of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Tenor **Mason Gates**, who made his company debut as Don Curzio in last season’s *The Marriage of Figaro*, will return to sing the role of Jonathan Dale in *Silent Night*.

Bass, **Nathan Stark**, will sing the role of General Audebert in *Silent Night* and made his Opera San José debut as Mustafa in Rossini’s *The Italian Girl in Algiers* during the 2014-15 season. Former resident company member and tenor, **Christopher Bengochea**, will return to sing the role Kronprinz. Mr. Bengochea most recently appeared at Opera San José as B.F. Pinkerton in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* in 2014 and was a member of the resident company from 2005-2008.

**Branch Fields**, bass, will appear as William Dale. Mr. Fields previously appeared as Méphistophélès in Opera San José’s 2011-12 production of Gounod’s *Faust* and Sparafucile in the company’s 2001 production of Verdi’s *Rigoletto*. Baritone **Vitali Rozyenko** makes his company debut as the British Major.

Recent engagements for Mr. Rozyngo include the role of Pilatus in a staged version of Bach's *Johannes Passion* with the Nederlandse Reis Opera and Spencer Coyle in Britten's *Owen Wingrave* with The Nieuw Ensemble.

Opera San José's production of *Silent Night* includes set designs by **Steven Kemp**, costume designs by **Melissa Torchia**, lighting design by **Pamila Z. Gray**, 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:** February 11, 12m, 16, 19m, 24, 26m

**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

**Silent Night Preview:** January 31, 2017 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 *Silent Night*. 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](http://www.operasj.org/news-events/press-room)

To learn more about *Silent Night*, please visit [operasj.org](http://operasj.org)

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