

Opera San José Presents Puccini's Beloved
La bohème

SAN JOSE, CA (March 13, 2017) – *La bohème* is a passionate story of love among young artists in Paris. Mimi spends her days embroidering and her winter evenings longing for springtime. Literally in search of light, a match for her only candle, she instead finds happiness and friendship with a band of impoverished bohemians – a poet, a philosopher, a painter, and a musician. Briefly, Mimì and Rodolfo make a place of love for themselves, until poverty prevails. Based on the lives of bohemians, including Puccini himself, *La bohème* rings true.

“I am excited to direct *La bohème* for Opera San Jose,” said director, Michael Shell. “The opera will be set at the end of WWI, when Paris was delirious with optimism for the new century, when Nijinsky, Stravinsky, Picasso and Coco Chanel were creating a new way of life in the most exciting city in the world.”

La bohème will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. Run-time is approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes. Opera San José presents six performances of this beloved opera, opening in San José's California Theatre on April 15, 2017, closing April 30, 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 *La bohème*. Mr. Marcheso most recently conducted February's West Coast premiere of Puccini's *Silent Night* and 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 seventeen productions for Opera San José including and the world premiere of Mark Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread* during the 2014-15 season.

Michael Shell returns to direct *La bohème* and most recently directed the West Coast premiere of Puccini's *Silent Night* for which he was commended by Joshua Kosman of the *San Francisco Chronicle* who said, “Director Michael Shell makes deft use of the crowded stage at the California Theater to delineate the boundaries of the trenches and the way the soldiers manage to breach them.” Mr. Shell made his Opera San José debut as the director of Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* during the 2014-15 season.

Soprano **Sylvia Lee**, a member of the resident company, will sing three performances as Mimi. Ms. Lee most recently appeared as Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* for which she received wonderful reviews and was praised by Elijah Ho of *The Mercury News* who said, “By the time she had sung her final notes as Lucia on Saturday evening, it was apparent soprano Sylvia Lee had left us with something special.”

Resident company member, tenor **Kirk Dougherty**, will sing the role of Rodolfo. Mr. Dougherty most recently appeared as Nikolaus Sprink, a German opera singer, in Puccini's *Silent Night* and was commended by Jim Sohre of *Opera Today* for his performance as Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber*



of *Seville*, who said, “He (Dougherty) once again regales us with a honeyed voice that is pliable, beautifully produced, and consistently responsive. His forays into the upper reaches of the role are as comfortably negotiated as the characterful melismas.”

Resident baritone **Matthew Hanscom** will sing the role of Marcello in *La bohème*. Mr. Hanscom recently appeared as Lt. Gordon of the Scottish army in Puts and Campbell’s *Silent Night* and as Figaro in two performances of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* for which he was applauded by Mort Levine of *The Milpitas Post* who said, “The famous ‘Largo al Factotum’, as delivered by Hanscom was a bit of operatic wizardry in its dizzying patter song telling of the many kinds of ‘jobs’ the barber ‘of quality’ stands ready to perform.”

Brian James Myer, baritone and member of the resident company, appears as Schaunard. Mr. Myer most recently appeared as Ponchel in Puts and Campbell’s *Silent Night* and Figaro in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. Elijah Ho of *The Mercury News* had this to say about Mr. Myer’s performance in *The Barber of Seville*, “His unwavering charm and energy stole nearly every scene he was in, and with tremendous breath control, projection and clarity of diction, he navigated the octave leaps and challenges of his opening cavatina ‘Largo al factotum’ with conviction.”

Bass-baritone **Colin Ramsey**, also in the resident company, will appear as Colline in *La bohème* and most recently appeared as Father Palmer in Puts and Campbell’s *Silent Night*. Mr. Ramsey also appeared as Basilio in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* and was praised by Heather Morris of *Peninsula Reviews* who said, “His rich bass voice was quite magnificent in ‘La callunia è un venticello,’ an aria which grows and intensifies through a riveting crescendo.”

Soprano **Julie Adams**, who recently made her Opera San José debut as Anna Sorensen in Puts and Campbell’s *Silent Night*, will also sing three performances as Mimi. Jim Sohre of Opera Today wrote of Ms. Adams “She is entrusted to deliver a beautifully judged battlefield prayer, and boy, deliver it she did with heart-stopping effect. We will be hearing much more from her.” Other credits include Blanche DuBois (Previn’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*), Lia (Debussy’s *L’Enfant Prodigue*), Pamina (Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*), Magnolia Hawks (Kern’s *Show Boat*) and Rose (Weill’s *Street Scene*).

Soprano **Vanessa Becerra** makes her company debut appearing as Musetta in *La bohème*. Ms. Becerra is a recent graduate of the acclaimed Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program at Los Angeles Opera. Roles recently performed there include Papagena in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Annina in Verdi’s *La traviata*.

Opera San José’s production of *La bohème* includes set designs by **Kim A. Tolman**, costumes designed by **Alina Bokovikova**, 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: April 15, 16m, 20, 23m, 28, 30m

Time: “m” indicates matinee at 3pm; all other performances are at 8pm



Opera San José

Location: California Theatre, 345 South 1st Street (between San Carlos and San Salvador), San José, CA

La bohème Preview: April 4, 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 about the opera to ticket holders at the California Theatre before each performance of *La bohème*. 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 *La bohème*, please visit operasj.org

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