

Press Contact:
Chris Jalufka
Communications Manager
jalufka@operasj.org

Opera San José Presents Mozart's

The Abduction from the Seraglio

SAN JOSE, CA (August 14, 2018) – On September 15th, Opera San José's 35th season opens with Mozart's comedy *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. The opera was commissioned by Emperor Joseph II, and as the myth goes when he first heard it, he complained to Mozart, "That is too fine for my ears – there are too many notes." Mozart replied, "There are just as many notes as there should be."

Mozart's rollicking comedy tells us the story of Konstanze and her feisty maid who have been captured by pirates and sold to the Pasha Selim. The Pasha has added the elegant Konstanze to his harem while Blonde has been passed on as a servant to the gardener. Spanish aristocrat Belmonte arrives to rescue Konstanze, who is his fiancée. His sidekick Pedrillo, already on the Pasha's staff, jumps in. Hijinks ensue and so does Mozart's unfailing sense of humor and humanity as this unexpected mix of high art and slapstick comedy unfolds in an 18th-century Turkish fantasy that was conceived to entertain.

This is a new production and an Opera San José company premiere funded in part by a City of San José Cultural Affairs grant and a grant from the Packard Humanities Institute.

The Abduction from the Seraglio will be sung in German with English spoken dialogue and English supertitles. Runtime is approximately three hours. Opera San José presents six performances of this opera, opening in San José's California Theatre on September 15, 2018, closing September 30, 2018. The California Theatre is at 345 S. First Street in downtown San José.

George Manahan makes his Opera San José debut as conductor for *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. The wide-ranging and versatile George Manahan has had an esteemed career embracing everything from opera to the concert stage, the traditional to the contemporary. He is the Music Director of the American Composer's Orchestra and the Portland Opera (OR), previously served as Music Director of New York City Opera for fourteen seasons, and has appeared as guest conductor with the opera companies of Seattle, Santa Fe, San Francisco, Chicago, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Opera National du Paris and Teatro de Comunale de Bologna, New Jersey, Atlanta, San Francisco, Milwaukee, and Indianapolis Symphonies, and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra. A recipient of Columbia University's Ditson Conducting Award, he was honored four times by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his commitment to 20th-century music during his tenure as Music Director of the Richmond Symphony (VA).

Acting as both assistant conductor and chorus master for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* is **Ming Luke**, who was on the podium for OSJ's productions of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, the company premiere of Andre Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. He also

shared conducting duties in OSJ's productions of Verdi's *Falstaff*, Poulenc's *La voix humaine*, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

Michael Shell returns in the 2018-19 season to direct the company premiere of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Previously, Mr. Shell received critical acclaim for his direction of OSJ's West Coast premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *Silent Night* and Puccini's *La bohème*. He made his OSJ debut as stage director of Rossini's *The Italian Girl in Algiers* in the 2014-15 season.

Former resident company member soprano **Rebecca Davis** returns in the 2018-19 season to perform the role of Konstanze in the company premiere of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Recent performances for Ms. Davis included 2017-18 role debuts as Louise in Henze's *Der Junge Lord*, The First Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Agathe in Weber's *Der Freischütz*, and Marie in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, all with Staatsoper Hannover. During the 2016-17 season, Ms. Davis performed the roles of Mimì (Puccini's *La bohème*), Micaëla (Bizet's *Carmen*), Rosalinda (J. Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*), and the Countess (Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*), all with Germany's Staatsoper Hannover. In the previous season, Ms. Davis appeared as Donna Anna (Mozart's *Don Giovanni*), Mimì, and her title role debut in Dvorak's *Rusalka*, also with Staatsoper Hannover.

Making her company debut during the 2018-19 season, soprano **Katrina Galka** appears as Blonde in OSJ's company premiere of Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Recent engagements for Ms. Galka include Adina in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* and her role debut as Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, both for Portland Opera. She also returned to Arizona Opera as Cunegonde in Bernstein's *Candide*, Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, Woglinde in Wagner's *Das Rheingold*, and a quartet of roles in Morganelli's *Hercules vs Vampires* as well as joining the Las Vegas Philharmonic for Handel's *Messiah*.

Tenor **Matthew Grills** makes his company debut in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, appearing as Belmonte. Recent appearances include Tobias in San Francisco Opera's production of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* and a debut with Seattle Opera as Almaviva in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. He recently returned to Bayerische Staatsoper as a member of the company's ensemble, where his roles included Pedrillo in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, Brighella in Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* as well as Kedril in Janacek's *From the House of the Dead*, Danieli in Verdi's *Les vêpres siciliennes*, and Vierter Knappe in Wagner's *Parsifal*, all new productions.

Bass-baritone **Ashraf Sewailam** makes his company debut as Osmin in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* and Queequeg in Heggie's *Moby-Dick*. Engagements for Mr. Sewailam during the 2017-18 season included directing Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen* for Dell Arte Opera, performing the role of Capitán in Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Madison Opera, Monterone in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Opera Grand Rapids, Toledo Opera, and Opera Carolina, where he also performed Lignieres in DiChiera's *Cyrano*. On the concert stage, he sang a concert entitled *Eternal Spirit* with Boulder Bach Festival and a recital with pianist Kenneth Osowski at York College. Additionally, he has been recorded in a new opera by Danish composer Poul Ruders, *The 13th Child*.

Former member of OSJ's resident company tenor **Michael Dailey** returns during the 2018-19 season, appearing as Pedrillo in the company premiere of Mozart's *The Abduction of the Seraglio*. Mr. Dailey most recently appeared as Basilio in OSJ's 2015-16 production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. Other recent OSJ appearances include Lindoro in *The Italian Girl in Algiers* (2014-15) and Alfredo (*Die Fledermaus*) in 2012-13. While a member of OSJ's resident ensemble, Mr. Dailey performed the roles

Beppe (*Pagliacci*), Alfredo (*La traviata*), Konstantin Levin (*Anna Karenina*), Count Almaviva (*The Barber of Seville*), Des Grieux (*Manon*), Prunier (*La rondine*), Lensky (*Eugene Onegin*), Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), and Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*).

In the speaking role Pasha Selim is bass **Nathan Stark**, who has been praised by the *Washington Post* as having a voice of "unearthly power," The *Houston Press* as being a "blow away singer," and the *Mercury News* as a "natural comic actor." Mr. Stark has performed on operatic, concert and recital stages throughout the United States, Europe and China. In the 2017-18 season, Mr. Stark made company debuts as Banco in Verid's *Macbeth* with Opera San Antonio, Don Basilio in Rossini's *il Barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Santa Barbara, The Judge in *An American Solider* with Opera Saint Louis, Colline in *Puccini's La Boheme* with Opera Orlando, Rocco in Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Boston Baroque, and returned to Opera San José as the King in the United States premiere of Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella*.

Opera San José's production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* includes set designs by **Steven C. Kemp**, costumes designed by **Ulises Alcalá**, lighting design by **Pamila Z. Gray**, and wig and makeup designs by **Christina Martin**.

Dates: Performances: September 15, 16m, 20, 23m, 28, 30m

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 Abduction from the Seraglio Preview: September 4, 2018 from 12 – 1 p.m., California Theatre, 345 S. First Street in downtown San José; Please use the Market Street entrance; 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 Abduction from the Seraglio*. 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 Abduction from the Seraglio*, please visit operasj.org

Performances supported, in part, by a Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San José and a grant from the Packard Humanities Institute.

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



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schools and in the community at large, and offers preview lectures and Introduction to Opera talks for all mainstage productions.

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