

## OPERA SAN JOSÉ RINGS IN 2021 WITH **THE PARTING GLASS** A FREE VIRTUAL NEW YEARS CELEBRATION

SAN JOSE, CA (9 December 2020) – Eager to bid adieu, farewell, and even good riddance to 2020, **Opera San José** has announced it will present ***The Parting Glass***, an online celebration for music-lovers on New Year’s Eve. Set in a pub, this jovial program of drinking songs spanning centuries and countries was conceived and curated by OSJ Resident Bass-baritone **Nathan Stark**, and directed by OSJ Resident Director **Tara Branham**. Conductor **Christopher James Ray**, baritone **Eugene Brancoveanu**, mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon**, soprano **Maya Kherani**, tenor **Carlos Enrique Santelli**, and baritone **Efraín Solís** join their fellow OSJ Resident Artists, taking on the roles of the pub piano player, a French wine lover, a Russian drunkard, an Italian opera singer, a British professor, and the pub’s German regular. Produced and captured in the Heiman Digital Media Studio, this celebratory event will be available to stream at 6:30pm (PST), Thursday, December 31. For more information and to RSVP, the public may visit [operasj.org/the-parting-glass](https://operasj.org/the-parting-glass). While access to ***The Parting Glass*** is free of charge, patrons are given the opportunity to purchase exclusive add-ons for this one-night-only event to enhance their experience and raise funds for Opera San José. VIP Experience options include: \$150 (delivery of an Opera San José goodie bag that includes party favors and keepsakes), \$500 (delivery of Bird Dog meal for two from Chef Robbie Wilson’s lauded Palo Alto eatery with a pairing of the award-winning whiskeys from 10<sup>th</sup> Street Distillery and goodie bag), \$1,000\* (delivery of Bird Dog meal for four from Chef Robbie Wilson’s lauded Palo Alto eatery with pairings of award-winning whiskeys from 10<sup>th</sup> Street Distillery, two goodie bags, and a commemorative *Three Decembers* DVD). A silent auction of unique Opera San José experiences, raffle drawings, and paddle raise will be included in the evening’s celebration.

*\*May be delivered to two households.*

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For this production, **Opera San José** has assembled an outstanding team to create a safe performance space, operating under the strictest safety protocols. The participating artists quarantined, allowing them to safely interact during the process. All cast and crew underwent frequent COVID testing and temperature checks and adhered to strict masking and social distancing protocols. All crew wore personal protective equipment (PPE). A dedicated COVID-19 safety officer remained on-site throughout the entire process to ensure that all safety measures were strictly observed, enabling the company to proceed with the creation of this extraordinary production. Members of the creative team also included **Alyssa Oania** (Costume Coordinator), **Matt Vandercook** (Lighting Designer), **Christina Martin** (Hair and Makeup Designer), and **RAPT Productions** (Video Production).

### **Eugene Brancoveanu**

Growing up in Romania and Germany, baritone Eugene Brancoveanu studied at the Academy of Music in Transylvania, Romania and at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria before pursuing a successful international career, earning critical acclaim throughout North America and Europe. Career highlights include receiving a Tony Award for Excellence in Theatre for his participation in the principal ensemble (as Marcello) in Baz Luhrmann’s innovative Broadway production of Puccini’s *La bohème*, and his performance in the title role of Shostakovich’s *Orango* with the Los Angeles Symphony under the direction of Esa-Pekka Salonen and Peter Sellers, which was recorded for Deutsche Grammophon. Known for his robust voice and superior stagecraft, Brancoveanu was an Adler Fellow at San Francisco Opera for two seasons, directly following his critically acclaimed summer 2004 performances of Tarquinius in Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia* with the Merola Opera Program. Discovering Opera San José’s European style Resident Artist program, Brancoveanu was immediately drawn to the organization and appeared as a guest artist as early as 2014. Last season he became a Resident Artist, performing in Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus* (as Eisenstein), Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* (Father), and Verdi’s *Il trovatore* (Count de Luna).

### **Tara Branham**

Stage Director Tara Branham returned to Opera San José as Resident Director for its 2020-21 season, recently gaining critical acclaim for directing the dazzling production of *Three Decembers*. Her work was seen in the past two seasons at the helm of OSJ’s productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. Branham has built a robust directing portfolio both in opera and theatre across the country, with companies including Opera Theatre St. Louis, Chicago Opera Theatre, Long Beach Opera Theater, as well as Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Chicago’s famed Steppenwolf Theatre Company. She is the recipient of the National New Play Network Producer-in-Residence Fellowship with Prop Thtr, where she founded the Chicago Directors Workshop committed to the development of directors.

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### **Ashley Dixon**

A Grand Finals winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon is quickly establishing herself as one of the most exceptional artists of her generation. In February 2020, Dixon made her critically acclaimed debut with the Los Angeles Opera, stepping in as Sara in Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* alongside bel canto veterans Ramon Vargas and Angela Meade, under conductor Eun Sun Kim. The *Los Angeles Times* declared Dixon, “A young mezzo soprano worth paying attention to” who “brought an excellent fluidity to Sara.” A 2019 alumna of San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship, Dixon made her SFO mainstage debut in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life* as Angel First Class. During her two-year Adler tenure, she was also heard as Mércèdes in Bizet's *Carmen*, the Third Wood Sprite in Dvořák's *Rusalka*, the Italian Singer in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*, and the Sandman in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. As a two-year participant in the Merola Opera Program, Dixon performed as La Ciesca in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Mrs. Nolan in Menotti's *The Medium*, Popova in William Walton's *The Bear*, and ended her summer season on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House, singing an aria from Massenet's *Cendrillon* as part of the Merola Grand Finale concert.

### **Maya Kherani**

Lauded for her vibrant voice and exciting characterizations in repertoire from the Baroque to the modern, soprano Maya Kherani can be seen in Opera San José's hit virtual production of *Three Decembers*. She made her company debut as a guest artist during the 2017-18 season, appearing as Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Yvette in Puccini's *La Rondine*. Additional career highlights include starring in the title role of Handel's *Partenope* with Opera NEO; Meera in the premiere of Jack Perla's *The River of Light*, commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera; and Altisidore in Boismortier's *Don Quichote chez la Duchesse* with Central City Opera. She received First Place and Audience Favorite at the James Toland Vocal Competition, two Encouragement Awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and the top overall Barlow Award at the San Francisco Bay Area NATS competition, where she also won First Place in both the Professional Art Song and Aria categories.

### **Christopher James Ray (Pianist)**

Conductor Christopher James Ray returns to Opera San José for a second consecutive year in the company's resident ensemble. In 2017 he joined the music staff of the renowned Bayreuth Festival, where he worked on productions of Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and *Parsifal*. Christopher made his professional debut leading a double bill of Gianni Schicchi and Pagliacci with Mississippi Opera in 2014. Past conducting credits with Opera San José include *Il trovatore*, *Hansel & Gretel*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Moby Dick*, and *Pagliacci*. As assistant conductor, Ray has worked with the San Francisco Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Salzburg State Theater, North Carolina Opera, and Sarasota Opera. A protege of American composer Carlisle Floyd, Ray is a sought-after interpreter of Floyd's works. In addition to serving as the assistant to the composer, he recorded an album of Floyd's songs with the celebrated mezzo-soprano Susanne Mentzer.

### **Carlos Enrique Santelli**

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Tenor Carlos Enrique Santelli makes his company debut with Opera San José in the 2020/21 company of Resident Artists. Santelli was a winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National and Council Auditions and has appeared in a special gala celebrating the ten-year anniversary of La Opera’s Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program. He recently appeared with Dayton Opera as Count Almaviva in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville* and performed as a tenor soloist in Mendelssohn’s *Die Erste Walpurgisnacht (The First Walpurgis Night)* with the Sacramento Choral Society. On the concert stage, Santelli’s many appearances as tenor soloist include Handel’s *Messiah* (with the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra), as well as in joint recitals with his wife, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon, who will be a fellow 2020/21 Resident Artist.

### **Efraín Solís**

Baritone Efraín Solís made his company debut with Opera San José this season, appearing as Charlie in the new virtual production of Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*. A recent graduate of the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship and alumnus of the prestigious Merola Opera Program, he has been applauded by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for his “theatrical charisma and musical bravado.” Solís was a Grand Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2013, as well as a finalist in Houston Grand Opera’s Eleanor McCollum Competition and the Loren L. Zachary Society for the Performing Arts National Vocal Competition. Solís has been seen with opera companies throughout the nation, including Utah Opera, Opera Carolina, Virginia Opera, Toledo Opera, West Edge Opera, Opera Saratoga, Livermore Valley Opera, and Opera Memphis.

### **Nathan Stark**

Seen as a guest artist at Opera San José, bass-baritone Nathan Stark returns as Resident Artist for the 2020-21 season. Praised by *The Washington Post* for having a voice of “unearthly power,” by the *Houston Press* as a “blow-away singer,” and *The Mercury News* as a “natural comic actor,” he has performed with opera houses throughout the United States including the Metropolitan Opera, Atlanta Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Arizona Opera, Virginia Opera, Dayton Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Stark was the 2006 Southern California District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Competition, and First Place winner of the Los Angeles Classical Singers Association, in addition to awards from the Palm Springs Opera Competition, Fort Worth Opera Competition, The Opera Buffs Competition, The Pasadena Opera Competition, The Columbus Opera Aira Competition, and recipient of the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music Corbett Opera Scholarship.

The **Heiman Digital Media Studio** was made possible by a generous lead donation from Opera San José trustee Peggy Heiman in honor of her late husband, devoted Opera San José supporter Fred Heiman. This production of *Three Decembers* was made possible by the Carol Franc Buck Foundation and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation. Opera San José is supported, in part, by a Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose, and Applied Materials Foundation.

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**Opera San José** is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of artists and supporting emerging talent in role debuts, 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.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:**

**WHAT:** Eager to bid adieu, farewell, and even good riddance to 2020, **Opera San José** has announced it will present ***The Parting Glass***, an online celebration for music-lovers on New Year’s Eve. Set in a pub, this jovial program of drinking songs spanning centuries and countries was conceived and curated by OSJ Resident Bass-baritone **Nathan Stark**, and directed by OSJ Resident Director **Tara Branham**. Conductor **Christopher James Ray**, baritone **Eugene Brancoveanu**, mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon**, soprano **Maya Kherani**, tenor **Carlos Enrique Santelli**, and baritone **Efraín Solís** join their fellow OSJ Resident Artists, taking on the roles of the pub piano player, a French wine lover, a Russian drunkard, an Italian opera singer, a British professor, and the pub’s German regular.

**INFO:** To RSVP, the public may visit [operasj.org/the-parting-glass](https://operasj.org/the-parting-glass) or call **(408) 437-4450** (Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm).

Access to ***The Parting Glass*** is free of charge. VIP Experience options include: \$150 (delivery of an Opera San José goodie bag that includes party favors and keepsakes), \$500 (delivery of Bird Dog meal for two from Chef Robbie Wilson’s lauded Palo Alto eatery with a pairing of the award-winning whiskeys from 10<sup>th</sup> Street Distillery and goodie bag), \$1,000\* (delivery of Bird Dog meal for four from Chef Robbie Wilson’s lauded Palo Alto eatery with pairings of award-winning whiskeys from 10<sup>th</sup> Street Distillery, two goodie bags, and a commemorative *Three Decembers* DVD).

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**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos are available here:  
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/thepartingglass>