



Opera San José



OPERA SAN JOSÉ ANNOUNCES FREE LIVE STREAM OF IDOMENEO: RÉ DI CRETA

SAN JOSE, CA (6 April 2020) – While it will not be opening *The Magic Flute* in April due to COVID-19 restrictions, **Opera San José** has announced something all opera patrons can enjoy at home instead: the FREE live stream viewing of its breathtaking 2011 production of Mozart’s first dramatic masterpiece, the rarely produced *Idomeneo: ré di Creta*. Jointly produced with the Packard Humanities Institute, which generously underwrote the production and all rights for continued sharing online, this rarely presented, larger-than-life work features ground-breaking performances by artists who have since gone on to international fame, dance segments by choreographer Dennis Nahat performed by the Ballet San Jose (which ceased operations in 2016), and an orchestra conducted by world-famed Mozart interpreter George Cleve (who passed away in 2015). It was met with critical acclaim, with *The Mercury News* calling it a “jaw-dropping, must-see production,” and the *San Francisco Chronicle* applauding the company’s “vividly colorful” execution mixed “with a keen sense of Mozartean style.” Hailed as “arguably the most extravagant production ever at Opera San José,” (*ArtsSF*) this lavish realization of *Idomeneo* featured a cast of 73 singers, with 41 chorus members, 14 ballet dancers, 180 Cretan costumes, and an elaborate three-story-high set inspired by Crete’s ancient history. Beginning on April 18, *Idomeneo* will be available to stream at no charge on www.operasj.org, and will remain available through May 18, 2020.

“We are offering this video to the community on what would have been the opening night of *The Magic Flute*, our season finale cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. We hope second best to actually sitting in the beautiful California Theatre is reliving this highlight from our company’s rich history,” says Opera San José General Director Khori Dastoor, “We are reminded how important this work is to both our company and the artistic community as we celebrate this rarely performed masterpiece. This production truly encapsulates the artistry, musicality, and

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experience of the dedicated professionals that OSJ’s Artists and Musicians Relief Fund is currently supporting during this unprecedented time.”

Idomeneo: ré di Creta is set at the end of the Trojan War and follows the tale of a mythical king of Crete. Adapted from the French drama *Idoménée* by Antoine Danchet, it offers a rich and complex score by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart with libretto by Giambattista Varesco, sung in Italian with English supertitles with a run time of approximately three and a half hours, including two intermissions. The creative team included **George Cleve** (Conductor), **Anthony Quartuccio** (Assistant Conductor), **Brad Dalton** (Stage Director), **Steven Kemp** (Set Design), **Johann Stegmeir** (Costume Design), **Lori Scheper** (Props), **Christopher Ostrom** (Lighting Design), **Jeanna Parham** (Wigs/Makeup), **Ian Robertson** and **Andrew Whitfield** (Chorus Directors), and **Dennis Nahat** (Choreography).

Described by the *Spartan Daily* as “a three-act feast for the eyes, ears, and intellect,” Opera San José’s stunning production of *Idomeneo* was recorded in a performance starring tenor **Christopher Bengochea** as King Idomeneo, tenor **Aaron Blake** as Prince Idamante, soprano **Rebecca Davis** as Princess Iliia, soprano **Christina Major** as Princess Electra, tenor **Mathew Edwardson** as the High Priest of Neptune, and **Silas Elash** as the Voice of Zeus.

Christopher Bengochea has forged an international career in oratorios and operas, returning to OSJ to perform in several seasons, where he has been seen as Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*), Romeo (*Roméo et Juliette*), *Rudolfo* (*La bohème*) and many more. He was a regional finalist of the Metropolitan Opera Auditions, and a prize winner at the Henri and Marie Holte and Teatro Felice vocal competitions. He has been seen in operas companies around the world including Canada, Italy, and New York City.

Following his Opera San José appearance, **Aaron Blake** went on to perform with major opera companies around the world, making his debut at the Met in 2017 opposite Placido Domingo in *La traviata*, returning to appear in *Les contes d’Hoffmann*, *The Merry Widow*, and this season in *Ahknaten*. He earned international recognition for his creation of the role of Timothy Laughlin in Gregory Spears’ *Fellow Travelers*, named by *New Yorker Magazine* as one of the top 10

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recordings of 2017, and recently made a critically acclaimed debut with New York City Opera in Peter Eötvös’ operatic adaptation of *Angels in America*. He appears at opera houses around the world including Washington National Opera, Israeli National Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, and Opéra de Montréal.

After undertaking the role of Princess Ilia, **Rebecca Davis** continued to appear as many heroines, including Violetta in Verdi’s *La traviata*, Donna Elvira in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*, Mimi in Puccini’s *La bohème*, and Tatyana in Tchaikovsky’s *Eugene Onegin*, among others. In 2018, she returned to Opera San José to take on the role of Konstanze in the company premiere of Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. Davis appeared in major opera houses across the country including Chicago Opera Theater, Sarasota Opera, Opera North, Intimate Opera, and Opera Theatre North. She won the Grand Prize of the Chicago Bel Canto and was the 2012 winner of the Irene Dalis competition.

Christina Major, whose portrayal of Princess Electra was met with critical acclaim, went on to make her international debut as Norma at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Argentina and her New York debut at Carnegie Hall as the soprano soloist in Haydn’s *Missa Cellensis* and Vivaldi’s Gloria, returning this season in the Rutter Magnificat and *Mass of the Children*. She continues to perform around the country, including the Bay Area where she was proclaimed “Probably the best Lucrezia anywhere today” by the *Mercury News*, and praised for unleashing “powerful, perfectly placed high notes and athletic passage work” by the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Since announcing the cancellation of Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, Opera San José explored options and experiences to offer in place of its 2019-20 season closer, which was scheduled to perform April 18 through May 2. This thrilling *Idomeneo* pays tribute to both Mozart and acclaimed Mozart interpreter George Cleve (1936-2015). As the Music Director of San Francisco’s Midsummer Mozart Festival, which he founded in 1974, Cleve became synonymous with Mozart as one of the world’s most devoted interpreters of the composer’s music. While Mozart’s most famous operas including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Così fan tutte* were written in the last decade of his life, it was the first of these

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masterpieces, *Idomeneo*, that remained his favorite work for the stage. “Cleve and his players did full justice to the score,” said *The Mercury News*, “Building small gestures into long dramatic arcs, capturing effects both storming and delicate, building a running dialogue between orchestra and singers” – a salute to Mozart at the end of Opera San Jose’s 2019-20 season.

Opera San José performs at the California Theatre, the elegant 1927 former movie palace meticulously restored to opulent splendor and now one of the world’s most intimate opera houses.

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