

OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS VIRTUAL VARIETY SHOW AND FUNDRAISER

SING FOR YOUR SUPPER!

7:00pm, Saturday, May 22, 2021

SAN JOSE, CA (4 May 2021) – **Opera San José** invites music lovers from the Bay Area and beyond to its virtual variety show and fundraiser, ***Sing for Your Supper!*** Inspired by the Great American Songbook and the Golden Age of Radio of the 1930s, this high-spirited evening of American songs, stories, and surprises transports viewers to a radio studio, where an enthusiastic crew of talented performers put on an unforgettable show featuring hit songs by Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, the Gershwins, and others. This high-energy program will offer a fun, uplifting evening as hosts Nathan Stark and Maya Kherani and their fellow lauded Opera San José Resident Artists showcase their singing and comedic talents. Produced and captured in the Heiman Digital Media Studio, ***Sing For Your Supper!*** will be available to stream at 7:00pm (PDT), Saturday, May 22. For more information or to RSVP, the public may visit operasj.org/sing-for-your-supper/. While access to ***Sing For Your Supper!*** 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. Tax-deductible VIP Experience options include: \$500 (delivery of three-course Le Papillon dinner for two with specialty cocktail pairing), \$1000 (dinner/cocktails for four, plus commemorative DVD), \$1500 (dinner/cocktails for six, commemorative DVDs, and an invitation to an exclusive outdoor concert this summer).

“Even though this celebratory event is free, we hope that our patrons will help us make our fundraising goals by choosing one of our VIP packages, bidding on our unique auction experiences, or making a donation in support of our incredible working artists,” said Gala Co-Chairs Melody Walsh and Laurie and Michael Warner.

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Sing For Your Supper! will take audiences behind the scenes at radio station “KOSJ” for a look at the behind-the-mic antics of a group of performers and studio staff bustling to prepare a live radio show. Conceived and written by **Nathan Stark**, the production features performances by Stark and his fellow Opera San José Resident Artists **Maya Kherani**, **Ashley Dixon**, **Vanessa Becerra**, **Eugene Brancoveanu**, and **Efraín Solís**, plus special surprise guest appearances. Members of the creative team included **Tara Branham** (Stage Director), **Christopher James Ray** (Musical Director), **Joseph Marcheso** (Music Advisor), **Matthew Vandercook** (Lighting Designer), **Tom Johnson** (Sound Design), **Alyssa Oania** (Costume Coordinator), **Christina Martin** (Hair and Makeup Designer), and **Rapt Productions** (Video Production). The production was captured in the Opera San José Heiman Digital Media Studio. Every precaution was taken for the protection of company members and crew, with health and safety protocols meeting or exceeding local and state guidelines set by Santa Clara county’s valued Public Health Officers.

About the artists:

Nathan Stark

Seen in prior seasons as a guest artist at Opera San José, American bass-baritone Nathan Stark returns as a Resident Artist for the 2020/21 season. He conceived and wrote this production, and appears as Danny McCormick, one of the two *Sing For Your Supper!* hosts. Stark was seen in the company’s previous virtual fundraiser, *The Parting Glass*. Praised by *The Washington Post* for having a voice of “unearthly power,” the *Houston Press* as a “Blow-away singer,” and *The Mercury News* as a “natural comic actor,” Stark has performed on operatic, concert, and recital stages throughout the United States, Europe, and China. He has performed with opera houses in the United States such as the Metropolitan Opera, Atlanta Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Arizona Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera San José, Dayton Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, among others. His noted operatic roles have included Mustafà in *L’Italiana in Algeri*, Don Basilio and Don Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Leporello and Il Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, Dr. Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Sparafucile and Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Hunding in *Die Walküre*, and Colline in *La bohème*. On the concert stage, Stark has performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Boston Baroque, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. He has been the recipient of several vocal awards & scholarships throughout his career, including the 2006 Southern California District Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Competition, First Place Winner of the Los Angeles Classical Singers Association, and many others.

Maya Kherani

Praised by *Opera News* for her “rich, soaring soprano” and “crystalline tone” in repertoire from the Baroque to the modern, soprano Maya Kherani is a Resident Artist at Opera San José for the

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2020/2021 season. She returns as Helen Oliver, one of the two *Sing For Your Supper!* hosts, after appearing in *The Parting Glass* and as Beatrice in Opera San José’s hit virtual production of Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*. Kherani 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*. Career highlights include starring in the title role of Handel’s *Partenope* with Opera NEO and Meera in the premiere of Jack Perla’s *The River of Light*, commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera. Upcoming debuts include Drusilla/Fortuna (Poppea cover) in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* at the 2022 Festival d’Aix-en-Provence, *Messiah* with Boston Baroque, and the Vancouver Symphony. She received First Place and Audience Favorite at the James Toland Vocal Competition (Tier II), the 2015 McGlone Award from Central City Opera, two Encouragement Awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, and last year, was the only American soprano to compete as a Semifinalist in the international Glyndebourne Opera Cup. Prior to her singing career, Ms. Kherani graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University with a BSE in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

Vanessa Becerra

Peruvian and Mexican-American soprano Vanessa Becerra is an Opera San José 2020/21 Resident Artist who made her season debut as the Countess Susanna in *Il segreto di Susanna*, one of the operas featured in *Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy*, the company’s latest digital offering. She returns as Valarie Valhalla in *Sing For Your Supper!* A recent graduate of LA Opera’s prestigious Young Artist Program, Becerra has been praised for her “bold and bright” singing (*Opera News*), “full, beautifully focused” instrument (*Wall Street Journal*), and “charismatic and eloquent” presence (*San Francisco Chronicle*). She made her Opera San José debut as Musetta in *La bohème*, and returned as the title role in Alma Deutscher’s *Cinderella*, conducted by Jane Glover (available on Sony Classical DVD). During her time with LA Opera, appearances included Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, Annina in *La Traviata*, and Gossip 2 in the Grammy Award-winning recording of *The Ghosts of Versailles* (all with Maestro James Conlon). In the 2019-20 season Becerra made her Kennedy Center debut with Washington National Opera as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, as well as her debut with Houston Grand Opera in the world premiere of *El Milagro del Recuerdo*. The previous season, she made her role debut as Maria in Francesca Zambello’s production of *West Side Story* at the Glimmerglass Festival, reprising the role at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Atlanta Opera, and Liepāja Symphony Orchestra in Latvia. A native of Fort Worth, Texas, Becerra made her professional debut at Fort Worth Opera in 2014. She has performed at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Atlanta Opera, Opera Omaha, and Baltimore Concert Opera. Concert appearances include the LA Phil with Gustavo Dudamel, and the San Francisco Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas.

Eugene Brancoveanu

Baritone Eugene Brancoveanu is a returning Resident Artist at Opera San José, appearing as Jimmy Bean in the *Sing For Your Supper!* He appeared earlier this season in the company’s digital production of *Dichterliebe* and as the baritone role in *The Husbands*, one of the three operas featured in *Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy*. Growing up in Romania and Germany, 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

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throughout North America and Europe, including a nomination for a Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award for his performance in the title role of *Dracula* at the Leshner Center. 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 Philharmonic 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 2019/20 Resident Artist, performing in *Die Fledermaus* (as Eisenstein), *Hansel and Gretel* (Father), and *Il trovatore* (Count de Luna).

Ashley Dixon

A member of Opera San José’s 2020/21 Resident Artists, mezzo-soprano Ashley Dixon takes on the role of Ella Santella in the company’s virtual variety show and fundraiser, *Sing For Your Supper!* She was featured in Opera San José’s virtual New Year’s Eve celebration, *The Parting Glass*, and recently appeared in *The Husbands*, one of the three operas featured in its recent virtual hit, *Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy*. A Grand Finals winner of the 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Dixon is quickly establishing herself as one of the most exceptional artists of her generation. Possessing a “robust instrument full of beguiling vocal colors, as well as formidable technical command” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), she is at home in a repertoire spanning three centuries. In spring of 2020, Dixon made her critically acclaimed debut with the Los Angeles Opera, stepping into a run of performances as Sara in *Roberto Devereux* alongside bel canto veterans Ramon Vargas and Angela Meade. 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*. During her two-year tenure, she was heard in *Carmen*, *Rusalka*, *Manon Lescaut*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. Recent engagements include her debut with Michigan Opera Theatre in Copland’s *The Tender Land*, Ravel’s *Shéhérazade* at the Ravinia Festival, the workshop of Laura Kaminsky’s *Hometown to the World: Postville* with San Francisco’s “Opera for all Voices.”

Efraín Solís

Hailed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for his “theatrical charisma and musical bravado,” baritone Efraín Solís joins Opera San José as a Resident Artist in the 2020/21 season. With the company he sings Conte Gil in *Il segreto di Susanna* after appearing earlier as Charlie in its hit virtual production of Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers* and in its online New Year’s Eve celebration, *The Parting Glass*. Also this season, he reprised Charlie in *Three Decembers* with Florida Grand Opera and will return to Utah Opera as Escamillo in *La tragédie de Carmen*. Solís is a recent graduate of the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship and, while with the company, sang Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Dandini in *La cenerentola*, Schaunard in *La bohème*, Silvano in *Un ballo in maschera*, Sciarrone in *Tosca*, and Prince Yamadori

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in *Madama Butterfly*. Other performances include Lieutenant Audeberet in Puts' *Silent Night* (Utah Opera), Mark in Martinez's *Cruzar la cara de la luna* (Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, El Paso Opera), Mercutio in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* (Utah Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera Carolina, Toledo Opera), Figaro in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* (Opera Memphis, Livermore Valley Opera), and El Payador in Piazzolla's *Maria de Buenos Aires* (Opera Southwest). www.efrainsolis.com

Joseph Marcheso

Joseph Marcheso, Music Director and Principal Conductor of Opera San José, serves as Music Advisor for *Sing For Your Supper!* He was recently the conductor for *Il segreto di Susanna* in *Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy*. For the 2019-20 season, he served as Principal Conductor for the family-friendly adaptation of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* and Verdi's *Il trovatore*. The prior season, he conducted the company premiere of Heggie and Scheer's *Moby-Dick* and Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. Marcheso has conducted 22 productions for Opera San José, including *The Flying Dutchman*, the West Coast premiere of Puts and Campbell's *Silent Night*, the world premiere of Mark Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *Tosca*, *La bohème*, *The Magic Flute*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto* and *La traviata*. As staff conductor and cover at the San Francisco Opera, he has served on many productions including *Les Troyens*, *Jenůfa*, *Show Boat*, *Die Meistersinger*, *Partenope*, the San Francisco premiere of John Adams's *Nixon in China*, and the world premieres of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, Bright Sheng's *The Dream of the Red Chamber*, and John Adams's *Girls of the Golden West* and recently covered works as diverse as Wagner's *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*, *Roberto Devereux*, and Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Marcheso was on the conducting staff for Washington National Opera's *Manon Lescaut*. He has conducted Hailstork's *Joshua's Boots* for the young artists of Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and *Turandot* and *Il trovatore* for Festival Opera. Previously Marcheso was the Music Director for the Amato Opera in New York City.

Christopher James Ray

Conductor Christopher James Ray returns to Opera San José for a second consecutive year in the company's resident ensemble, serving as the 2020/21 Resident Conductor. 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*. Ray 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.

Tara Branham

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A director and producer of opera and theatre based in Chicago, Tara Branham currently serves as Opera San José’s 2020-21 Resident Director. In addition to directing the virtual productions of Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers*, *The Parting Glass*, and *Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy* earlier this season, Branham is the Director for *Sing For Your Supper!* Other directing credits include: *Little Women* (First Folio Theatre), *Another Jungle* (Cloudgate), *octagon* (Jackalope), *good friday* (self-produced with Oracle), and *Bars and Measures* (Prop Thtr). Recent Assistant Directing Credits: *Freedom Ride* (Chicago Opera Theatre); *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, *La Traviata* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); *Madama Butterfly*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Die Fledermaus* (OSJ); and *The Consul* (Long Beach Opera). Branham is a recipient of the National New Play Network Producer-in-Residence Fellowship with Prop Thtr and the Resident Assistant Director for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

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: **Opera San José** invites music lovers from the Bay Area and beyond to its virtual variety show and fundraiser, *Sing for Your Supper!* Inspired by the Great American Songbook and the Golden Age of Radio of the 1930s, this high-spirited evening of American songs, stories, and surprises transports viewers to a radio studio, where an enthusiastic crew of talented performers put on an unforgettable show featuring hit songs by Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, the Gershwins, and others. This high-energy program will offer a fun, uplifting evening as hosts Nathan Stark and Maya Kherani and their fellow lauded Opera San José Resident Artists showcase their singing and comedic talents. Guests can upgrade their experience with home-delivered three-course dinners from Le Papillon with specialty cocktail pairing, and other add-ons.

WHEN: **7:00pm (PDT), Saturday, May 22**

TICKETS: Access to *Sing For Your Supper!* is free of charge. Tax-deductible VIP Experience options: \$500 (delivery of three-course Le Papillon dinner for two with specialty

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cocktail pairing), \$1000 (dinner/cocktails for four, plus commemorative DVD), \$1500 (dinner/cocktails for six, commemorative DVDs, invitation to an exclusive outdoor concert in July 2021).

INFO: For more information or to RSVP, the public may visit operasj.org/sing-for-your-supper/.

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MEDIA: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
sydney@cb-pr.com

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