



OPERA SAN JOSÉ PRESENTS VIBRANT PRODUCTION OF MOZART'S

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

September 10-25, 2022

SAN JOSE, CA (2 August 2022) — Opera San José launches its 2022-23 season with an all-new production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, transported to colonial India during Victorian Imperial rule. Sexual politics and class resentments play out through the prism of shifting power and revolution, culminating in a sparkling Indian wedding that will bring the exuberance of Bollywood to the California Theatre stage. Opera San José will join forces with Mosaic America to bring Indian folk and classical dance to Mozart's masterpiece. Internationally acclaimed conductor Viswa Subbaraman makes his company debut at the podium, while director Brad Dalton returns to stage this vibrant production. The opera will feature Maya Kherani as Susanna, Efraín Solís as Figaro, Eugene Brancoveanu as Count Almaviva, Maria Natale as Countess Almaviva, Deepa Johnny as Cherubino, Tahanee Aluwihare as Marcellina, Matthew Anchel as Dr. Bartolo, Zhengyi Bai as Don Basilio, Krishna Raman as Don Curzio, Melissa Sondhi as Barbarina, and Jesús Vicente Murillo as Antonio. *The Marriage of Figaro* will be sung in Italian, with English and Spanish supertitles, with performances from September 10-25, 2022 (dates/times below) at the California Theatre, 345 South 1street, San Jose. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$55–\$195), the public can visit operasj.org or call (408) 437-4450 (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm).

Composed by Mozart in 1786, *The Marriage of Figaro* is a four-act opera buffa, featuring an Italian libretto written by Lorenzo Da Ponte, that premiered on the stage of Vienna's Burgtheater in May of 1786. Its libretto is based on the 1784 stage comedy by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*. This work is considered one of the greatest operas ever written and appears consistently among the top ten in Operabase's list of most frequently seen operas. *The Marriage of Figaro* was the first of three collaborations between Mozart and Da Ponte – with *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* to follow.

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Opera San José has assembled a stellar creative team for this project, including **Viswa Subbaraman** (Conductor), **Brad Dalton** (Director), **Antara Bhardwaj** (Choreographer and Cultural Consultant), **Steven C. Kemp** (Scenic Designer), **Anshuman Bhatia** (Lighting Designer), **Deepsikha Chatterjee** (Costume Design), **Heather Sterling** (Hair and Makeup Designer), **Dana Sadava** (Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master), and **Tara Branham** (Assistant Director).

Artist bios:

Tahanee Aluwihare

Hailed as "impeccable" and praised for her "dusky instrument," Sri Lankan-American mezzo-soprano **Tahanee Aluwihare** is regularly sought out for her unique vocal timbre and vibrant stage presence. She has performed with opera companies around the country, including Opera Memphis, Charlottesville Opera, Opera Idaho, and City Lyric Opera, among others. In the 2020-21 season, Aluwihare made her Tri-Cities Opera debut in Kamala Sankaram's livestreamed virtual-reality opera, *Miranda*, where she played the role of Anjana. Aluwihare also sang Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with Boston Camerata (in a filmed version of the opera), and returned to Opera Idaho for its 2021-22 season premier gala concert, *Opera in the Park*. In the same season, Aluwihare made her debut with Cambridge Chamber Ensemble in the title role of Holst's seldom performed opera, *Savitri*. In the 2022-23 season, Aluwihare makes her company debut with Opera San José, and returns to Opera Idaho and Boston Camerata.

Matthew Anchel

Called "a voice to watch" by The Wall Street Journal, bass Matthew Anchel has performed with many of the world's leading companies and orchestras. In the fall of 2020, Anchel joined Stadttheater Giessen as Banquo in Verdi's Macbeth and was slated to join Tiroler Landestheater (Innsbruck) in 2021 as Sarastro in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte (canceled COVID-19). In the 2021-22 season, he performed as the bass soloist in Mozart Requiem with Stiftsmusik Stuttgart, made his On Site Opera debut as Claggart in What Lies Beneath, returned to the Metropolitan Opera and made his debut singing Master of Ceremonies in Massenet's Cinderella, Jailer in Puccini's Tosca, Un moine in Don Carlos, and covered Schwarz in Wagner's Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg. Anchel also sang Latinus/John in Georgia Shreve's Courageous Women of Antiquity, and made his role and house debut as Vanuzzi in Strauss's Die schweigsame Frau at Bard SummerScape and Der Diener in Sergei Rachmaninoff's The Miserly Knight with the American Symphony Orchestra. In the 2022-23 season, Anchel will return to Opera San José this season to star as Dr. Bartolo in Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, make his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut covering the Grand Inquisitor in Verdi's Don Carlos, return to the Metropolitan Opera to cover Loreck in Umberto Giordano's Fedora and 2nd Commissioner in Poulenc's Dialogues des Carmélites, and make his Arizona Opera debut as Sarastro in Mozart's The Magic Flute.

Zhengyi Bai

Tenor **Zhengyi Bai** recently completed his training in the renowned Adler Fellowship Program at the San Francisco Opera (SFO). He makes his company debut with Opera San José this season, appearing as Don Basilio in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and Dr. Caius in Verdi's *Falstaff*. As a 2018 participant of the Merola Opera Program, Bai has been recognized by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for his "charming verve." During the 2019-20 season, he made his SFO debut as Remendado in Bizet's *Carmen*, and also appeared as the Dancing Master and Lamplighter in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*. In the spring of 2021, Bai performed in SFO's *The Adlers: Live at the Drive-In* concert, which heralded the company's return to live performance, and he covered the role of Almaviva in SFO's production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*. In the 2021-22 season, Bai performed the role of the First Prisoner in Beethoven's *Fidelio* with SFO. Born and raised in the Shandong province of China, Bai began his studies as a collaborative pianist. In his junior year of college, he discovered his true instrument: his voice. With a solid foundation of music study, Bai flourished in his vocal studies, completing his initial vocal training in Shandong, China and continuing his opera training in the United States.

Eugene Brancoveanu

This season, baritone Eugene Brancoveanu returns as a Resident Artist at Opera San José (OSJ) to appear as Count Almaviva in Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro and Ford in Verdi's Falstaff. Past roles with the company include Eisenstein (J. Strauss's Die Fledermaus), the Father (Humperdinck's Hansel and Gretel), Count Di Luna (Verdi's Il trovatore), Stubb (Heggie and Scheer's Moby-Dick), Leporello (Mozart's Don Giovanni), Stanley Kowalski (Previn's A Streetcar Named Desire), and Escamillo (Bizet's Carmen). He has also appeared in OSJ's digital productions of Sing For Your Supper! and Love & Secrets: A Domestic Trilogy, as well as Robert Schumann's Dichterliebe. Recent engagements include the Older Brother in Jabri's Cities of Salt with Opera Movie NY, and serving as director and performing the role of Pasha Selim in Mozart's The Abduction from the Seraglio with Livermore Opera. In Freiburg, Germany, Brancoveanu appeared as Falke in Strauss's Die Fledermaus, Darcy in Mechem's Pride and Prejudice, Escamillo in Bizet's Carmen, and performed the title role in Don Giovanni in Warsaw, Poland. Other international performances include appearances at Heidelberg Opera, Stuttgart Opera, Salzburg Festival, Munich State Opera, Berlin Opera, Teatro Rossini, Piccola Scala di Milano, Macerata Opera, Romanian National Theater, Tokyo Opera House, Opéra de Montréal, and the Opera Theater of Tel Aviv. After his successful apprenticeship with the Merola Opera Program, Brancoveanu was awarded the position of Adler Fellow, where roles performed included Tomski in Tchaikovsky's Pique Dame, Riccardo in Rossini's The Italian girl in Algiers, the title role in Don Giovanni, the Pilot in Rachel Portman's The Little Prince, Belcore in Donizetti's The Elixir of Love, Enrico in Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor, and Tarquinius in Britten's Rape of Lucretia. 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. Brancoveanu graduated from the Academy of Music in Transylvania, Romania and the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria.

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Deepa Johnny

Born in Muscat, Oman, mezzo-soprano Deepa Johnny has been gaining recognition in major competitions and festivals on the operatic scene. She makes her company debut with Opera San José this season, appearing as Cherubino in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. In 2020, Johnny was chosen as a winner in the Western Canada District of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. In her 2020-21 season, Johnny was featured as title roles for Indiana University Opera Theatre productions, including Rosina, Lauretta, Serse and Poppea. During the summer of 2021, she was invited to the Ravinia Steans Music Institute as a fellow presenting art song repertoire. In the winter of 2021, Johnny made her West Virginia Symphony Orchestra debut with the Sounds of the Seasons concerts, guest conducted by Luke Frazier. Earlier this season, Johnny made her Carnegie Hall debut at Renée Fleming's SongStudio, appearing as Suzuki with Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's concert version of Puccini's Madama Butterfly, followed by a role debut at the Aspen Music Festival as Meg Page in Verdi's Falstaff, opposite Bryn Terfel in the title role. Most recently, Johnny was honored with the André Bourbeau for the Best Canadian Artist Award, as well as the ICI Musique People's Choice Award at the Concours Musical International de Montréal competition. She is one of the newest members of the LA Opera Domingo-Colburn Stein's Young Artist Program for the 2022-23 season.

Maya Kherani

Indian-American soprano Maya Kherani returns to Opera San José to star as Susanna in The Marriage of Figaro. Kherani made her company debut with Opera San José 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. She returned as a Resident Artist in the 2020-21 season, where she was seen as Beatrice in Jake Heggie's Three Decembers opposite Susan Graham, Belinda in Purcell's Dido and Aeneas, The Parting Glass, and Sing For Your Supper!. Recently, she made her debut at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence as Drusilla/Fortuna (Poppea cover) in Claudio Monteverdi's L'incoronazione di Poppea. Upcoming projects include Muffat's Missa in labore requies with Philharmonia Baroque; Mahler's Symphony No. 4 with Vancouver Symphony; Handel's Belshazzar, Messiah, and Bach's Mass in A major for American Bach Soloists; and Sankaram's Thumbprint at Portland Opera. Other recent engagements include a world premiere project as The Piper in Glyndebourne's Pay the Piper, Messiah with Boston Baroque and Portland Baroque Orchestra, and Esmail's Meri Sakhi Ki Avaaz (My Sister's Voice) for Berkeley Symphony. Her numerous awards include semifinalist in The Glyndebourne Opera Cup 2020 and Third Place in the 2021 Handel Aria Competition. Kherani graduated with honors with an MM in Vocal Performance from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and prior to her singing career, graduated summa cum laude from Princeton University with a BSE in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

Jesús Vicente Murillo

Hailed by *Opera News* as "utterly loveable, with an expansive sound and easy stage presence," baritone **Jesús Vicente Murillo** has been performing across the United States and Canada since making his debut at with Michigan Opera Theater at the age of eighteen. In 2019 he completed a two-year residency with Utah Opera, where he performed The Businessman in Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, Gregorio in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, Second Priest in Mozart's *The Magic*

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Flute, The Captain in Leonard Bernstein's Candide, Captain Gardiner in Jake Heggie's Moby-Dick, The Notary in Puccini's Gianni Schicchi, Belcore in Freeze Frame: The Elixir of Love, and the Bass Soloist in Messiah. Since then, Murillo has gone on to respectively cover and perform the role of Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's The Barber of Seville with Santa Fe Opera and Fargo Moorhead Opera, Figaro in ¡Figaro! (90210) with Chautauqua Opera, Betto di Signia in Gianni Schicchi/Buoso's Ghost with Michigan Opera Theater, and Masetto in Mozart's Don Giovanni with Bare Opera. He has also made numerous appearances with Opéra Louisiane, Charlottesville Opera, Opera in Williamsburg, and many others. Recent engagements include Leporello in Don Giovanni with Fargo Moorhead Opera, Guillermo Kahlo/Petate Vendor in Robert Xavier Rodriguez's Frida with Michigan Opera Theater, Guillermo Kahlo/R.J. Rockefeller/Edward G. Robinson in Frida with El Paso Opera, Kassandra in Iannis Xenakis's Kassandra with The Chamber Cartel of Atlanta, The Bass Soloist in Basses and Beer with The Penn Square Music Festival, and Fauré's Requiem with The Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields (Chestnut Hill, PA).

Maria Natale

Praised by The New York Times for her "plummy, penetrating voice," soprano Maria Natale is the recipient of many awards and grants from some of the most prestigious vocal competitions nationwide. She was awarded First Prize in the National James Collier Vocal Competition, Second Prize and Audience Choice in the Elizabeth Connell Prize, Second Place in the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition, Second Prize in the Opera at Florham Vocal Competition, and was a Grand Finalist in the Loren L. Zachary Vocal Competition and a grant recipient from the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation. Recently, Natale made her debuts at Tulsa Opera as Cio-Cio San in Puccini's Madama Butterly and at Opera San José as Nedda in Leoncavallo's Pagliacci. She has also been seen at Opera San José as Cio-Cio San and as Rosalinde in J. Strauss's Die Fledermaus. Other engagements include her Tulsa Opera debut as Cio-Cio San, Opera Maine as Violetta in Verdi's La Traviata under conductor Stephen Lord, where Opera News applauded Natale's performance, noting "her powerful soprano easily filled the house." In her Sarasota Opera debut as Liù in Puccini's Turandot, Natale was hailed by New Outpost as having an "unequivocal Italian sound." As a concert soloist, Natale has been featured at Carnegie Hall in Fauré's Requiem and Mozart's Missa Solemnis with MidAmerica Productions. She has also appeared as the soprano soloist with NYC Master Chorale in Dvořák's Te Deum and Mozart's Requiem. During the 2022-23 season, Natale will return to Opera San José as Countess Almaviva in Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, and will make her debut as the title role in Puccini's Tosca.

Krishna Raman

Tenor **Krishna Raman** started his musical journey at age five, when he began singing Carnatic music, a style of Indian classical music. Since then, he has shifted his focus onto Western classical music. Raman earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Vocal Performance from Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), where he studied under Daniel Teadt. During his time at CMU, Raman portrayed the roles of Ali in André Grétry's opera *Zémire et Azor*, Fabrizio in Adam Guettel's musical *The Light in the Piazza*, and sang the featured tenor solo in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. Currently, Raman is pursuing a Master of Music in Vocal Arts at the University of Southern California, where he studies under Thomas Michael Allen. Most recently, he was part of an international collaboration between the

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Sibelius Academy of Finland and University of Southern California, premiering a new opera about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

Efrain Solis

Hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle for his "theatrical charisma and musical bravado," baritone Efraín Solís returns to Opera San José as Figaro in The Marriage of Figaro. In the 2022-23 season, he will sing a trio of roles in Poulenc's Dialogues of the Carmélites with San Francisco Opera, Germano in Rossini's La Scala di Seta with Opera Santa Barbara, Dulcamara in Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore with Hawaii Opera Theater, and further performances of Figaro with Annapolis Opera. He also returns to the Las Vegas Philharmonic for Handel's Messiah. The future sees debuts with Staatsoper Hamburg, Santa Fe Opera, and Dallas Opera. Previously with Opera San José, Solís has sung Aeneas in Purcell's Dido and Aeneas, Charlie in Jake Heggie's Three Decembers, and Conte Gil in Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari's Il segreto di Susanna, which was presented as part of Love & Secrets, a trilogy of fully-staged works. Other recent engagements include Mark in Cruzar la Cara de la Luna (Houston Grand Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, New York City Opera, El Paso Opera); Papageno in Mozart's Die Zauberflöte; Dandini in La Cenerentola; Schaunard in Puccini's La bohème (San Francisco Opera); Lieutenant Audebert in Kevin Puts's Silent Night; Mercutio in Gounod's Roméo et Juliette (Utah Opera); further performances of Mercutio (Virginia Opera, Opera Carolina, Toledo Opera); additional performances of Charlie in Three Decembers (Florida Grand Opera, Virginia Opera); Malatesta in Donizetti's Don Pasquale (Opera Santa Barbara); previous performances of Figaro (Opera Memphis); and Golaud in Debussy's Pelléas et Mélisande (West Edge Opera, Opera Southwest). On the concert stage, Solís has sung Mahler's Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen (Palo Alto Philharmonic), Britten's War Requiem (Berkeley Community Chorus), and previous performances of Handel's Messiah with the Las Vegas Philharmonic and New Choral Society.

Melissa Sondhi

Indian-American soprano **Melissa Sondhi** returns to Opera San José to appear as Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro* after making her principal role debut in the 2021-22 season, performing First Witch in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. That same season, Sondhi also appeared as Iza in Pocket Opera's production of Offenbach's *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein*. In the 2019-2020 season, she covered the roles of Ida in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus* and the Dew Fairy in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* with Opera San José, and also sang the roles of Le feu and Le rossignol in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with Air Opera Collective. In the 2018-19 season, Sondhi was seen as Giannetta in Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* with Pocket Opera, Edith in Arthur Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Fiametta in Arthur Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* with Lamplighters Music Theatre. Other engagements have included the title role in *Hansel and Gretel*, Parasha in Stravinsky's *Mavra*, Maria Bertram in the West Coast premiere Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*, and Sister Catherine in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Sondhi holds a BM from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance (2015), and an MM from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (2017).

Viswa Subbaraman

Internationally acclaimed American conductor **Viswa Subbaraman** makes his company debut with Opera San José in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Recent engagements include conducting Jeanine Tesori's

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Blue at Seattle Opera and assistant conducting Brett Dean's Hamlet at the Metropolitan Opera. In the 2022-23 season, Subbaraman will return to Seattle Opera to lead the world premiere of Sheila Silver's A Thousand Splendid Suns and will make his Pittsburgh Opera debut conducting Daniel Bernard Roumain's We Shall Not Be Moved. He currently serves as Artistic Advisor to The South Asian Symphony Orchestra Foundation, a project to build a pan-South Asian ensemble, uniting musicians from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka. Subbaraman was previously Artistic and Music Director of the Skylight Music Theatre in Milwaukee. During his tenure at the Skylight, he expanded the company's repertoire, placing it at the forefront of the industry in producing contemporary opera and reimagining traditional works. The company's production of Thomas Adès's Powder Her Face, directed by Robin Guarino, was declared by Urban Milwaukee as "a triumph for Skylight's artistic leader," while BroadwayWorld praised Subbaraman for his "sublime control of this music, and the singers."

Brad Dalton

Director Brad Dalton's original productions have been produced widely throughout the United States and abroad in opera houses such as Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Barbican Centre (with the London Symphony Orchestra), State Opera of South Australia, Carnegie Hall, Washington National Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera San José, Opera Santa Barbara, New Orleans Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Austin Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera. In 2003, Dalton was awarded the prestigious Helpmann Award for "Best Direction of an Opera in Australia" for his direction of the Australian premiere of Jake Heggie's Dead Man Walking. He has received critical acclaim for his production of André Previn's A Streetcar Named Desire starring Renée Fleming, which has been seen in London, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. In 2017, Dalton directed the American premiere of Alma Deutscher's Cinderella with Opera San José, available on Sony DVD and Blu Ray. New opera productions include Gluck's Alceste; Mozart's Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute, Così fan tutte, La clemenza di Tito, and Idomeneo; Verdi's Rigoletto and Il trovatore; Puccini's Tosca, La bohème, and Madama Butterfly; Gounod's Faust and Roméo et Juliette; Bizet's Carmen; Pietro Mascagni's Cavalleria rusticana; Ruggero Leoncavallo's Pagliacci; David Carlson's Anna Karenina; Britten's Albert Herring; Wagner's The Flying Dutchman. Dalton is a graduate of Harvard University and the National Shakespeare Conservatory. He has directed numerous productions of theatre and musical theatre as well as opera.

Opera San José (OSJ) is a flagship arts organization of Silicon Valley. Maintaining a resident company of artists, OSJ presents four mainstage productions annually in San José's beautifully restored, magnificent California Theatre. It also regularly broadcasts fully produced productions from its state-of-the-art Heiman Digital Media Studio. OSJ specializes in role debuts, serving as an artistic incubator for established and emerging artists and administrators, producing world- class operatic performances for diverse audiences throughout the Bay Area and around the globe. More information is available at www.operasj.org.

The California Theatre is one of the most magnificent, best-preserved examples of 1920s-era lavish motion picture palaces. Lovingly restored at the turn of the 21st century, its opulently ornamented interiors were completely refurbished, including the elaborately stenciled entry foyer ceiling and

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magnificent gallery. With only twenty rows of seats in the orchestra section, five rows in the grand tier, and six in the mezzanine, every seat has an excellent view of the stage. With just over 1,100 seats, the California is comparable to England's Glyndebourne and Venice's historic Teatro la fenice and is in the select ranks of the world's most intimate opera houses.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT:

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WHEN: September 10–25, 2022

TICKETS: \$55-\$195

INFO: For more information or to purchase tickets, the public can visit **operasj.org** or call

(408) 437-4450 (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am-5:00pm).

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:

http://www.cbpr.co/press/marriageoffigaro