

OPERA SAN JOSÉ PRESENTS VERDI'S
FALSTAFF

February 11–26, 2023

SAN JOSE, CA (23 January 2023) – Women take charge in **Opera San José's** rollicking production of Verdi's *Falstaff*. Adapted from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and scenes from *Henry IV*, Parts 1 and 2, this hilarious and beloved comedic masterpiece offers a joyful look at one of the Bard's most popular characters, the boisterous knight Sir John Falstaff, and his misadventures at the hands of four witty women. The classic production will feature notable role debuts by some of America's leading new voices. Stage direction is by **José Maria Condemi**, Director of Opera and Musical Theatre at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and OSJ Music Director **Joseph Marcheso** conducts. Casting includes **Darren Drone** as Falstaff, **Chanée Curtis** as Alice Ford, **Natalia Santaliz** as Nanetta, **Megan Esther Grey** as Dame Quickly, **Eugene Brancoveanu** as Ford, **Shanley Horvitz** as Meg Page, **Jonghyun Park** as Fenton, **Marc Molomot** as Bardolfo, **Andrew Allan Hiers** as Pistola, and **Zhengyi Bai** as Dr. Caius. *Falstaff* will be sung in Italian, with English and Spanish supertitles, with performances from **February 11–26, 2023** (dates/times below) at the **California Theatre**, 345 South First Street, 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).

Over the six decades of his career, **Giuseppe Verdi** (1813–1901) composed 28 operas, many of which are at the core of today's repertoire. Verdi's final work for the stage, *Falstaff* made its World Premiere at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1893 and has gone on to become one of the greatest operatic comedies of all time, a work bursting with humor, genuine emotion, freshness, and vivid originality.

The creative team for this production includes **Joseph Marcheso** (Conductor), **José Maria Condemi** (Director), **Steven C. Kemp** (Scenic Designer), **David Cuthbert** (Lighting Designer), **Suzanne Mess**

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(Costume Design), **Christina Martin** (Hair & Makeup Design), **Johannes Löhner** (Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master), and **Tara Branham** (Assistant Director).

Artist bios:

Darren Drone (Falstaff)

Baritone **Darren Drone** makes his Opera San José debut in the title role of Verdi's *Falstaff*. He made his Portland Opera debut earlier this season as Zuniga in Bizet's *Carmen*. Described as having "a gorgeously warm tone and deep resonance" (*Opera News*), Drone is becoming known in the opera world as an exciting up-and-comer. During the 2021-22 season, Drone joined the Metropolitan Opera roster as a featured soloist in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, covered Mtchll in the World Premiere of Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *it all falls down* at Washington National Opera, made his Opera Memphis debut as Guglielmo in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, and was set to make a debut with Florentine Opera as Schaunard in Puccini's *La bohème* (rescheduled to 2024 due to COVID-19). In the summer of 2021, Drone joined the Santa Fe Opera roster, covering the roles of the Count in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Starveling in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Captain in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. In the summer of 2022, Drone returned to Santa Fe to appear as Moralès in *Carmen* and cover the title role in *Falstaff*.

Chanée Curtis (Alice Ford)

American soprano **Chanée Curtis** makes her company debut with Opera San José as Alice Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff*. Following her debut with the Metropolitan Opera, singing Annie in the company's critically acclaimed 2019 production of Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Curtis appeared at Wolf Trap Opera as Léontine in Joseph Bologne's classical-period comedy *L'amant anonyme*. In the 2021-22 season Curtis made her role debut as Nedda in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* with Opera Memphis, was selected by Bartlett Sher for the premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Intimate Apparel* at Lincoln Center Theater, and returned to the Metropolitan Opera as both Countess Ceprano in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, as well as 2nd Pit Singer in Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet*. In the summer of 2022, Curtis returned to Wolf Trap Opera to star as Violetta Valéry in Verdi's *La traviata*. She has performed extensively abroad, including with Welsh National Opera as Anna Gomez in Menotti's *The Consul* and in Strauss's *Four Last Songs* at St. David's Hall, as well as in a guest appearance at Buckingham Palace to perform for Prince (now King) Charles. Other notable roles include Musetta in Puccini's *La bohème*, Alice Ford in *Falstaff*, Countess Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Natalia Santaliz (Nanetta)

Puerto Rican soprano **Natalia Santaliz** returns to Opera San José (OSJ) as a Resident Artist for the 2022-23 season, performing the title role in Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella* and as Nanetta in Verdi's *Falstaff*. She appeared with OSJ last season, covering the roles of Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Maria in Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim's *West Side Story*. During the 2021-22 season, she made her debut as Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with Berkshire Opera Festival, performed as soprano soloist for the Fauré Requiem with Orquesta Sinfónica de Puerto Rico, and joined the Gerdine Young Artists Program at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where she covered

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Papagena in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Career highlights include singing Nella and covering Lauretta in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* under Kent Nagano at the Festival Napa Valley; performing *The Blue Project: Puerto Rican Folk Music*, presented by New World Symphony; and appearing as soprano soloist in John Rutter's Requiem with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. Santaliz has sung the roles of Susanna in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mařenka in Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Camila in Navarro's *Frenesí*, and has been a guest artist with Ópera de Puerto Rico, Teatro de la Ópera, Fundación Puertorriqueña de Zarzuela y Opereta, and Teatro Lírico del Oeste, among others. She has participated in Martina Arroyo Foundation's "Prelude to Performance" and the Sherrill Milnes Voice Studio, as part of the Savannah Voice Festival in Georgia.

Megan Esther Grey (Dame Quickly)

A recent graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development program, contralto **Megan Esther Grey** makes her company debut with Opera San José this season, appearing as Fairy in Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella* and as Dame Quickly in Verdi's *Falstaff*. During the 2022-23 season, Grey will also appear as the soloist in Mahler's *Rückert Lieder* with the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra and cover Dritte Dame in both the holiday adaptation and new production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* with the Metropolitan Opera. In the 2021-22 season, Grey returned to the Metropolitan Opera to cover both Suzuki and Kate Pinkerton in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, performed the title role of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* with the University of North Texas (UNT) Opera, sang Emilia in a concert production of Verdi's *Otello* with the UNT Symphony Orchestra, and made her Washington Concert Opera debut as Mistress Bentson in Delibes's *Lakmé*. In the summer of 2022, Grey joined Santa Fe Opera, covering the role of Brangäne in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Throughout the disrupted 2020-21 season, Grey performed in multiple recitals in collaboration with pianist Matthew Gemmill. In April 2021, she was joined by pianist Mark Bilyeu and trombonist Derek Bromme for performances of Libby Larsen's *Mary Cassatt* and Dominick Argento's *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf*. This multimedia recital featuring paintings by Mary Cassatt, as well as mixed media prints by Mer Brich and an animated script by Alexandra Saulsbury. In the summer of 2021, Grey also returned to Wolf Trap Opera as Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street in Concert*.

Eugene Brancoveanu (Ford)

Baritone **Eugene Brancoveanu** returns this season as a Resident Artist at Opera San José (OSJ), appearing 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* ('A Poet's Love'). Recent engagements for Brancoveanu include 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

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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 Mozart's *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.

Shanley Horvitz (Meg Page)

American mezzo-soprano **Shanley Horvitz** returns to Opera San José to appear as Meg Page in Verdi's *Falstaff*. She was last seen with the company during its 2022 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, where she captured Second Place. Horvitz has awarded First Place at the Orpheus Vocal Competition (2022), Houston Gilbert & Sullivan Career Grant Competition (2022), Mario Lanza Institute Competition in Philadelphia (2021), and Vienna Summer Musical Festival. Other accolades include Second Place at the Pasadena Vocal Competition (2022) and the Encouragement Award for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Laffont Competition at the Pittsburgh District. Past appearances include the role debut of Anacaona in Alberto Franchetti's *Cristoforo Colombo* with Teatro Grattacielo, Ježibaba in Dvořák's *Rusalka*, and the title role in Bizet's *Carmen* with Vincerò Academy. Last year, Horvitz also made her Carnegie Hall debut singing music from *Carmen* and her debut as Donna Elvira in Vienna Music Festival's production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Jonghyun Park (Fenton)

Korean tenor **Jonghyun Park** makes his company debut with Opera San José as Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff*. He has been awarded prizes in the Napa National Music Competition, Classical Music Magazine Competition, Herald Music Competition, the Korean Voice Competition, and the Daegu Voice Competition. Past performances include Luigi in Puccini's *Il tabarro* with Yale Opera, Don Ottavio in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at Seoul National University Theater, Duca di Mantova in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Kim & Lee Opera Company, Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* and Edgardo in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Seoul National University Theater, Ruggero in Puccini's *La rondine*, and Tebaldo in Bellini's *I Caputeti e Montecchi* with Yale Opera. As a concert soloist, Park made his Seoul Art Center debut as a tenor soloist performing with Nation's Forces Symphony Orchestra. He also collaborated with Santa Cecilia Chamber Orchestra in Korea. Other recent performances include Handel's *Messiah* with Brandford Messiah, Mozart's *Requiem* with Waterbury Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with Yale Philharmonia, and Beethoven's *9th Symphony* with Yale Symphony Orchestra.

Marc Molomot (Bardolfo)

Tenor **Marc Molomot** makes his company debut with Opera San José as Bardolfo in Verdi's *Falstaff*.

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Recently named "Artist of the Year" by *Voix des Arts*, Molomot enjoys an international career in opera and on the concert stage. Recent highlights include creating the role of Leonard Lev in the World Premiere of Tobias Picker's *Awakenings*, and recitals of Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* at Untermyer Gardens and Saint Andrew Music Society. The live recording of this performance was the winner of a GRAMMY Award and an Echo Klassik Award, both for Best Opera Recording. In the baroque arena, he is particularly in demand for Purcell. January 2020 saw Molomot in the title role of Purcell's *King Arthur* for Long Beach Opera, where the *Los Angeles Times* called him "A superb actor... capable of winning our affections with a depth of expression once he begins to sing." In the contemporary realm, Molomot's performance as the protagonist in Evan Ziporyn's *A House in Bali* was considered "rapturously sung" (*Wall Street Journal*) and "powerful" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). He also created the role of Le Cochon in Jean-Marc Singier's acclaimed *Chat perché* at the Amphithéâtre Bastille in Paris and on a multi-city tour of France. In concert, recent engagements include Britten's *Serenade* with Omaha Symphony and Britten's *St. Nicholas Cantata* with Berkshire Chorale International; Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Mobile Symphony Orchestra and Nashville Symphony; Bach's *Magnificat* with Israel Camerata Jerusalem; *Messiah* with Rhode Island Philharmonic, Milwaukee Symphony, and Symphony Nova Scotia; and Mozart *Coronation Mass* at Alice Tully Hall with American Classical Orchestra. Molomot's recordings include the GRAMMY Award-winning release of Berg's *Wozzeck* with the Houston Symphony; GRAMMY Award-nominated Lully's *Thésée* with the Boston Early Music Festival; GRAMMY Award-nominated *Il Ritorno di Ulisse* on Linn Records with Boston Baroque; Charpentier's *Judicium Salomonis* with Les Arts Florissants, conducted by William Christie; Handel's *Acis and Galatea* with Les Boréades conducted by Eric Milnes; and Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* with Apollo's Fire led by Jeannette Sorrel.

Andrew Allan Hiers (Pistola)

Bass-baritone **Andrew Allan Hiers** makes his company debut with Opera San José this season, appearing as Pistola in Verdi's *Falstaff*. Possessing a versatile vocal range with a dark, yet vibrant vocal timbre, Hiers brings a unique color and dynamic stage presence to every performance he undertakes. As an alumnus of the Merola Opera Program and Opera Colorado's Resident Artist Program, he is no stranger to leading roles and big stages. Hiers most recently performed Count Capulet in Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera Naples where he returns to sing Zuniga in Bizet's *Carmen* later this season. Originally from West Palm Beach, Hiers currently resides in central Florida along the space coast with his partner, soprano Chelsea Lehnea and cat Shiley in their RV.

Zhengyi Bai (Dr. Caius)

Tenor **Zhengyi Bai**, who made his company debut with Opera San José as Basilio in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, returns as Dr. Caius in Verdi's *Falstaff*. He recently completed his training in the renowned Adler Fellowship Program at the San Francisco Opera (SFO). As a 2018 participant of the Merola Opera Program, Bai was recognized by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for his "charming verve." During the 2019-2020 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. Here, 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

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Beethoven's *Fidelio* with SFO. Born and raised in the Shandong province of China, Bai began his studies as a piano student and a collaborative pianist, before starting vocal studies in his junior year of college. He completed his initial vocal training in Shandong, China and continuing his opera training in the United States.

Joseph Marcheso (Conductor)

Joseph Marcheso, Music Director and Principal Conductor of Opera San José (OSJ) will conduct Verdi's *Falstaff*. He was most recently seen conducting OSJ's vibrant, flamenco-infused production Bizet's *Carmen* during its 2021-22 season. Marcheso has conducted more than 25 productions for OSJ, including the company premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby Dick*, the West Coast premiere of Puts and Campbell's *Silent Night*, and the World Premiere of Mark Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, among others. As staff conductor and cover at San Francisco Opera, he has served on many productions including the San Francisco premiere of John Adams's *Nixon in China*, the World Premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, and Heggie and Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life* (cover). Prior to joining Opera San José, Marcheso was on the conducting staff for Washington National Opera's *Manon Lescaut* and served as the Music Director for the Amato Opera in New York City.

José Maria Condemi (Director)

Director **José Maria Condemi** makes his company debut with Opera San José for Verdi's *Falstaff*. His directorial work, which has been presented by companies in North America and abroad, encompasses an eclectic range of styles and repertoire and has been consistently praised for its creatively theatrical and innovative approach. Notable engagements include Bizet's *Carmen*, Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, Charles Gounod's *Faust*, Puccini's *Tosca*, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* and the World Premiere of Nolan Gasser's *The Secret Garden* (San Francisco Opera), Verdi's *Ernani* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (Lyric Opera Chicago), Verdi's *Aida* (Houston Grand Opera), Verdi's *Luisa Miller* (Canadian Opera Company), Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Puccini's *La bohème* (Seattle Opera), Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Frida* (Michigan Opera Theater), Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (Cincinnati Opera), Puccini's *Tosca* (L'Opera de Montreal), André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Kentucky Opera), *Carmen* (Central City Opera), Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Atlanta Opera), Massenet's *Cendrillon* and Verdi's *Rigoletto* (New Orleans Opera), Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis), Donizetti's *Maria Padilla* (Minnesota Opera), Daniel Catán's *Florescia en el Amazonas* (Opera Colorado and Pittsburgh Opera), Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* (Teatro Colon/Buenos Aires), *Tosca* and Astor Piazzolla and Horacio Ferrer's *María de Buenos Aires* (Florida Grand Opera), Verdi's *La Traviata* (Wolftrap Opera), and *Carmen* (Lyric Opera of Kansas City). Condemi is in demand as a trainer of young artists and has been a master teacher and stage director for the San Francisco Opera Center, Seattle Opera Young Artists Program, Houston Grand Opera Studio, University of Cincinnati, Opera Theater of Lucca and the New National Theater Young Artists Programme in Tokyo. Condemi was also a first-time Adler Fellow in Stage Direction at the San Francisco Opera and a Fulbright Fellow. Other upcoming engagements include new productions of *Bohème Out of the Box* (San Francisco Opera), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Cincinnati Opera) and *Tosca* (TBA company). Condemi was the Carol Franc Buck Distinguished Chair and Director of Opera and Musical Theater at the San Francisco

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Conservatory of Music from 2015 until 2022. He was also the Artistic Director of Opera Santa Barbara from 2010 until 2015.

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 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: Women take charge in **Opera San José's** rollicking production of Verdi's *Falstaff*. Adapted from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and scenes from *Henry IV*, Parts 1 and 2, this hilarious and beloved comedic masterpiece offers a joyful look at one of the Bard's most popular characters, the boisterous knight Sir John Falstaff, and his misadventures at the hands of four witty women. The classic production will feature notable role debuts by some of America's leading new voices. Stage direction is by **José Maria Condemi**, Director of Opera and Musical Theatre at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and OSJ Music Director **Joseph Marcheso** conducts. Casting includes **Darren Drone** as Falstaff, **Chanée Curtis** as Alice Ford, **Natalia Santaliz** as Nanetta, **Megan Esther Grey** as Dame Quickly, **Eugene Brancoveanu** as Ford, **Shanley Horvitz** as Meg Page, **Jonghyun Park** as Fenton, **Marc Molomot** as Bardolfo, **Andrew Allan Hiers** as Pistola, and **Zhengyi Bai** as Dr. Caius. *Falstaff* will be sung in Italian, with English and Spanish supertitles.

WHEN: **7:30pm, Saturday, February 11**
2:00pm, Sunday, February 12
7:30pm, Thursday, February 16
2:00pm, Sunday, February 19
7:30pm, Friday, February 24
2:00pm, Sunday, February 26

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

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