

# OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS LINE-UP FOR 2023–24 SEASON

**40TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON CELEBRATES PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE  
INCLUDES BAY AREA PREMIERE, NEW PRODUCTIONS,  
ROLE DEBUTS, PLUS VIRTUAL PRODUCTION  
September 9, 2023 – May 5, 2024**

SAN JOSÉ, CA (1 March 2023) — **Opera San José** General Director **Shawna Lucey** has unveiled plans for the company's gala 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary season, which will celebrate the organization's illustrious past, innovative present, and exciting future. The 2023-24 season will feature four mainstage productions at the majestic California Theatre in downtown San José. Said Lucey, "We are proud to announce two brand-new productions and the revival of two beloved classics. These operas will represent the very best of OSJ, featuring artist debuts that introduce Bay Area audiences to the stars of tomorrow, as well as an important Bay Area Premiere of Daniel Catán's masterpiece, *Florencia en el Amazonas*." Lucey also announced plans to maintain Opera San José's international digital presence, utilizing its state-of-the-art Heiman Digital Media studio to produce works offered to audiences around the world, including a digital workshop of a new opera.

The season launches with Lucey directing an all-new production of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, with a diverse cast of rising young artists making their role debuts (Sept. 9 – 24, 2023), followed by a family-friendly romp with Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* (Nov. 11 – 26, 2023) that will feature opera star Dale Travis. The season continues with a thrilling revival of Verdi's *Rigoletto* (Feb. 17 – Mar. 3, 2024), followed by the Bay Area Premiere of the stunning magical-realism opera *Florencia en los Amazonas* by Mexican composer Daniel Catan (April 20 – May 5, 2024). Opera San José also announces a planned digital workshop of the new opera *Zheng*, composed by Shinji Eshima with a libretto by Tony Asaro, based on the life of San Francisco mezzo-soprano Zheng Cao (Fall 2023, dates TBA).

For more information or to purchase subscriptions (\$150–\$585) the public can visit [operasj.org](https://operasj.org) or call (408) 437-4450 (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm). Subscriptions, including an all-new FLEX four-pack, are on sale now; single tickets will go on sale on July 1, 2023.

**2023–24 SEASON**

OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS 2023-24 SEASON

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## ROMEO AND JULIET

*Music by Gounod, libretto by Barbier and Carré*

September 9 – 24, 2023

Launching the company's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season will be an all-new production of Gounod's **Romeo and Juliet**, directed by Shawna Lucey, her first production for the company she now helms. Following on the heels of Lucey's critically acclaimed legacy production of *La Traviata* for San Francisco Opera, this production will also bear Lucey's inimitable stamp. For this work, OSJ will bring Shakespeare's play about feuding factions and illicit love to the stage in a vibrant new production. Audiences can expect swashbuckling sword fighting, lively dancing, and a young, diverse cast. Lucey describes her vision for this production as "a piece for our time, with a focus on how deep divisions can make love illegal." Several artists will make role debuts, including Indian-American soprano **Melissa Sondhi** in the role of Juliet and rising star tenor **Joshua Sanders** as Romeo. Armed with a sword and commanding tenor voice, **Alex Boyer** returns to the California Theatre in the role of **Tybalt**, and former Adler Fellow and renowned bass **Kenneth Kellogg** joins the production as the Duke. Bass **Vartan Gabrielian** makes his OSJ debut as Frère Laurent and baritone **Jesús Vicente Murillo** debuts with the company as Mercutio, with additional casting to be announced. Opera San José Director of Music **Joseph Marcheso** will conduct.

## THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

*Music by Rossini, libretto by Sterbini*

November 11 – 26, 2023

(Special family matinee: Saturday, November 18)

Rossini's rollicking **The Barber of Seville** returns to Opera San José, offering an upbeat comedy for operagoers of all ages. Subtitled "The Useless Precaution," this opera buffa introduces the rascalion barber Figaro, who uses all his wiles to assist the love-struck Count Almaviva in liberating his true love Rosina from the clutches of her guardian, Dr. Bartolo. A comic masterpiece fizzing with entertaining hijinks and memorable melodies, initial casting includes a star turn by bass-baritone **Dale Travis**, recent winner of the San Francisco Opera Medal, as Dr. Bartolo and tenor **Joshua Sanders** returning as Count Almaviva. Mezzo-soprano **Courtney Miller** and bass-baritone **Vartan Gabrielian** round out the cast of this fast-paced comedy as Berta and Basilio, respectively, with additional casting to be announced. Opera San José Director of Music **Joseph Marcheso** will conduct.

## RIGOLETTO

*Music by Verdi, libretto by Piave*

February 17 - March 3, 2024

The season continues with a revival of Opera San José's thrilling production of Verdi's **Rigoletto**. Boasting some of opera's most memorable music, including the signature aria "La donna è mobile," this tragic work follows the hunchback jester Rigoletto, his beautiful daughter Gilda, and the

## OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS 2023-24 SEASON

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licentious Duke of Mantua whose callous treatment of women sets into motion a horrifying series of misidentifications, ending with murder and tragic self-sacrifice. The production will be helmed by visionary director **Dan Wallace Miller**, acclaimed for his work with Seattle Opera and other national companies. Announced casting to date includes company favorite, baritone **Eugene Brancoveanu** in the title role; tenor **Joshua Sanders** as the Duke of Mantua, completing a powerhouse season in a variety of roles, reuniting with soprano **Melissa Sondhi** as Gilda; bass-baritone **Vartan Gabrielian**; and mezzo-soprano **Melisa Bonetti** will appear as the assassin Sparafucile and his wily sister, Maddalena, respectively. Local Bay Area favorite bass-baritone **Philip Skinner** appears as the doomed Monterone, with additional roles to be announced.

### FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS

*Music by Daniel Catán, libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain*

April 20 - May 5, 2024

Opera San José will conclude its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season on a high note with the Bay Area premiere of ***Florencia en el Amazonas***. Marrying romance with magical realism, this enthralling opera was co-commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Seattle Opera – making it the first Spanish-language opera to be commissioned by major US opera houses. ***Florencia en el Amazonas*** is set to make its debut at the Metropolitan Opera in the fall of 2023, with OSJ’s new production following in the spring of 2024. In this two-act opera, Mexican composer Daniel Catán transports audiences to a steamship sailing the Amazon river, where a famous opera singer is returning to her homeland both to perform and with hopes of reuniting with her lover, a butterfly hunter who has disappeared into the jungle. “This is an opera that is joining the most important works of the American canon,” says Shawna Lucey. “We are proud to introduce this work in the Bay Area, and to present the first Spanish-language opera performed on our mainstage – something long overdue.” This production will be directed by Latina international director **Crystal Manich**, who returns to OSJ where she helmed the company’s award-winning production of *West Side Story*. Manich was also nominated for a 2021 Emmy Award for her production of Daniel Catán’s *La Hija de Rappaccini*. Working alongside Manich, Opera San José cast a trio of astronomical talent to inhabit the female characters in the opera: soprano **Marlen Nahhas** in the title role of Florencia Grimaldi, soprano **Melissa Sondhi** as Rosalba, and mezzo-soprano **Guadalupe Paz** as Paula. Former Resident Artist and favorite of OSJ audiences, baritone **Efraín Solís**, joins the cast as Alvaro. Opera San José Director of Music **Joseph Marcheso** will conduct. Additional casting is to be announced.

### ZHENG

*Music by Shinji Eshima, libretto by Tony Asaro, dramaturge by Cori Ellison*

Digital production – Fall 2023 (dates TBA )

## OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS 2023-24 SEASON

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The soaring new opera **Zheng** will be presented to local, national, and international audiences as a digital workshop through Opera San José's Heiman Digital Media Studio in partnership with producers Peter & Jayne Davis. Workshopped at San Francisco Opera in 2019, **Zheng** tells the story of San Francisco mezzo-soprano Zheng Cao, a gifted singer in the national opera scene and Adler Fellow at San Francisco Opera, whose tragic death at age 46 after a four-year battle with lung cancer impacted much of the opera world. In this intimate work, Zheng's opera roles come to life, with Cherubino and Suzuki interacting with Zheng, guiding and caring for her as she battles her final illness. Performed excerpts at San Francisco Opera were lauded by the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Joshua Kosman for conveying "much of the ferocity and dogged spirit of its subject" whom he described as "both a gifted artist and an individual of unstoppable power" and the work as "a final stirring paean to the force of her own singing."

**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 [operasj.org](http://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 21<sup>st</sup> 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:

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OPERA SAN JOSÉ UNVEILS 2023-24 SEASON  
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**WHEN:** September 9, 2023 – May 5, 2024

**WHERE:** California Theatre, 345 South 1<sup>st</sup> St., San José CA

**TICKETS:** Subscriptions (\$150–\$585) are on sale now; single tickets will go on sale July 1, 2023.  
**INFO:** For more information or to purchase subscriptions, the public can visit [operasj.org](http://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/operasanjose>