

OPERA SAN JOSÉ PARTICIPATES IN
SOUTH FIRST FRIDAY

OFFERING FREE MUSIC, DANCE, MORE, AT CALIFORNIA THEATRE
September 1, 2023

SAN JOSE, CA (25 August 2023) — **Opera San José** will offer up lively free entertainment for art lovers participating in the Downtown San Jose SoFA District's evening art walk **South First Friday** taking place September 1. Joining in this celebration of the arts and culture of the city, Opera San José will open the doors of the historic California Theatre for an evening filled with music, dance, a sneak peek at rehearsals for the company's upcoming *Romeo and Juliet*, and other activities. Events will take place from 5:30pm to 9pm at the **California Theatre**, 345 South First Street, San Jose. For more information or to ensure a free seat the public can visit operasj.org/event/first-friday.

The entertainment begins at 5:45pm with dances by SNJV, Maansa Kavuri, Juan Magacho, Akshay Savale, Shruthi Shyam — and Antara Bhardwaj, who staged dances for Opera San José's triumphant *The Marriage of Figaro* last fall and returns to create the court dances for its 40th Anniversary season-launching production of *Romeo and Juliet*, which begins performances on September 9. The dancing will be followed by arias performed by members of the *Romeo and Juliet* company, featuring mezzo-soprano Jessica Gonzalez-Rodriguez, tenor Keanu Aiono-Netzler, bass Eric Delagrangé, and the production's Juliet — Jasmine Habersham. At 7pm art strollers are invited to watch some rehearsal from the production, and then at 7:15pm beloved organist Jerry Nagano will perform favorite tunes on the California Theatre's mighty Wurlitzer organ. The night will conclude with music by a very special string quartet, formed of members of the Opera San José orchestra, starting at 8pm.

"As we celebrate our 40th season of bringing celebrated and new works to the San Jose community, what a great way to give art aficionados a glimpse of our work," said **Opera San José General Director/CEO Shawna Lucey**. "We love bringing opera to the people and the people to the opera; I can't wait to share our music and our enthusiasm with South First Friday participants."

Opera San José will launch its 40th anniversary season with an all-new production of Charles Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by OSJ General Director/CEO Shawna Lucey, in her first production since taking the helm of the company. *Romeo and Juliet* follows on the heels of Lucey's critically acclaimed *La Traviata* for San Francisco Opera, which is scheduled to be remounted at Los Angeles Opera this season. Conducted by OSJ Director of Music **Joseph Marcheso**, Shakespeare's beloved story of feuding factions and illicit love will be brought to life

at the historic California Theatre in downtown San Jose for six performances. A feast of impassioned French music, famous melodies, and a timeless story, *Romeo and Juliet* will be sung in French with English and Spanish supertitles, September 9-24, 2023 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).

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.

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: Opera San José will offer up lively free entertainment for art lovers participating in the Downtown San Jose SoFA District’s evening art walk *South First Friday* taking place September 1. Joining in this celebration of the arts and culture of the city, Opera San José will open the doors of the historic California Theatre for an evening filled with music, dance, a sneak peek at rehearsals for the company’s upcoming *Romeo and Juliet*, and other activities.

WHEN: 5:30pm, Friday, September 1

WHERE: **California Theatre**, 345 South First St., San Jose, CA

TICKETS: FREE

INFO: For more information or to ensure a free seat the public can visit operasj.org/event/first-friday

MEDIA: Contact Courtney Heimbeck, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/romeoandjuliet/>