

OPERA SAN JOSÉ TO RECEIVE MORE THAN \$20,000 GRANT FROM NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

SAN JOSE, CA (24 January 2024) — **Opera San José** has been approved by the **National Endowment for the Arts** (NEA) for a Grants for Arts Projects award of \$22,000. This grant will support diverse audience access and opportunities for the Bay Area premiere of *Florencia en el Amazonas* presented by Opera San José, April 20 – May 5, 2024, at the California Theatre in downtown San Jose. The NEA funds will be put towards the South Bay company’s community outreach for the first Spanish-language opera to be presented on its mainstage, with initiatives including free public sneak peek concerts throughout the San Jose area and inviting students to experience the production to celebrate the rich diversity of one of America’s largest cities. This award is one of the NEA’s 958 Grants for Arts Projects awards totaling more than \$27.1 million, announced as part of its first round of fiscal year 2024 grants.

“The NEA is delighted to announce this grant to Opera San José, which is helping contribute to the strength and well-being of the arts sector and local community,” said **National Endowment for the Arts Chair Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD**. “We are pleased to be able to support this community and help create an environment where all people have the opportunity to live artful lives.”

“We are grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for its generous grant, that will support our ongoing efforts to welcome new audiences to opera, particularly as we present the Bay Area premiere of Daniel Catan’s mesmerizing opera *Florencia en el Amazonas*,” said **Opera San José General Director/CEO Shawna Lucey**. “This production marks Opera San José’s first presentation of a Spanish-language opera on its mainstage, and the support of the NEA will enable us to uplift more artists of San Jose, expose more young people to their first operagoing experience, host a public concert series, and more.”

The NEA’s Grants for Arts Projects (GAP) provides expansive funding opportunities to strengthen the nation’s arts and cultural ecosystem. Grants are available for arts projects in a wide variety of artistic disciplines.

Opera San José will conclude its 40th anniversary season 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 U.S. opera houses. *Florencia en el Amazonas* premiered at New York’s Metropolitan Opera in November 2023 and this spring will debut at the California Theatre as Opera San José’s first Spanish-language opera performed on its mainstage. In this two-act opera, Mexican composer Catán transports audiences to a 20th century riverboat sailing the Amazon River. There, a famous opera singer returns home to perform, while hoping to reunite with her lover, a butterfly hunter who has disappeared into

the jungle. A story rich in allusion that bridges drama and fantasy, *Florencia en el Amazonas* will be performed in Spanish with English and Spanish supertitles.

Celebrated Latina international director **Crystal Manich** 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 has 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 while tenor **César Delgado** will play Arcadio. Baritone **Ricardo José Rivera** – who charmed audiences as Figaro in OSJ season's *The Barber of Seville* – returns as Riolobo and bass-baritone **Vartan Gabrielian** will take on the role of Captain. Opera San José Director of Music **Joseph Marcheso** will conduct.

For more information on other projects included in the NEA's grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).

For more information on Opera San José, the public can visit operasj.org or call **408-437-4450**.

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 20 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.

INFO: For more information or to purchase subscriptions, 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:
<https://cbpr.co/press/florenciaenelamazonas/>