

OPERA SAN JOSÉ PARTICIPATES IN
SOUTH FIRST FRIDAY

WITH FUN BIRTHDAY PARTY INCLUDING
FREE MUSIC, GAMES, TREATS, TOURS, MORE
AT CALIFORNIA THEATRE

February 2, 2024

SAN JOSE, CA (23 January 2024) — **Opera San José** will present lively free entertainment for art lovers participating in the Downtown San Jose SoFA District's evening art walk **South First Friday** taking place February 2. 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, a sneak peek of the upcoming production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, and an opportunity to celebrate Opera San José's 40th anniversary with birthday treats and activities for operagoers of all ages. Events will take place from 5:30pm to 8:30pm 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.

Throughout the evening, arts aficionados will be able to get a tour of the California Theatre led by its ushers filled with historical facts about the city's unique building. The entertainment begins at 6:00pm with performances by Opera San José singers soprano Alexandra Halchak, tenor WooYoung Yoon, and baritone Robert Balonek featuring music from OSJ's upcoming production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* with pianist Veronika Agranov-Dafoe. The anniversary festivities will start at 7:00pm with local balloon artist Hey Balloon Lady! creating fantastical inflated creations. Guests can show off their vocal capabilities by singing "Happy Birthday" to Opera San José and enjoy cupcakes by San Jose-based Peter's Bakery. Then at 7:15pm, beloved organist Jerry Nagano will perform favorite tunes on the California Theatre's mighty Wurlitzer organ. Following that, the public is welcome to participate in party games with an Opera San José twist, such as "Pin the Crown" on OSJ founder Irene Dalis and tackling a handmade pinata by treasured local party purveyors Dulceria Mi Carnaval. The night will conclude with a performance by a string quartet of Opera San José orchestra musicians, starting at 8pm.

"All season, we have been celebrating 40 years of producing world-class operatic performances and are inviting South First Friday art walkers to join the party," said **Opera San José General Director/CEO Shawna Lucey**. "We welcome everyone to bring the kids, a date, or come alone and enjoy an old-fashioned birthday party to help us mark our fourth decade here in downtown San Jose."

Opera San José's 40th anniversary season continues with a thrilling production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Boasting some of opera's most memorable music, including the signature aria "La donna è mobile," this gripping work follows the jester Rigoletto, his innocent daughter Gilda, and the corrupt Duke of Mantua whose callous treatment of women launches a storm of vengeance, murder, and tragic self-sacrifice. The production is led by visionary director Dan Wallace Miller, acclaimed for his work with Seattle Opera and other national companies, while Jorge Parodi guest conducts for the South Bay opera company – both making their OSJ debuts. 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 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.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

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WHEN: 5:30pm – 8:30pm, Friday, February 2

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

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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<https://cbpr.co/press/rigoletto/>