

OPERA SAN JOSÉ PRESENTS
MOZART'S WHIMSICAL ADVENTURE
THE MAGIC FLUTE
September 14-29, 2024

SAN JOSÉ, CA (29 July 2024) — **Opera San José** will launch its 41st season this September with ***The Magic Flute***, featuring the return of prodigy composer/conductor **Alma Deutscher** at the podium. Deutscher, whose updated *Cinderella* enthralled OSJ audiences, reunites with director **Brad Dalton** to create a production of the fantastical opera that will be welcoming to operagoers of all ages. This fanciful work, Mozart's final opera, follows the fairytale story of handsome young prince Tamino and silly bird-catcher Papageno, who set out to free the clever princess Pamina. Equipped with a set of magical musical instruments, these two new friends face a vengeful Queen of the Night, a world of sorcerers and serpents, spirits and secrets, and more, that will test their loyalty, love, and persistence. ***The Magic Flute*** will be performed in German with English and Spanish supertitles. It will be presented **September 14-29, 2024** (performance dates/times below) at the **California Theatre**, 345 South First Street, San José. For more information or to purchase tickets (\$58–\$215), the public can visit operasj.org or call **408-437-4450** (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm).

“Opportunities to see a woman, much less a very young woman at the podium commanding a full orchestra are rare. As we saw when she conducted her own *Cinderella* at Opera San José in 2022, Alma Deutscher, who began composing operatic and chamber works of international renown while still a small child, is becoming an astonishing force in the world of music and we are delighted that our audiences will again have the opportunity to see her at work – this time on the music of another prodigy, Mozart,” said Opera San José General Director/CEO Shawna Lucey. “***The Magic Flute*** is an opera that thrills audiences of all ages. As a parent of a small child, I love to include operas in our season that can introduce the wonder of opera to children. This piece is perfect for both the young and young at heart.”

Opera San José has assembled a talented cast to bring ***The Magic Flute*** to life. Tenor **WooYoung Yoon** returns to Opera San José as Tamino following his performance last season as The Duke in *Rigoletto*, Opera San José's inaugural Wadhvani Chair soprano **Melissa Sondhi** will play Pamina, and soprano **Emily Misch** will make her Opera San José debut as the Queen of the Night. Baritone **Ricardo José Rivera** – who charmed audiences as the beloved barber in last season's *The Barber of Seville* – will return as Papageno, while soprano **Nicole Koh** will make her Opera San José debut as Papagena. Bass **Younggwang Park** makes his Opera San José debut as Sarastro. Tenor **Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst** will make his role debut as Monostatos and Opera San José fan favorite bass-baritone **Philip Skinner** will return as The Speaker. Soprano **María**

Brea will make her Opera San José debut as First Lady, mezzo-soprano **Melisa Bonetti Luna** – who delighted audiences last season in Opera San José’s production of *Rigoletto* as the scheming sister Maddelena – returns to Opera San José as Second Lady, and past Opera San José chorus member mezzo-soprano **Mariya Kaganskaya** will make her role debut as Third Lady. Also in the cast are tenor **Eric Mellum** as First Priest, baritone **Michael Jesse Kuo** as Second Priest, tenor **Joachim Luis** as First Man in Armour, and bass-baritone **Joseph Calzada** as the Second Man in Armour.

Six youthful members of Los Altos-based **Cantabile Youth Singers of Silicon Valley** will alternate as the three Spirits: **Chinmay Chakravarthi**, **Evan Kronstadt**, **Haniel Park**, **Alexandra Peña**, **Gus Solomon**, and **Katherine Vladimirova**. The chorus ensemble is comprised of **Rachel Beninghof**, **Lauren Biglow**, **Jeremy Harr**, **Ru Huang**, **Danielle Imai**, **Brennah Kemmerly**, **Michaël S. Kim**, **Kyounghee Lee**, **Leonardo Mangalindan**, **Nicholas Mollé**, **Fallon Nunes**, and **Joshua Porter**. On September 29, sopranos **Abigail Bush** and **Nicole Koh** will appear as Papagena and Queen of the Night, respectively.

The creative team for ***The Magic Flute*** is **Alma Deutscher** (Conductor), **Brad Dalton** (Director), **Antara Bhardwaj** (Choreographer), **Ryan McGettigan** (Scenic Designer), **David Lee Cuthbert** (Lighting Designer), **Calli Carvajal** (Hair and Makeup Designer), **Johannes Löhner** (Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master), and **Michelle Ainna Cuizon** (Assistant Director).

“Classically Curious” night for ***The Magic Flute*** will be held Friday, September 20, bringing together people ages 21 to 40 who have a passion for deepening their involvement with opera. This young professionals program was created to introduce new audiences to opera, offering access to discounted tickets, exclusive behind-the-scenes opportunities, and social and community events that connect young adult opera lovers. More information can be found at go.operasj.org/ClassicallyCurious.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's final opera, ***The Magic Flute*** made its world premiere at the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden in Vienna on September 30, 1791. The opera follows prince Tamino and his newfound friend, a comic bird-catcher Papageno, who launch a quest to rescue Pamina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night, from the clutches of the high priest Sarastro. Audiences are transported to a mystical realm, from the dark and foreboding temple of Sarastro to the spellbinding trials of fire and water that Tamino and Papageno must face. Inspired by a mix of folk tales, this two-act opera offers a surreal blend of enchanting fantasy and profound allegory, and features iconic arias, such as the Queen of the Night's dazzling and vengeful "Der Hölle Rache," and the serene "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön," as well as the amusing duet "Pa-Pa-Pa-Papageno" between Papageno and his newfound love Papagena. ***The Magic Flute*** continues to captivate audiences worldwide with its magical music and rich symbolism, blending timeless themes of love, courage, and wisdom with mesmerizing melodies.

Artist Bios:

WooYoung Yoon (Tamino)

Opera San José Artist-in-Residence tenor **WooYoung Yoon** has been praised for his “soaring high notes” and a voice that “conveys nobility” by *Opera News*. His future engagements include Rodolfo in *La bohème* with Opera San José and his return to Carnegie Hall as a soloist in Hagenberg’s *Illuminare* and in Ramírez’s *Misa Criolla*. Recent performances include The Duke in Verdi’s *Rigoletto* and Benvolio in Gounod’s *Romeo and Juliet* for Opera San José, Mozart’s *Requiem* for the Evansville Philharmonic, and the title role in *La damnation de Faust* with Maestro Nelson and the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional de Costa Rica. For the New York City Opera, he made his role debut as Edgardo in Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*, premiered a concert commemorating the heroism of Chiune Sugihara which debuted at Carnegie Hall, and was featured in its production of Peter Rothstein’s *All Is Calm*.

Melissa Sondhi (Pamina)

Praised for her “charm” (*San Francisco Chronicle*), her “shimmering, agile soprano” and “remarkable dynamic range” (*Operaville*), for her “warm and evocative” voice (*Cordell Reports*), and her “effortless performance” (*Opera Tattler*), the inaugural Opera San José Wadhvani Artist-in-Residence and Indian American soprano **Melissa Sondhi** is an opera singer on the rise. Sondhi has recently made role debuts at Opera San José, San Francisco Opera Guild, Pocket Opera, and Cinnabar Theater. In the 2023-24 season, she debuted the roles of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Opera San José, and covered the role of Rosalba in *Florencia en el Amazonas*. She also performed the role of Musetta in Pocket Opera and Cinnabar Theater’s collaborative production of *La bohème* and looks forward to revisiting the role with Opera San José in the upcoming 2024-25 season. Other roles include Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Barbarina in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Giannetta in *L’elisir d’amore*, and Le feu in *L’enfant et les sortilèges*. In 2023, Sondhi won first place in the Adult Classical Voice category at the Los Angeles Semifinals of the Music International Grand Prix competition and was also a semifinalist in the Orpheus Vocal Competition in 2017.

Emily Misch (Queen of the Night)

Soprano **Emily Misch** has been praised by *Opera News* for her “stratospheric coloratura with scintillating precision.” A sought-after Queen of the Night, this season Misch will also reprise the role for the Glacier Symphony Orchestra, after having performed it for Arizona Opera (2023), Annapolis Opera (2023), and the Glimmerglass Festival (2021). *The New York Times* called her performance “impressive” and “fearsome,” and *The Wall Street Journal* praised how she “ably navigated the Queen of the Night’s coloratura.” At Glimmerglass, she also performed the role of Berginella in *Songbird*, a new adaptation of Offenbach’s *La Périchole* created by Eric Sean Fogel, James Lowe, and Kelley Rourke. Performances in the 2021-22 season included Madame Goldentrill in *The Impresario* with Syracuse Opera and Handel’s *Messiah* with Naples Philharmonic. She also performed as a soloist in Berg’s *Wozzeck* with the Boston Symphony

Orchestra. Her 2022-23 season included Musetta in *La bohème* with Newport Classical and *Carmina Burana* with the Cincinnati Ballet and Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed with American Lyric Theater for its workshop of *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Fallen Giant*. Misch made her Glimmerglass Festival debut in 2019 as Florestine in *The Ghosts of Versailles*, a role she reprised with Château de Versailles Spectacles in France for her European debut. Other recent roles include Olympia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* and Ruth Bader Ginsburg in Derrick Wang's *Scalia/Ginsburg* with Opera North, Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with Opera in Williamsburg, Le feu, La princesse and Le rossignol in *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with Opera on the Avalon, and Leah in Joel Mandelbaum's *The Dybbuk* at Queens College. On the concert stage, Misch has performed as soprano soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* and Haydn's *Paukenmesse* with Huntington Choral Society, in *Carmina Burana* with the Altoona Symphony Orchestra and the Westchester Choral Society, in Mahler's *Symphony No. 8 (Mater Gloriosa)* with Berkshire Choral International, and in *Exsultate, jubilate, K. 165* with the Greenville Symphony Orchestra. A 2018 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions National Finalist, Misch has also been awarded prizes from the Schuyler Foundation for Career Bridges, the Gerda Lissner Foundation, Mannes College, and Yale University.

Ricardo José Rivera (Papageno)

Baritone **Ricardo José Rivera** returns to Opera San José where he made his debut as Figaro in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and as Riolo in *Florença en el Amazonas* last season. He has also recently performed Nottingham in *Roberto Devereux* with the Washington Concert Opera, Don Carlo in *Ernani* with Sarasota Opera, Severo in Donizetti's *Poliuto* with Teatro Nuovo, and Silvio in *I Pagliacci* with Opera San Antonio. His other engagements include Silvano in *Un ballo in maschera* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Riccardo Muti, Schaunard in *La bohème* for CulturArte de Puerto Rico, the Marquis de la Force (cover) in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* for the Houston Grand Opera, Escamillo in *Carmen* with Opera de Puerto Rico, and concerts with the Mobile Symphony. He debuted the role of Miller in Verdi's *Luisa Miller* with Sarasota Opera and returned to Teatro Nuovo for Carolina Uccelli's *Anna di Resburgo*. Future engagements include a debut with Pittsburgh Opera as Silvio in *I Pagliacci*. For the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Rivera sang Schaunard in *La bohème*, Baron Douphol in *La traviata*, Silvio in *I Pagliacci*, and Sharpless in *Madame Butterfly*. Other recent engagements include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Aspen Music Festival, Claudio in Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* and Angel #7 in the American premiere of contemporary opera *Seven Angels* by Luke Bedford, both with the Aspen Music Festival, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with the International Lyric Academy of Rome and Silvano in *Un ballo in maschera* with Opera in the Heights. In concert, he has performed with the Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago in Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* and with the Civic Orchestra at the Chicago Symphony Center, Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Dominican Republic Symphony Orchestra, and in several concerts with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. Rivera has been the recipient of several grants, including the Richard F. Gold Career Grant presented by the Shoshana Foundation, First Prize and Audience Prize

winner in the Houston Saengerbund Voice Competition, and Third Prize winner in The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions – Gulf Region.

Nicole Koh (Papagena)

This summer, Koh performed the role of Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel* as an apprentice artist with the Chautauqua Opera Company. She sang the title role in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory under the direction of Marlena Malas and John Giampetro, and covered Winnie in Beecher's *Sky on Swings* as a young artist with Opera Saratoga.

Abigail Bush (Papagena on September 29)

Hailed for her "great range and polished technique" (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), soprano Bush returns to Opera San José where she was seen last season as Countess Ceprano in Verdi's *Rigoletto*. Recent engagements include Anne Page in Otto Nicolai's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Diana in Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* with Pocket Opera. Other previous roles include performances as Papagena in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Clara Johnson in Adam Guettel's *The Light in the Piazza*, and Edith in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Younggwang Park (Sarastro)

Opera San José Artist-in-Residence **Younggwang Park** is a bass from South Korea. In 2022, he won The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition - Georgia District. The following year, he achieved third place in the Southeast Region of The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, received an Encouragement Award at the Giulio Gari Vocal Competition, and secured second place at the Opera at Florham International Vocal Competition. In 2023, he won the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (New York District), and the Opera Index Vocal Competition. He performed as Pastore in *Orfeo* at Santa Fe Opera, where he was an apprentice artist in the summer of 2023.

Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst (Monostatos)

A member of the Opera San José chorus since 2015, tenor **Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst** has participated in more than 30 OSJ productions, including playing Tashtago in Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick*, the Messenger in *Il trovatore*, and in the ensemble of the North American premiere of Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella*. Most recently Vasquez-Gerst was a part of the world premiere of Vance Maverick's *At the Hawks Well* with Bay Area Arts Alliance, portraying the Young Man. In the 2024-25 season, he will return to San Francisco Opera as a member of its extra chorus in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, and Bizet's *Carmen*. Vasquez-Gerst has been featured as a soloist with Magic Circle Opera, Bay Shore Lyric Opera, and as a member of the San Francisco Opera Extra Chorus in Wagner's *Ring*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Verdi's *Il trovatore*, and Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

Philip Skinner (The Speaker)

Lauded for his “mellifluous bass-baritone” (*Opera News*), **Philip Skinner** has appeared with San Francisco Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera, New York City Opera, La Monnaie, Teatro di San Carlo, Opéra de Nantes, and Victoria State Opera, as well as prominent orchestras such as the Israel Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, and Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. Among his many roles, Skinner has sung Zaccaria in *Nabucco* and King Marke in *Tristan und Isolde* in concert (Claude Heater Foundation in San Francisco), Olin Blitch in *Susannah* (Festival Opera), Nikititsch in *Boris Godunov* (San Francisco Symphony), Scarpia in *Tosca* (Sacramento Opera), Arkel in *Pelléas et Mélisande* (West Edge Opera), The Speaker in *The Magic Flute* (Seattle Opera), Eric/Ghost of Bazzetti in *Great Scott* (San Diego Opera), Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* (Madison Opera), Wotan/Gunther in the *Mini-Ring* (Minnesota Concert Opera), Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* (Opera Parallèle), Iago in *Otello* (Livermore Valley Opera), Dr. Schön/Jack the Ripper in *Lulu* and the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (West Edge Opera), the title role in *The Flying Dutchman* (Livermore Valley Opera), the King in *Aida* (Pacific Symphony), and Casaubon in *Middlemarch in Spring* (Charlottesville Opera).

María Brea (First Lady)

Currently an Opera San José Artist-in-Residence, Venezuelan soprano **María Brea** has been called a “fantastic soprano,” by *Opera Wire* which noted her “virtuosity as a singer” and “luxurious polish.” Brea was chosen as a finalist in the 2022 Paris Competition and sang for the 2021 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition. She recently performed as Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Vero Beach Opera and will make her role debut as Ana Maria in *Zorro* with Arizona Opera in 2025.

Melisa Bonetti Luna (Second Lady)

Opera San José Artist-in-Residence mezzo-soprano **Melisa Bonetti Luna** has appeared in the premiere of *The Climate Opera Project* at BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music) with American Opera projects, as Carmen in *CarmXn* with the Hogfish Festival in which the performers and creative team collectively devised a new adaptation, and last season as Maddalena in *Rigoletto* with Opera San José.

Mariya Kaganskaya (Third Lady)

Mezzo-soprano **Mariya Kaganskaya** recently sang Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* with West Bay Opera and made her Opera Columbus debut as Larina in *Eugene Onegin*. She has performed with San Francisco Opera, Teatro Grattacielo, Opera Ithaca, Opera Omaha, West Bay Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Arizona Opera, and played the teacher in Santa Fe Opera’s world premiere production of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, which earned a Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording.

Eric Mellum (First Priest)

Tenor **Eric Mellum** makes his role debut with Opera San José as First Priest in *The Magic Flute*. He moved to the Bay Area after more than 20 seasons with Minnesota Opera, where he was featured in the world premieres of *Silent Night* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the North American premiere of *The Handmaid's Tale*. He has performed with various arts organizations including The Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Company, Out of the Box Opera, Minnesota Orchestra, Colorado Opera Festival, Mill City Summer Opera, Skylark Opera, Pocket Opera, Lamplighters Music Theatre, Lyric Theatre, and Coastal Repertory Theatre.

Michael Jesse Kuo (Second Priest)

Taiwanese baritone **Michael Jesse Kuo** has worked with numerous companies such as San Francisco Opera, Opera San José, Lyric Opera Studio of Weimar, Pocket Opera, San Francisco Opera Guild, and West Edge Opera, singing roles such as Dulcamara, Schaunard, Marullo, and Papageno.

Joachim Luis (First Man in Armour)

Tenor **Joachim Luis** was recently seen in West Edge Opera's Snapshot Concert, is an extra chorister with the San Francisco Opera and a tenor in the San Francisco Symphony Chorus. Luis has performed with numerous groups including Bella Voce, Chicago Choral Artists, William Ferris Chorale, Chicago Bach Ensemble, Cantate, Constellation Men's Ensemble, Vocality, Hot Commodity, Main Street Opera (Chicago), Opera on Tap San Francisco, Livermore Valley Opera, West Bay Opera, and will be joining San Francisco Opera's outreach program this fall 2024.

Joseph Calzada (Second Man in Armour)

After his appearance with Opera San Jose, American-Greek bass-baritone **Joseph Calzada** joins Wolf Trap Opera as a studio artist this season, performing in *Silent Night*, *Don Alfonso*, *Così fan tutte*, and *La bohème* and will be seen in the upcoming Livermore Valley Opera production of *Don Giovanni* as Masetto in 2025. He has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, the Vienna Summer Music Festival, St. Petersburg Opera Company Greek Opera Studio, the Festival of the Aegean, Savannah Opera, The Pan-European Philharmonia of Warsaw, Napa Valley Youth Symphony, Music on Site, Inc., IU Opera Theater, San Francisco Conservatory of Music Opera Theatre, Russian Opera Workshop, Harrower Summer Opera Workshop, and the Vienna Summer Music Festival.

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.

Opera San José performs at the **California Theatre**, 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:

WHAT: **Opera San José** will launch its 41st season this September with ***The Magic Flute***, featuring the return of prodigy composer/conductor **Alma Deutscher** at the podium. Deutscher, whose updated *Cinderella* enthralled OSJ audiences, reunites with director **Brad Dalton** to create a production of the fantastical opera that will be welcoming to operagoers of all ages. This fanciful work, Mozart's final opera, follows the fairytale story of handsome young prince Tamino and silly bird-catcher Papageno, who set out to free the clever princess Pamina. Equipped with a set of magical musical instruments, these two new friends face a vengeful Queen of the Night, a world of sorcerers and serpents, spirits and secrets, and more, that will test their loyalty, love, and persistence.

WHEN: 7:30pm, Saturday, Sept. 14 – opening night
2:00pm, Sunday, Sept. 15
7:30pm, Friday, Sept. 20 – “Classically Curious” night
2:00pm, Sunday, Sept. 22
7:30pm, Friday, Sept. 27
2:00pm, Sunday, Sept. 29

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

TICKETS: \$58–\$215

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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MEDIA: Contact Courtney Heimbeck, CBCO Public Relations
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
https://cbpr.co/press/osj_themagicflute