

OPERA SAN JOSÉ PRESENTS
BARTÓK'S EVOCATIVE TALE OF TRUST AND LOVE
BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE

February 15 – March 2, 2025

SAN JOSÉ, CA (16 December 2024) — **Opera San José** presents an all-new production of Béla Bartók's chilling one-act opera *Bluebeard's Castle* directed by OSJ General Director/CEO **Shawna Lucey**. This psychological thriller follows Judith who uncovers terrifying corners of her new husband's dark past while unlocking rooms in his eerie home. *Bluebeard's Castle* will feature Emeritus OSJ Artist-in-Residence soprano **Maria Natale** whose recent acclaimed portrayals at OSJ include the title role in *Tosca* and The Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, as the unwitting bride who comes to live in the haunted realm of a mysterious duke. Acclaimed baritone **Zachary Nelson** will make his OSJ debut as Duke Bluebeard and OSJ Music Director **Joseph Marcheso** is set to conduct the powerful work. *Bluebeard's Castle* by **Béla Bartók** with a libretto by **Béla Balázs**, will be performed in English, with English and Spanish supertitles, **February 15 – March 2, 2025** (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, 11:00am - 5:30pm).

"I can't wait to bring this mesmerizing opera to our audiences," said Opera San José General Director/CEO **Shawna Lucey**. "Besides its stunning orchestration, the work is emotional and unforgettable. From fierce brass sections to rich strings and sonorous woodwinds, the music and terrifically challenging vocals take us on a truly chilling thrill ride for a little over an hour. Fasten your seat belts for this memorable one-act work."

Opera San José is collaborating with the Silicon Valley dance company **New Ballet** to feature three dancers as the previous wives of Duke Bluebeard: **Delaney Ewert, Alysa Reinhardt, and Sorcha Tate**.

The creative team for *Bluebeard's Castle* includes Opera San José Music Director **Joseph Marcheso** (Conductor), Opera San José General Director/CEO **Shawna Lucey** (Director), **Steven Kemp** (Scenic Designer), **Michael Clark** (Lighting Designer), **Caitlin Cisek** (Costume Designer), **Christina Martin** (Hair and Makeup Designer), **Michelle Cuizon** (Assistant Director), and **Johannes Löhner** (Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master).

“Classically Curious” night for ***Bluebeard’s Castle*** will be held Friday, February 21, bringing together people who have a passion for deepening their involvement with opera. This Silicon Valley 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 emerging opera lovers. More information can be found at go.operasj.org/ClassicallyCurious.

Composed by Béla Bartók with a libretto by Béla Balázs, ***Bluebeard's Castle*** is a one-act opera that premiered at the Royal Hungarian Opera House in Budapest in 1918. Based on, and departing from, the tale of Bluebeard from French folklore, the opera delves into psychological themes of love, trust, and the unknowable depths of the human soul. The work is acclaimed for its lush and evocative orchestration, which conveys the dark, mysterious atmosphere of Bluebeard’s castle, and its dramatic vocal writing for the two characters, Bluebeard and Judith. Bartók’s innovative use of Hungarian folk music influences and modernist techniques creates a gripping narrative soundscape and has remained a cornerstone of 20th-century opera, praised for its emotional intensity and symbolic depth.

Artist Bios:

Maria Natale (Judith)

Praised by *The New York Times* for her “plummy, penetrating voice,” Italian American soprano **Maria Natale** is the recipient of many awards and grants from some of the most prestigious vocal competitions nationwide including the National James Collier Vocal Competition, the Elizabeth Connell Prize in Sydney, Australia, the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition as well as a grand finalist in the Loren L. Zachary Vocal Competition. Natale made debuts at Tulsa Opera as Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly* and at Opera San José as Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, and Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* recent acclaimed portrayals at OSJ include the title role in *Tosca* and The Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. She won critical and audience acclaim for her recent appearances at OSJ as *Tosca* and The Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Other opera engagements have included *Violetta* in *La Traviata* with Opera Maine under conductor Stephen Lord where *Opera News* reported that “her powerful soprano easily filled the house,” and her Sarasota Opera debut portraying the role of Liù in *Turandot* where she was hailed as having an “unequivocal Italian sound” by *New Outpost*. As a concert soloist, Natale has been featured at Carnegie Hall in Faure’s *Requiem* and Mozart’s *Missa Solemnis* with MidAmerica Productions. She has also appeared as the soprano soloist with the NYC Master Chorale in Dvorak’s *Te Deum* and Mozart’s *Requiem*. Natale is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, where she performed the role of Lady Macbeth in Ernest Bloch’s only opera *Macbeth* and was praised by *Opera News* for her “high voltage vocal thrills” and “merciless stage presence.”

Zachary Nelson (Duke Bluebeard)

Zachary Nelson's 2024-25 season features an exciting mix of role debuts and favorites as he returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago for Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *The Listeners* as Paul and makes his house debut as the titular Bluebeard in *Bluebeard's Castle* with Opera San José. Elsewhere in the season, he returns to one of his signature roles, Leporello, in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Omaha, and continues the role of Alberich in his first performances of Siegfried with Atlanta Opera for its *Ring Cycle*. In concert, he joins the Santa Fe Symphony for Beethoven's *9th Symphony*. Nelson has performed with Palm Beach Opera, Florentine Opera, Atlanta Opera, Arizona Opera, the Utah Symphony, the Sag Harbor Song Festival, Santa Fe Opera, North Carolina Opera, the Lubbock Symphony, New Orleans Opera, the Jacksonville Symphony, Des Moines Metro Opera, and Chicago Opera Theater, San Francisco Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Opera Orchestra of New York, Den Norske Opera, the Aix-en-Provence Festival on tour in Manama, Bahrain, and with the Seiji Ozawa Music Academy in Kyoto, Tokyo, and Nagoya. He made a debut at the Salzburg Landestheater, and returned to the Canadian Opera Company as Escamillo after making his debut as Masetto in Dmitri Tcherniakov's *Don Giovanni*. A regular performer with Lyric Opera of Chicago, the baritone has been featured at the Lyric as a soloist in their widely attended annual Millennium Park concert, followed by performances of Marcello in *La Bohème*. He has also performed Ping in *Turandot*, Donner in *Das Rheingold*. Nelson joined the ensemble of the Dresden Semperoper for the 2013-14 season, where he performed the roles of Il Conte in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, Der Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte*, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and Guglielmo in a new production of *Così fan tutte*. Subsequent performances there include Paolo in *Simon Boccanegra*, Escamillo in *Carmen*, and he reprised the roles of Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*, Marcello in *La Bohème*, and Figaro in both *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and premiered a new production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Awards Nelson has garnered are The George London Award from the 2012 George London Foundation, first prize from the 2012 Opera Index Competition, the 2012 Liederkrantz Foundation Competition (General Opera Division), and the 2012 Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation. Also, second prize from the 2011 Gerda Lissner Competition, the 2011 Giulio Gari Foundation, and the 2011 Loren Zachary Competition.

Shawna Lucey (Director)

Shawna Lucey is an acclaimed American theatre and opera director, whose work has been seen at The Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, and other major houses around the world. Her legacy production of Puccini's *Tosca* launched San Francisco Opera's 99th season in 2021. It was followed in 2022 by the centennial celebration of her ground-breaking legacy production of Verdi's *La Traviata*, re-staged this past season at Los Angeles Opera. She returns to Los Angeles Opera this spring to direct *Così fan tutte*. Lucey made her directorial debut with Opera San José in 2018 with *La Traviata*, brilliantly staged with skill and imagination, offering a compelling contemporary viewpoint. Last year, she directed the company's season-opening *Romeo and Juliet*. Her directorial work has been seen across the U.S., from The Met to Dallas Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Santa Fe Opera, and many others. Lucey also boasts an international reputation, staging works in Spain, Russia, and Germany, at the Gran Teatre del Liceu, Bolshoi Theater, and Schauspiel Hannover, among many others, and has assisted esteemed directors, including Stephen Lawless, Lee Blakeley, John Caird, Peter Schumann, and Francesca Zambello.

Lucey holds BAs in Theater and Italian from the University of Texas at Austin, received her MFA in Directing & Movement from the Boris Shchukin Theatre Institute of the Vakhtangov Theater in Moscow, and received her MS in Non-Profit Management from Columbia University in 2023. She has also served as an adjunct professor in Speech and Theatre at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, encouraging the next generation of artists while teaching courses on acting, design, stage management, and directing. She serves on the Board of Directors of Team San José as well as the Board of the Theatre Preservation Fund in San Jose.

Joseph Marcheso (Conductor)

Music Director and Principal Conductor of Opera San José **Joseph Marcheso** was most recently seen conducting OSJ's production of *La Bohème* this season. He has conducted more than 25 productions for OSJ, including the company premiere of Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby Dick*, the West Coast premiere of Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *Silent Night*, and the world premiere of Mark Weiser's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, among others. As staff conductor and cover at San Francisco Opera, Marcheso has served on many productions, including the San Francisco premiere of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, the world premiere of Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, and Heggie and Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life* (cover). Prior to joining OSJ, Marcheso was on the conducting staff for Washington National Opera's *Manon Lescaut* and served as the music director for the Amato Opera in New York City.

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** presents an all-new production of Béla Bartók's chilling one-act opera *Bluebeard's Castle* directed by OSJ General Director/CEO **Shawna Lucey**. This psychological thriller follows Judith who uncovers terrifying corners of her new husband's dark past while unlocking rooms in his eerie home. *Bluebeard's Castle* will feature Emeritus OSJ Artist-in-Residence soprano **Maria Natale** whose

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WHEN: **February 15 – March 2, 2025**
7:30pm, Saturday, Feb. 15 – opening night
2:00pm, Sunday, Feb. 16
7:30pm, Friday, Feb. 21 – “Classically Curious” night
2:00pm, Sunday, Feb. 23
2:00pm, Friday, Feb. 28
2:00pm, Sunday, Mar. 2

WHERE: **California Theatre, 345 S 1st St, San José**

TICKETS: **\$58 – \$215**

INFO: For more information, the public can visit operasj.org or call **408-437-4450** (open Tuesday through Friday, 10:00am–4:00pm).

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MEDIA: Contact Courtney Heimbeck, CBCO Public Relations & Marketing
650-308-4390 | courtney@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos will be available here:
cbpr.co/press/bluebeardscastle