

**OPERA SAN JOSÉ'S  
LA DOLCE VITA GALA  
HONORS MAESTRO JOSEPH MARCHESO'S  
10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SEASON,  
RAISES OVER \$300,000 TO SUPPORT COMPANY**

SAN JOSÉ, CA (25 February 2026) — **Opera San José's *La Dolce Vita Gala*** attracted a host of civic leaders and arts supporters to celebrate Maestro Joseph Marcheso's 10th anniversary season on Saturday, February 21, 2026. Held at the majestic California Theatre in downtown San José, the spectacular evening was brought to life by Gala Host and Auction Committee members Laura Bajuk, Mark Chambers-Bray, Lenore Johnson, Oceane Li, and Joyce Scott, with event sponsors including Corinne Augustine, Michael Kalkstein and Susan English, Larry Kern, Matt and Maria Bornski, Peggy Heiman, Team San Jose, Charles Hanes, Heritage Bank of Commerce, Karl and Jennifer Hsu, and Smith Commercial Management. Civic leaders attending the event included Congressman Sam Licardo, and San José Councilmembers Michael Mulcahy and Anthony Tordillos. The evening raised more than \$300,000, empowering the company to continue presenting emotionally thrilling opera that reflects and engages Silicon Valley's diverse community while cultivating the next generation of operatic talent.

The evening began with a cocktail reception as a steady arrival of lavishly dressed OSJ supporters were welcomed by gorgeous models in flower-bedecked gowns that complemented the stunning floral arrangements by Asiel designs adorning the historic theatre lobby. Guests sipped champagne, wine, or hand-mixed Negronis and enjoyed a sumptuous spread of antipasti while browsing an array of silent auction items and mingling with General Director & CEO **Shawna Lucey**, Music Director and Principal Conductor **Joseph Marcheso**, and the company's fabulous artists. Serenaded by organist **Jerry Nagano** on the theatre's surround Wurlitzer, guests then took their seats at elegantly garlanded tables set beneath the opulent period lighting of the upper and lower lobbies. They enjoyed a multi-course gourmet dinner featuring Italian favorites, paired with wines from Joseph George Winery and Robert Cipresso Wines, accompanied by entertainment and special surprises.

During dinner, guitarist **Allen Pacheco** provided live music before guests were treated to performances by top operatic talent, including stars of OSJ's current production. **Maria Natale** charmed the audience with her rendition of "Over the Rainbow," followed by tenor **Ben Gulley**, who thrilled listeners with a full-throated aria.

San José Councilmember Mulcahy then presented an official commendation honoring the outstanding leadership and artistic excellence of Maestro Marcheso, the proclamation was issued by Mayor Matt Mahan and signed by Vice Mayor Pam Foley and all members of the San José City Council, in recognition of Marcheso's enduring contributions to the arts community.

Following dinner, guests entered the theatre for an evening of delights, hosted by **Shawna Lucey**, who began the night by bringing onstage maestro extraordinaire, **Joseph Marcheso** who had the audience roaring with laughter as he accepted the tribute with a witty and charming speech.

The evening continued with an all-star lineup of OSJ artists and special guest appearances. Celebrated composer and conductor **Alma Deutscher** took the stage for a remarkable improvisation. After requesting four notes from the audience, she spent just a minute crafting a beautifully intricate fugue on the spot using those notes as her theme. Deutscher's triumph was followed by performances from **Natale** and **Gulley**, as well as baritone **Kidon Choi**, tenor **Micah Perry**, and soprano **Mikayla Sager**, all accompanied by OSJ Head of Music **Veronika Agranov-Dafoe**.

Honoring the Italian theme, the remarkable tenor **Alex Boyer**, a former OSJ Artist-in-Residence, made a dramatic entrance from the audience, thrilling listeners with his powerful rendition of "Nessun Dorma." The performance finale brought all the singers together onstage for a breathtaking rendition of "Non ti partirò."

Alongside **Shawna Lucey**, auctioneer **Keith L. McLane** kept the audience energized as they bid on live auction items such as a trip to Italy's charming Tuscan village Cortona, an original artwork depicting OSJ's current production of *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, by artist Erin Salazar, and the priceless opportunity to appear as a supernumerary in an opera next season, which all sold for top dollar to benefit Opera San José. McLane then delivered an enthusiastic appeal for guests to "Fund a Need," prompting attendees to raise their paddles and contribute an additional total of \$145,000 in donations.

Sponsors of Opera San José's *La Dolce Vita* Gala included **Maria Manetti Shrem**, **Roberto Cipresso**, **Gordon Biersch**, **Asiel Design**, **Joseph George Fine Wines**, and **Team San Jose**.

## **ABOUT OPERA SAN JOSÉ**

**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 broadcasts digital productions from its state-of-the-art Heiman Digital Media Studio, and performs regularly in its community, providing access to the arts to audiences of all ages and backgrounds. 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](http://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 Theatre is comparable to England's Glyndebourne and Venice's historic Teatro La Fenice in the select ranks of the world's most intimate opera houses.

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**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos will be available here: [cbpr.co/press/OSJladolcevita](http://cbpr.co/press/OSJladolcevita)