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Opera San José presents company premiere of Mozart's favorite opera
Idomeneo: King of Crete

SAN JOSÉ, CA— **Opera San José** opens its 28th season with a San José premiere of Mozart's first dramatic masterpiece, ***Idomeneo, ré di Creta***, the mythical tale of the king of Crete set at the end of the Trojan War. **George Cleve**, founder and music director of the Midsummer Mozart Festival, conducts, with stage direction by **Brad Dalton**, and a cast of 73, featuring current and former members of Opera San José's resident company, and introducing guest artists making their San José debuts. Eight performances are scheduled from September 10 through 25 at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José Box Office, by phone at (408) 437-4450, or online at www.operasj.org. ***Idomeneo, ré di Creta*** is jointly produced with the [Packard Humanities Institute](http://www.packardhumanitiesinstitute.org).

An epic work of music drama that changed the course of Mozart's operas, ***Idomeneo, ré di Creta*** is based on the ancient Greek story of the king of Crete, returning home from the Trojan War. To gain a safe return to shore during a violent storm at sea, Idomeneo vows to sacrifice to Neptune the first person he sees on land. Unfortunately, that person is his son, Idamante, so Idomeneo flees instead of greeting him. Idamante, meanwhile, is in love with Ilia, the captured daughter of the king of Troy. Neptune, cheated out of his sacrifice, sends a sea monster to ravage Crete. Idamante, learning the truth of his father's vow, slays the monster and presents himself for sacrifice, but Ilia comes between them declaring her love for Idamante. With the gods appeased, a divine voice declares that Idamante and Ilia shall reign as the new king and queen of Crete.

Mozart was just 25 years old when his mythological music drama premiered in Munich on January 29, 1781. Adapted from the French drama *Idoménée* by Antoine Danchet, with an Italian libretto by

Giambattista Varesco, *Idomeneo, ré di Creta* was Mozart's first dramatic masterpiece and his personal favorite of all his operas. After the world premiere in Munich, Mozart revised the work for production in Vienna. Opera San José will produce a hybrid version of these two, using the most beautiful music of each. This elaborate opera, originally commissioned by the Elector of Bavaria, boasts extended choral scenes and ballet. **Dennis Nahat**, artistic director of **Ballet San José**, choreographs dancers from his company in Opera San José's *Idomeneo, ré di Creta*.

Idomeneo, ré di Creta features current and former members of Opera San José's resident company in principal roles as well as first-time guest artists. Tenors **Christopher Bengochea** and **Alexander Boyer** alternate in the title role of the king of Crete, who must make the ultimate sacrifice. Tenor **Aaron Blake** (in his Opera San José debut) and mezzo-soprano **Betany Coffland** share the role of Idamante, Idomeneo's son. Former resident sopranos **Rebecca Davis** and **Sandra Bengochea** will perform the role of Ilia, the captured princess of Troy and Idamante's love. The role of Electra, the daughter of King Agamemnon and rival for Idamante's affection, will be shared by sopranos **Christina Major** and **Jasmina Halimic**. Making his debut with Opera San José, tenor **Nova Safo** performs the role of the king's confidant, Arbace. Tenor **Mathew Edwardson** will also make his company debut in the role of the High Priest of Neptune, and Opera San José resident bass **Silas Elash** sings the Voice of Zeus.

George Cleve, acclaimed music director of the Midsummer Mozart Festival, will conduct *Idomeneo, ré di Creta*. Maestro Cleve has become almost synonymous with Mozart as one of the world's most devoted interpreters of the composer's music. In 1974 he founded the Midsummer Mozart Festival, the only music festival in North America dedicated exclusively to Mozart. As a guest conductor he has appeared with most of the major American and European orchestras, and has conducted many operas including *Don Carlos*, *Carmen*, *La bohème*, *La traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Così fan tutte*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Abduction from the Seraglio*, *Bastien and Bastienne*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Madama Butterfly* and *Oedipus Rex* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia, San Francisco Spring Opera, Long Beach Opera, and **Opera San José**.

Award-winning stage director **Brad Dalton** returns to **Opera San José** to direct *Idomeneo, ré di Creta*. Dalton's previous credits with the company include the West Coast premiere of David Carlson's *Anna Karenina*, *Così fan tutte* and *Madama Butterfly* for which he received critical acclaim. He has directed productions for opera companies throughout the United States and abroad, including San Francisco Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, Washington Opera, and the State Opera of South Australia.

In 2004, Dalton received the prestigious Helpmann Award for "Best Director of an Opera" in Australia.

Opera San José's production of *Idomeneo: ré di Creta* includes set designs by **Steven C. Kemp**, costume designs by **Johann Stegmeir**, lighting design by **Chris Ostrom**, and wig and makeup designs by **Jeanna Parham**.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) is regarded by many as the world's greatest composer and creator of some of opera's most memorable works. Born in Salzburg, Mozart was a child prodigy who began playing the keyboard at the age of three and composed from the age of five. By the time of his death at the age of 35, Mozart had composed more than 600 works. Unlike other composers of his time who distinguished themselves in one form of composition, Mozart excelled in every form from chamber music to opera. His most famous operas, including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan tutte*, were written in the last decade of his life, but it was the first of these masterpieces, *Idomeneo*, that remained his favorite work for the stage.

Opera San José's *Idomeneo, ré di Creta* is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

About Opera San José

Opera San José, performing at the historic **California Theatre** in downtown San José, is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of principal artists, Opera San José specializes in showcasing the finest young professional singers in the nation. In addition to mainstage performances, Opera San José maintains extensive educational programs in schools and in the community at large, and offers *Preview* lectures and *Introduction to Opera* talks for all mainstage productions.

About Packard Humanities Institute

The Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) is a non-profit foundation dedicated to archaeology, music, film preservation, historic conservation, and early education. PHI is located in Los Altos, California. PHI is independent of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and is not associated in any way with any Hewlett-Packard Company foundations.

Idomeneo: King of Crete

In Italian with English Supertitles

<u>Cast:</u>	<u>September 10, 13, 18, 22</u>	<u>September 11, 17, 23, 25</u>
Ilia	Rebecca Davis	Sandra Bengochea
Electra	Christina Major	Jasmina Halimic•
Idamante	Aaron Blake†	Betany Coffland•
Idomeneo	Christopher Bengochea	Alexander Boyer•
Arbace	Nova Safo†	Nova Safo†
High Priest	Mathew Edwardsen†	Mathew Edwardsen†
The Voice	Silas Elash•	Silas Elash•

• Resident Company † Company Debut

What: **Opera San José** opens its 28th season with a San José premiere of Mozart's first dramatic masterpiece, ***Idomeneo, ré di Creta***, the mythical tale of the king of Crete set at the end of the Trojan War. Eight performances are scheduled from September 10 through 25 at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José Box Office, by phone at (408) 437-4450 or online at www.operasj.org. ***Idomeneo, ré di Creta*** is jointly produced with the [Packard Humanities Institute](http://www.packardhumanitiesinstitute.org) and made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

Who: Composer: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Librettist: Giambattista Varesco, based on the drama *Idoménée* by Antoine Danchet
Conductor: George Cleve
Assistant Conductor: Anthony Quartuccio
Stage director: Brad Dalton
Choreographer: Dennis Nahat
Designers: Steven C. Kemp (sets); Johann Stegmeir (costumes); Chris Ostrom (lighting); Jeanna Parham (wigs/makeup)

Dates: September 10, 11m, 13, 17, 18m, 22, 23, 25m; 2011

Time: "m" indicates matinee at 3pm; all other performances are at 8pm

Location: California Theatre, 345 South First Street between San Carlos and San Salvador streets, downtown San José

Tickets: \$51–\$101 (includes city facility usage fee) from Opera San José Box Office, 2149 Paragon Dr., San José, CA 95131; 408-437-4450; 408-437-4455 fax; www.operasj.org
Available 90 minutes prior to curtain at the California Theatre box office only: Seniors (65 and older) 10% discount; Students 25 and younger (with student ID) \$11

Photo: <http://operasj.org/news-events/press-room/press-photos/>

Press Room: <http://operasj.org/news-events/press-room/>

To learn more about *Idomeneo*, please visit www.operasj.org and consider these opportunities:

Idomeneo Preview/Panel Discussion: August 30, 12 noon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, 150 E Fernando Street, downtown San José. Free vocal preview with members of the cast, followed by a panel discussion with members of the creative team. For information, call 408-437-4450.

Idomeneo Preview/Lecture: August 30, Eulipia Restaurant, 374 South First street, downtown San José. Doors open at 6:30pm; program 7-8pm. Wine and cheese will be served. Vocal preview with members of the cast, followed by a lecture by General Manager, Larry Hancock. Advance tickets - \$25 (\$30 at the door), call 408-437-4450.

Introduction to Opera: Before each performance (except opening night), General Manager, Larry Hancock, will present a free 45-minute talk about the opera at the California Theatre, beginning at 6:30pm prior to evening performances and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

Season Opening Gala: Saturday, September 10 at 5 pm. A spectacular opening night event for the premiere of *Idomeneo*. \$150 per person for a three-course dinner at Arcardia Restaurant, valet parking at the Marriott Hotel, and post-performance champagne reception at the Sainte Claire Hotel. For menu and reservations, call the Opera San José Box Office at 408-437-4450.

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