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Opera San José presents Bizet's romantic gem
The Pearl Fishers

SAN JOSE, CA— **Opera San José** opens its 29th season with Bizet's exotic romance, ***The Pearl Fishers***, a mesmerizing tale of a friendship tested by a forbidden love, set on the tropical island of ancient Ceylon. **Anthony Quartuccio** conducts with stage direction by **Richard Harrell**, Director of the Opera Program for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. ***The Pearl Fishers*** will be sung in French with English supertitles. Eight performances are scheduled from September 8 through 23 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. ***The Pearl Fishers*** is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

Opera San José presents Georges Bizet's ***The Pearl Fishers*** for the first time on the California Theatre stage. With a libretto by Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré, ***The Pearl Fishers*** is the story of two fishermen, Zurga and Nadir, who vow eternal friendship, but the desire for a mysterious woman from their past (a priestess named Leila) ignites a jealous rivalry. A mesmerizing tale of love and sacrifice set on the tropical island of ancient Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Bizet's musical gem overflows with lush melodies, haunting arias, and features the beloved duet for tenor and baritone, "Au fond du temple saint."

Composed more than a decade prior to Bizet's most popular work, *Carmen*, ***The Pearl Fishers*** premiered in Paris at the Théâtre Lyrique in 1863, just weeks prior to the composer's 25th birthday. Although it was well received by audiences in its initial run, it was not a critical success and the opera would not be presented again in Bizet's short lifetime. ***The Pearl Fishers*** would eventually become part of the repertoire of opera companies around the world and Bizet acknowledged as one of the great French composers of the Romantic era.

Anthony Quartuccio will conduct *The Pearl Fishers*. **Quartuccio's** long history with Opera San José includes conducting performances of more than 20 operas including the company premiere of Mozart's *Idomeneo* last season and the 2010-11 production of *Tosca*. **Quartuccio** is music director of the South Valley Symphony and assistant conductor of the San Jose Chamber Orchestra. His conducting and instrumental appearances include the Spokane Symphony, Cabrillo and Brevard Festival orchestras, the Santa Cruz Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony. The **September 15 and 16** performances will be conducted by **Andrew Whitfield**, resident Chorus Master for Opera San José. **Whitfield** served as Chorus Master for last season's productions of *Idomeneo*, *Pagliacci*, *La traviata* and *Faust*, and served as Assistant Conductor for *Pagliacci*. He made his West Coast professional debut conducting a performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Festival Opera. Other directorial credits include music director for New York's Amato Opera, where he conducted performances of *Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci*, *Aida*, *La forza del Destino*, *Falstaff*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La bohème*, *Tosca*, *Faust* and *Don Giovanni*.

Richard Harrell makes his Opera San José debut as stage director of *The Pearl Fishers*. **Harrell** currently serves as Director of the Opera Program for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, visiting faculty for the Opera Studio of the Netherlands and as Associate Director of the Orfeo Foundation, an international non-profit organization that supports young opera performers. Previously, he was the Director of the Juilliard Opera Center, the Director of the San Francisco Opera Center, Artistic Advisor and Head of Faculty for the Training Program of the New National Theatre in Tokyo and Artistic Consultant and Principal Stage Director for the Bangkok Opera.

The Pearl Fishers features members of Opera San José's resident ensemble in the principal roles. Alternating in the role of Leila, the mysterious priestess, are sopranos **Cecilia Violetta López** and **Melody King**. Both will make their debuts as resident artists in *The Pearl Fishers*. Recent engagements for **López** include the title role in *Suor Angelica* for Opera San Luis Obispo, Micaëla (*Carmen*) and Gasparina (*La Canterina*) for UNLV Opera Theatre and Poppea (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) for the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival. **King** made her company debut as Yvette in Opera San José's 2010 production of *La rondine*. Other roles performed recently by **King** include Cio-Cio-San (*Madama Butterfly*), and Donna Anna (*Don Giovanna*), both for Livermore Opera. Returning resident tenor **Alexander Boyer** will perform the role of Nadir. Last season, Boyer appeared in the title role in Opera San José's company premiere of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Canio in *Pagliacci* and the title role in *Faust*. He shares the role with tenor **James Callon** who joins the Opera San José resident ensemble after

concluding his second season as a Studio Artist with Tulsa Opera, where he performed the role of Howard Boucher in the company's debut production of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* to critical acclaim. Resident baritones **Evan Brummel** and **Zachary Altman** share the role of Zurga, King of the pearl fishers. **Brummel** returns for a second year as a member of the resident ensemble after appearing last season in the roles of Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Giorgio Germont (*La traviata*) and Valentin (*Faust*). **Altman** makes his debut with Opera San José after recently performing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl as Herman Augusts and Second Inquisitor in Bernstein's *Candide*. He spent three years as a fellow at the Music Academy of the West, where he sang the title role in *Don Giovanni*, Dr. Miracle in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and Breedley in Bolcom's *A Wedding*. Rounding out the cast is resident bass **Silas Elash** who performs the role of Nourabad. A resident artist since 2008, some of Elash's previous roles with the company include Méphistophélès (*Faust*), Dr. Grenville (*La traviata*), the Voice of Nettuno (*Idomeneo*), Colline (*La bohème*), Bartolo (*The Barber of Seville*) and Scarpia (*Tosca*).

Opera San José's production of ***The Pearl Fishers*** includes set designs by **Charlie Smith**, costumes by **Elizabeth Poindexter** (revival), lighting design by **Pamila Gray**, and wig and makeup designs by **Jeanna Parham**.

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.

The Pearl Fishers

In French with English Supertitles

Cast:

September 8, 13, 16, 21

September 9, 15, 18, 23

Leila
Nadir
Zurga
Nourabad

Cecilia Violetta López •†
Alexander Boyer•
Evan Brummel•
Silas Elash•

Melody King•
James Callon•†
Zachary Altman•†
Silas Elash*

• Resident Company † Company Debut

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

What: Opera San José opens its 29th season with Bizet's exotic romance, *The Pearl Fishers*, a mesmerizing tale of a friendship tested by a forbidden love, set on the tropical island of ancient Ceylon. *The Pearl Fishers* will be sung in French with English supertitles. Eight performances are scheduled from September 8 through 23 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. *The Pearl Fishers* is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

Who: Composer: Georges Bizet
Librettist: Eugène Cormon and Michel Carré
Conductor: Anthony Quartuccio
Assistant Conductor: Andrew Whitfield (**September 15 and 16** performances)
Stage Director: Richard Harrell
Set Designer: Charlie Smith
Costume Designer: Elizabeth Poindexter
Lighting Designer: Pamila Gray

Dates: September 8, 9m, 13, 15, 16m, 18, 21, 23m; 2012

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–\$111 (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 current student ID) \$11

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

Press Room: <http://www.operasj.org/pressroom.html>

To learn more about *The Pearl Fishers* please visit www.operasj.org and consider these opportunities:

The Pearl Fishers Preview/Panel Discussion: August 28, 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.

The Pearl Fishers Preview/Lecture: August 28, The Fairmont Hotel, 170 South Market street, downtown San José. Doors open at 6:30pm; program 7-8pm. Wine and light refreshments will be served. Vocal preview with members of the cast, followed by a lecture by General Manager, Larry Hancock. Tickets - \$50, 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 (except opening night) and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

Season Opening Night Gala Dinner: Saturday, September 8 at 5 pm. A spectacular opening night event for *The Pearl Fishers*. \$150 per person for a three-course dinner at the Marriott Hotel (Willow Glen ballroom) in downtown San Jose, including valet parking, and post-performance champagne reception with the artists at the Sainte Claire Hotel. For menu and reservations, call the Opera San José Box Office at 408-437-4450.

Meet the Artists: Meet members of the cast, the stage director, and the conductor immediately following the opening Sunday matinee, September 9, at the California Theatre. Free for matinee attendees.

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