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“Let the light shine on Festival Opera.”

- San Francisco Classical Voice

Festival Opera Announces 31st Season

Vincenzo Bellini’s

NORMA

Cast led by acclaimed singer Shana Blake Hill

With the Festival Opera Orchestra & Chorus

Directed by Mark Foehringer

Conducted by Bryan Nies

2 performances only! July 8 and 10

ARTIST RECITAL SERIES

Alex Boyer, Tenor – March 20

***They Sing!* Lily Bogas, Mezzo-Soprano, Matheus Coura, Countertenor – May 22**

MIXTAPE DIGITAL STAGE

Shana Blake Hill, Soprano – Episode 3 For April release

Taylor Thompson, Tenor – Episode 4 For June release

***Plus* RETURN OF FESTIVAL OPERA ANNUAL EVENTS**

OPERA IN THE PARK

The Annual Tradition continues at Orinda Community Park June 16

OPERA AFTER DARK

Rudney Plaza at the Leshner Center for the Arts – August 2022

ANNUAL COSTUME BALL/GALA

Lafayette Park Hotel - October 22, 2022

Tickets on sale February 14 at FESTIVALOPERA.org or by calling (925) 943-7469

(WALNUT CREEK, CA – February 11, 2022) Walnut Creek’s newly revitalized Festival Opera announces its 31st season of performances and special events, featuring an all-new production of Bellini’s *Norma*, featuring acclaimed singer Shana Blake Hill in the title role, directed by Mark Foehringer and conducted by Bryan Nies, with the Festival Opera Orchestra and Chorus. *Norma* will have two performances on

Friday, July 8 at 7:30pm and Sunday, July 10 at 2:00pm in the Hofmann Theatre at the Leshner Center for the Arts, located at 1601 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek.

The season will also include the return of the **Artist Recital Series**, with Tenor Alex Boyer at the Piedmont Center for the Arts on Sunday, March 20 at 5:00pm, and Mezzo-Soprano Lily Bogas and Countertenor Matheus Coura in ***They Sing!*** on Sunday, May 22, at 5:00pm. Online, The **MIXTAPE Digital Stage** series continues, with Episode 3 featuring Soprano Shana Blake Hill scheduled for April release, and Episode 4 with Tenor Taylor Thompson scheduled for release this June.

Festival Opera also welcomes the continuation of ***Opera in the Park*** at Orinda Community Park on June 16, ***Opera After Dark*** in Rudney Plaza at the Leshner Center for the Arts this August, and the annual **Costume Ball/Gala** at Lafayette Park Hotel on October 22.

Tickets for all Festival Opera events will go on sale February 14 at FestivalOpera.org or by phone at 925-943-7469.

Festival Opera General Director Zachary Gordin said, "Our 2022 season is inspired by the power of the human voice to move and unite us through storytelling and shared experience. Our multifaceted season will unfold in ways that meet our audience where they are, welcoming them into more intimate spaces and conversations with our artists, and will crescendo through more casual festivities to culminate in the grandest gestures opera has to offer."

"An all-new production of Bellini's *Norma* will bring a stunning display of vocal fireworks to the Leshner Center for the Arts, joined by the forces of our outstanding orchestra and chorus. I'm thrilled to present an incredible cast of principal artists from around the country, and to introduce our audience to emerging local artists on the path to major operatic careers. Join us for this thrilling and satisfying journey!"

"We will offer intimate chamber recitals and our MIXTAPE digital stage, highlighting individual artists' journeys and musical inspirations. Our *Behind the Mask* video interview series will continue to allow audiences a peek into the lives and stories of our collaborators. We'll take opera out of the theatre and into our community with *Opera in the Park* and *Opera After Dark* performances."

Led by General Director Zachary Gordin, Festival Opera is committed to community building through culturally rich and diverse programming, increased equity and access for underrepresented communities, and producing operatic and vocal masterworks with the highest artistic standards. The company believes in a world where the historic barriers of our theatre are broken down, a world in which they can provide the community with an invitation and a safe space for all people to gather and experience the power of music.

Festival Opera was founded in 1991 by Dr. Theodore Weis, who, twenty years earlier had helped create the Arizona Opera Company in Tucson. Past leadership includes the artistic direction tenures of famed soprano Olivia Stapp and Maestro Michael Morgan of the Oakland Symphony. Festival Opera is committed to presenting emerging and local artists in compelling and socially relevant productions of new and classic repertoire. Festival Opera gives emerging artists a venue to hone their craft in leading roles with the guidance and collaboration of established professionals - providing a vital launching pad for their professional future. FO alums have gone on to perform in major opera houses and symphony halls around the globe. Memorable past stagings include Mozart's *Don Giovanni* set in a contemporary nightclub, Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* highlighting the human and political struggles we face, Floyd's *Susannah* echoing the #metoo movement, and Massenet's *Werther* set in the 1950s.

FESTIVAL OPERA

Artist Recital Series

Alex Boyer, tenor
Kevin Korth, pianist

March 20, 2022 - 5:00 PM
Piedmont Center for the Arts

Alex Boyer, known for his unique “grit and vocal power” when inhabiting the great lyric tenor roles, joins us in recital alongside pianist Kevin Korth. The program is a decadent and delectable array of vocal showpieces by Hans Pfitzner, Rachmaninoff, Schubert, Sibelius, and Tosti. Front-row intimacy with the power of the tenor voice, as well as with Boyer's visual storytelling and emotional range will thrill audiences at any stage of their love affair with opera and classical singing.

A New York native, Alex Boyer (*he/him*) is an alumnus of the Merola and Santa Fe Opera programs. From 2008 to 2013, he was a resident artist with Opera San José where he performed over 13 roles. Most recently, he has been seen as Canio in *Pagliacci* with Festival Opera, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* with Hawaii Opera Theatre and as Captain Ahab in Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick* with Chicago Opera Theater. Pianist Kevin Korth (*he/him*), recently praised by *Gramophone* for playing that is “superb”, and “full of color and character,” has collaborated with such legendary artists as Frederica von Stade, Isabel Leonard, Jake Heggie, Nadine Sierra, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Sasha Cooke, Lise Lindstrom, and Deborah Voigt. This power packed collaboration is not to be missed!

FESTIVAL OPERA

Artist Recital Series

They Sing!

Lily Bogas, mezzo-soprano
Matheus Coura, countertenor
Zachary Gordin, pianist

May 22, 2022 - 5:00 PM
Piedmont Center for the Arts

Opera and theater, from Greek tragedy to those 18th Century rock stars the Castrati, have historically told stories through a broad spectrum of voices, personalities, and gender expressions. Performed and curated by mezzo-soprano Lily Bogas (*she/they*) and countertenor Matheus Coura (*they/them*), ***They Sing!*** will explore feelings from sublime to irreverent to comedic: recognizing that voices of the same range have validity in roles across the gender spectrum. This program will feature arias, songs, and duets by Monteverdi, Handel, Mozart, Bizet, Strauss, Kurt Weill, and Ricky Ian Gordon. ***They Sing!*** will take you on a journey through the past, present and into the future of how music has shaped and reflected the multifaceted human experience.

Emerging mezzo-soprano Lily Bogas is a student at the Eastman School of Music whose recent credits include Taller Daughter in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, Dido in *Dido and Aeneas*, and Cinderella in *Into the Woods*. A finalist in the National CS Vocal Competition, and third place winner in the Schmidt Vocal Competition, Lily was also a finalist in the American Songbook Academy, performing jazz standards alongside Michael Feinstein. Lily will be making their mainstage debut with Festival Opera as Clotilde in *Norma* this season.

Praised for their “sonorous voice” and “delightful spontaneity” Brazilian-American countertenor Matheus Coura's recent performances include Giuliano in *Eliogabalo* with West Edge Opera, and Narcissus in *...two united in a single soul...* with San Francisco Ballet. Coura is a proud recipient of the SF Artist Grant, was a finalist in the Bethlehem Bach Competition, and prize winner at the St. Petersburg

Opera Guild and Cooper-Bing Competitions. Coura is also an internationally published portrait photographer, and resident artist at The Convent Arts Collective where they co-founded the drag revue *Bad Habits*.

MIXTAPE Digital Stage

For April Release

Episode 3

Shana Blake Hill, soprano (*she/her*)

Zachary Gordin, pianist (*he/him*)

For June Release

Episode 4

Taylor Thompson, tenor (*he/they*)

Zachary Gordin, pianist (*he/him*)

Short, artist curated, HD video recitals of vocal music that spans centuries, cultures, and genres. Like that favorite playlist a friend shares with you to listen to on rainy days, MIXTAPE is our artists' love-letter to our audiences: storytelling in a way that feels familiar, with tracks highlighting different facets of their journey. On our release dates, we host collective screenings with a live post-chat with our artists. Tune in for MIXTAPE for your classical and contemporary musical quick fix! Episodes air on our YouTube channel and via our website at festivalopera.org

Opera in the Park

June 16, 2022 - 6:00 PM

Orinda Community Park

28 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA

An annual tradition! We'll bring our outstanding principal and young artists together for an afternoon of exhilarating operatic favorites on the lawn! Bring a picnic and enjoy our incredible artists alongside the rising stars of tomorrow. Don't miss this fun, casual, FREE event to share with your family and friends!

FESTIVAL OPERA

presents

***Norma* - Vincenzo Bellini**

July 8, 2022 - 7:30 PM

July 10, 2022 - 2:00 PM

Hofmann Theatre - Leshner Center for the Arts

Set against the struggles of culture and religion in Roman occupied Gaul, ***Norma*** is an epic story of love, lust, and the struggle for power. The druid high-priestess and daughter of King Oroveso, Norma is secretly in a love affair with a man who should be her enemy; the Roman proconsul Pollione. After years of hiding their affair - breaking Norma's vow of purity - and two children together, Pollione becomes infatuated with a young novice priestess: Norma's confidante Adalgisa.

Norma is now tasked with leading a rebellion against the Roman legions. She is in deep conflict over the fate of her children in the impending war. Adalgisa is torn between love for Pollione, betrayal of Norma and of her own vows. Pollione is driven by his desire for dominance. Betrayal, heartbreak, rage and the clash of cultures weigh heavily on this love triangle. In the end someone will have to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Packed with vocal fireworks, achingly beautiful arias and fierce characters, this iconic opera stands at the pinnacle of the bel canto repertoire. Even Wagner, who didn't like Italian opera, admired Bellini and

Norma tremendously as an example of the essence of what opera can emotionally deliver. Come and bask in an evening of 19th-century diva power anthems and famous duets, this opera is FULL of hits!

Opera in two acts with one intermission
Performed in Italian with English supertitles
Running time: approximately 2 hours 45 minutes.

CAST & CREATIVE

Norma: Shana Blake Hill (*she/her*)
Adalgisa: Ashley Dixon (*she/her*)
Pollione: Dane Suarez (*he/him*)
Oroveso: Kevin Thompson (*he/him*)
Flavio: Marcus J. Paige (*he/him*)
Clotilde: Lily Bogas (*she/they*)

Director: Mark Foehringer (*he/him*)
Conductor: Bryan Nies (*he/him*)
With the Festival Opera Orchestra & Chorus

Arts Around August - Downtown Walnut Creek Opera After Dark

Rudney Plaza at the Leshner Center for the Arts
August 26, 2022 - Time TBD

Ending *Arts Around August* on a high note! Festival Opera takes over Rudney Plaza at the Leshner Center for the Arts, transforming it into an outdoor nightclub combining the best of bohemian, speakeasy, and fashion week vibes. Come grab a drink and watch as our **divas** bring music, drama, and fashion together for a one-of-a-kind performance of opera and cabaret classics.

Annual Costume Ball/Gala

Lafayette Park Hotel - October 22, 2022

Celebrate Festival Opera's 2022 Season with a sparkling evening of entertainment, costumes, music, food, and dancing! Set in the Lafayette Park Hotel's gorgeous chateau courtyard and ballroom, our Masquerade Ball is sure to be a night full of spectacle for you and your friends.

Immerse yourself in music by Festival Opera artists and mingle with special guests while supporting Festival Opera's 2023 season, educational programming and digital content!

No Festival Opera gala would be complete without a chance to bid on live & silent auction items including incredible experiences and unique pieces to commemorate the evening. Fabulous costume theme to be announced soon!

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