



For Immediate Release

**FESTIVAL OPERA RETURNS TO ORINDA COMMUNITY PARK
FOR 13TH ANNUAL OPERA IN THE PARK CONCERT,
THURSDAY JUNE 22 AT 6 PM, SPONSORED BY ROTARY CLUB OF ORINDA
FESTIVAL OPERA ARTISTS AND PROGRAMMING ANNOUNCED;**

**SUMMER SEASON INCLUDES OUTDOOR CONCERT IN WALNUT CREEK, AUG. 6
AND NEW PRODUCTION OF *CARMEN*, AUG. 18 & 20**

www.festivalopera.org



"Opera in Park" at Orinda Community Park



Festival Opera's Zachary Gordin

Walnut Creek, Calif. (June 08, 2023) — **Festival Opera** returns to the beautiful setting of **Orinda Community Park** on Thursday, June 22 at 6 p.m., with the **13th Annual Opera in the Park** concert graciously sponsored by the **Rotary Club of Orinda**, with grateful thanks and appreciation to the **City of Orinda Parks and Recreation Department** and sponsor **Compass** realtor **Pablo Tiscareno**, and **Solano Jewelers**. Free and ample lawn seating awaits attendees along with a selection of food and wine trucks to enable their summer repast al fresco. The park is located at 28 Orinda Way, Orinda.

Long considered one of the highlights of the summer musical season, this year's Opera in the Park concert will present an evening of thrilling music from the worlds of opera, Broadway and the Great American Songbook, a program sure to delight the entire community.

Selected by Festival Opera's General Director **Zachary Gordin**, the featured guest artists are: **Aisha Campbell**, soprano; **Dalyte Kodzis**, mezzo-soprano; **Matheus Coura**, countertenor; **Michael Foreman**, tenor; and **Matthew Lovell**, bass-baritone. The exciting musical program will offer opera highlights from **Puccini's *La Bohème***, **Bizet's *Carmen***, **Mozart's *Don Giovanni***, in addition to excerpts from beloved Broadway shows including ***Les Misérables***, ***Camelot***, and works by **Sondheim**, **Gershwin**, **Kurt Weill**, and **Irving Berlin**. The singers will be accompanied by distinguished Bay Area pianist **Chun Mei Wilson**. Zachary Gordin will serve as the evening's concert host.

Festival Opera's summer season will continue on Sunday, August 6 at 4 p.m., when the company will joyfully revisit the lush grounds of **Walnut Creek's Civic Park** for a different **Opera in the Park** program, this one made possible by the **Walnut Creek Civic Pride Foundation**. This free community concert will feature Festival Opera singers performing highlights from the world of grand opera in an idyllic setting for a late summer afternoon concert of beautiful music and new cherished memories. The park is located at 1375 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek.

At the heart of Festival Opera's 2023 summer season will be a new production of Georges Bizet's immortal opera, *Carmen*, set for two performances Friday, August 18 at 7.30 p.m. and Sunday, August 20 at 2 p.m. at Walnut Creek's Hofmann Theatre, Leshner Center for the Performing Arts.

Zachary Gordin, said "It is with great pride Festival Opera celebrates its 32nd anniversary season with a refreshed, contemporary interpretation of Bizet's iconic work, *Carmen*. I'm especially pleased to present a cast of rising, highly talented opera stars in such a collaborative stage production that will surely resonate with Bay Area audiences."

For only the second time in the company's history, Festival Opera presents Bizet's *Carmen*, the composer's final work for the lyric theater stage in 1875 prior to his tragically early death at age 36. The groundbreaking work abounds with raw energy and enduring melodic inspiration, wrapped within a plot that is startling in its uncompromising realism. In many ways, *Carmen* was foundational for the blood-and-guts genre of verismo, even while its origins in *opéra comique* are evident throughout the score: this is an opera that celebrates irony, dance and song itself, and *l'amour* - despite the tragic finale.

Curated by Zachary Gordin, an impressive roster of rising operatic stars has been assembled for *Carmen* beginning with the highly anticipated company debut of "vocal sensation," mezzo-soprano **Taylor Raven*** in the title role of the Iberian Gypsy, Carmen; the welcome return of successful Festival Opera alumni, soprano **Hope Briggs** (Micaëla) and tenor **Dane Suarez** (Don José); and the company premier of "magnificent" baritone, **Young Kwang Yoo*** (Escamillo).

Joining the *Carmen* cast in a number of important comprimario roles will be bass-baritone **Matthew Lovell** (Zuniga); soprano **Lila Khazoum*** (Frasquita); mezzo-soprano **Lily Bogas** (Mercédès); tenor **Taylor Thompson*** (Remendado); and baritone **Andrew Fellows*** (Moralés/Dancaïro).

On the podium leading the **Festival Opera Orchestra** will be San Francisco Opera veteran **Robert Mollicone*** alongside a highly talented creative team including stage director and choreographer **Michael Mohammed***; production designer **Peter Crompton**; and lighting designer **Matthew Antaky**. The **Festival Opera Chorus** is under the direction of **Bruce Olstad**; the production will also feature the vocal talents of the Grammy Award-winning **Pacific Boychoir Academy***. Sung in French with projected English supertitles, *Carmen* will be presented in two acts, one intermission and will last two hours and forty-five minutes.

Individual tickets for Festival Opera's *Carmen* are now on sale and are \$45, \$70 and \$90. Student tickets are \$20 (age 25 and younger). Tickets may be purchased online at www.festivalopera.org/carmen or by calling the Leshner Center for the Arts Box Office, (925) 943-7469. Performances are scheduled for Friday, August 18 at 7.30 p.m. and Sunday, August 20 at 2 p.m. at the Hofmann Theatre, Leshner Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek.

Festival Opera was founded in 1991 by **Dr. Theodore Weis**, who, twenty years earlier had helped create the Arizona Opera Company in Tucson. Past Festival Opera leadership includes the artistic direction tenures of famed soprano **Olivia Stapp**, Maestro **Michael Morgan** of the Oakland Symphony, and is currently led by Zachary Gordin. Festival Opera is committed to presenting emerging and local artists in compelling and socially relevant productions of new and classic repertoire. Festival Opera proudly 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.

Zachary Gordin began his administrative association with Festival Opera in 2018 as Artistic Advisor, later Artistic Director, and in 2020 was appointed company General Director. A native son of Oakland, Gordin is a highly accomplished baritone singer performing opera repertoire and concert music throughout the country, and is a greatly skilled and insightful piano accompanist; a dedicated health and fitness advocate, the multi-talented musician and impresario is also a builder of harpsichords.

For more details about Festival Opera, visit online at www.festivalopera.org.

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Note New Festival Opera Press Contact: Jon Finck, jonfincksf@gmail.com / +1 415 577 1323

Please connect for interviews, artwork and press credentials. Season calendar is attached.

Programming and casting subject to change.

***Festival Opera Debut**