



News Release: Opera Modesto Presents CARMEN

March 6, 2019 – Opera Modesto continues its 35th anniversary season with Georges Bizet’s popular opera, CARMEN. The performances are at the Mary Stuart Rogers Theater, Gallo Center for the Arts, May 3 (7:30 pm) and 5 (2:00 pm). The charismatic San Francisco-based mezzo-soprano, Nikola Printz, stars in the title role.

General & Artistic Director, Roy Stevens, has announced the final casting and exciting details about the production, directed by Annalisa Winberg and conducted by Ryan Murray.

“Carmen may be the most popular opera in the world,” said Mr. Stevens. “It is filled to the brim with beautiful melodies recognizable even to those new to opera. The unforgettable story has compelling characters, edge-of-your-seat drama, romance and thrilling dance.”

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The Cast

CARMEN features a remarkable cast led by the Nikola Printz in the title role, who wowed Modesto audiences in the Opera Modesto 35th Anniversary Gala Concert with her stunning aerial trapeze opera diva act. The role of Don José will be performed by Modesto's own operatic tenor, Christopher Bengochea. Fast rising Brazilian opera star bass-baritone, Johnny França, will make his US debut as the bullfighter Escamillo. Modesto's Liisa Davila will reprise her beautiful interpretation of Micaëla.

The remarkable basso profundo, John Ames, returns to Opera Modesto in the role of Zuniga. Also returning are Linda Baird of San Francisco as Mercédès and Donn Bradley as Moralès/Le Dancaïre. Making their Opera Modesto debuts are two Sacramento-based artists, Darron Flagg as Le Remendado and Natasha Collier as Frasquita. Rounding out the cast is Prospect Theater Project's Founding Director, Jack Souza, in the speaking role (in French!) of Lillas Pastia, the innkeeper.

Community Collaborations

Mr. Stevens is also proud to announce three exciting community collaborations. The Ballet Tradiciones Folklorico Dance Company of Modesto, led by Christina and Gustavo Martinez, is preparing two original dances for CARMEN. Choreography by Christina Martinez, the dances are inspired by Spanish Flamenco and Zacatecas bullfighting-based dance traditions. Center Stage Kids, led by Heather Vargas and Amy DeMoura, is training a talented group of elementary school age children to perform as the Children's Chorus.

Most exciting is the new collaboration with the Portuguese-Azorean bloodless bullfighting community. Through a partnership with Coudelaria Martins in Hilmar, the famous Cavaleiro de Alternativo (horse-riding bullfighter) Paulo Ferreira and one of his world class dressage dancing horses will grace the stage of the Rogers Theater. Paulo and his horse will be part of the Procession of the Bullfighters that opens Act IV of CARMEN. This will be the first horse ever to appear onstage at the Gallo Center for the Arts. Joining in the procession will be 8 additional professional bullfighters, members of the Grupo de Forcados Amadores de Turlock ("Suicide Squad") led by George Martins.

The Creative Team

Annalisa Winberg, who made her Opera Modesto's directorial debut in the acclaimed 2018 production of MADAMA BUTTERFLY returns to direct CARMEN, conducted by Opera Modesto's longtime, award winning Music Director Ryan Murray. Making their Opera Modesto debuts are Shannon Carmack-Mize, Costume Design, and UC Santa Barbara professor, Andrew Schmedake, Lighting Design.

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Pre-Opera Talk

Each performance of CARMEN will be preceded by an entertaining and informative pre-show discussion by Hillari DeSchane, Opera Modesto board member and opera aficionado, and Ryan Murray, Opera Modesto's Music Director. The Pre-Opera Talk is in the theater one hour prior to the performance and is a "must" for those new to opera, as well as experienced opera-goers.

Tickets

Tickets begin at \$20 and can be purchased in person at the Gallo Center for the Arts Box Office, by phone at 209.388.2100, or online at galloarts.org.

\$20 Student Rush Tickets are available for each performance. Student Rush Tickets can only be purchased the day of the performance, must be purchased in person, and are limited to the number of seats available (Student Id required).

Sponsors

The production of CARMEN is made possible by generous gifts from the E. & J. Gallo Winery, The Bright Family Foundation, Mary Stuart Rogers Foundation, Wilmar and Judy Jensen, Robert Saunders, Gary and Babette Wagner, Eli Aywas & Alicia Shepheard, Norma Foster Maddy and Jessie West.

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More information available at Opera Modesto's new website www.operamodesto.org.