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San Diego Opera’s 2019-2020 Season Continues with Hansel and Gretel

Whimsical interpretation of classic fairy tale uses puppetry to bring the magical forest to life

Blythe Gaissert (Hansel) and Sara Gartland (Gretel) make welcome returns to the Company

San Diego, CA – San Diego Opera’s 2019-2020 mainstage season continues with Engelbert Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel, which opens on Saturday, February 8, 2020 at the San Diego Civic Theatre for four performances. Additional performances are February 11, 14, and 16 (matinee), 2020. This family-friendly, fully-staged, production of Hansel and Gretel marks the welcome return of mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert, last heard as Hannah After in 2017’s As One, as Hansel and soprano Sara Gartland, last heard as Musetta in 2015’s La bohème, as Gretel. They will be joined by returning baritone Malcolm MacKenzie, last heard as Schaunard in 2015’s La bohème, as the Father and returning tenor Joel Sorensen, last heard as Pong in 2018’s Turandot, as the Witch. Making exciting Company debuts are sopranos Marcy Stonikas as the Mother and Devon Guthrie as the Dew Fairy/Sandman. Conductor Ari Pelto makes his Company debut leading the San Diego Symphony from the podium and stage director Brenna Conner will stage the production. This is a new production for San Diego Opera audiences from Vancouver Opera. This production uses many life-sized puppets in the style of Japanese bunraku puppetry. The puppet design is by Old Trout Puppet Workshop.

Performed in English adapted from the original German libretto, Hansel and Gretel is based on the Germanic fairy tale about two children lost in the woods and captured by a cannibalistic witch. The children are able to outwit her and return home to their father. Hansel and Gretel will delight young and old with its enchanting music, whimsical visuals, and an instantly familiar story.

These performances of Hansel and Gretel will be performed in English with English text projected above the stage. This will be the third time the opera has been performed by the Company with additional performances occurring in 1999 and 1984.
The sets and costumes were designed by Old Trout Puppet Workshop. The Lighting Designer is Thomas C. Hase.

_Hansel and Gretel_ will have a radio broadcast on Saturday, June 13, 2020 on KPBS radio, 89.5 FM (97.7 FM Calexico) and online at [www.kpbs.org](http://www.kpbs.org)

Pre-production photos can be found online at [https://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/2019-2020-Preproduction-Artwork/](https://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/2019-2020-Preproduction-Artwork/)

**The Cast**

**Blythe Gaissert,** Hansel
American mezzo-soprano Blythe Gaissert made her San Diego Opera debut as Hannah After in 2017’s _As One_. Recent engagements include Hannah After with Opera Colorado, Mother Marie in _Dialogues of the Carmelites_ for Des Moines Metro Opera, Maddalena in _Rigoletto_ with Lyrique en Mer Festival, Orlofsky in _Die Fledermaus_ with Sarasota Opera, the Verdi _Requiem_ with Duluth Symphony, workshop performances at American Opera Projects and the world premiere at the Brooklyn Academy of Music of _As One_, Hansel in _Hansel and Gretel_ for Tulsa Opera, and the title role of _Carmen_ with Lake George Opera. On the concert stage, she has appeared with the Asheville Symphony Orchestra in _El Amor Brujo_, Cincinnati Symphony for Zemlinsky's _Psalm 83_, Colonial Symphony in _Candide_, Florence Symphony and the Garden State Philharmonic for Handel's _Messiah_, and World Symphony Orchestra in Beethoven's _Symphony No. 9_. She has participated in a number of notable programs for young artists, including San Francisco Opera's Merola Program, Cincinnati Opera, Lake George Opera, Sarasota Opera, Aspen Opera Theatre Centre. She is the 2010 Winner of the First Prize of the National Opera Association.

**Sara Gartland,** Gretel
American soprano Sara Gartland made her Company debut in 2015 as Musetta in _La bohème_. Notable appearances include the title role of _Jenufa_ and Juliette in _Romeo and Juliet_ for Des Moines Metro Opera, Roselinde in _Die Fledermaus_, Violette in _La traviata_, and Curley’s Wife in _Of Mice and Men_ with Utah Opera, the title role of _Rusalka_ for Arizona Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera, Marzelline in _Fidelio_ with Opera Omaha, Adina in _The Elixir of Love_ with Austin Lyric Opera, Josephine in _HMS Pinafore_ with Arizona Opera, and Gretel with Opera San Jose. As a member of the prestigious Merola and Adler Fellow programs with San Francisco Opera, Ms. Gartland sang numerous roles, including Barbarina in _The Marriage of Figaro_, Kate Pinkerton in _Madama Butterfly_, Micaëla in _Carmen_, Pat/Ann in the world premiere of _Heart of a Soldier_, Gerhilde in _Die Walküre_, and Suzel in _L’amico Fritz_. On the concert stage, Ms. Gartland has sung Beethoven’s _Symphony No. 9_ with the Elmhurst Symphony, _Carmina burana_ with the Cheyenne Symphony Orchestra, and debuted the song cycle _Four Hardy Songs_ by Pablo Ortiz with UC Davis Symphony Orchestra.

**Malcolm MacKenzie,** Father
American baritone Malcolm MacKenzie first performed with San Diego Opera as Marullo in _Rigoletto_ in 2002, returned in 2005 as Escamillo in _Carmen_, in 2008 as Zurga in _The Pearl Fishers_, in 2009 as Marullo in _Rigoletto_ and Sharpless in _Madama Butterfly_, in 2010 and 2015 as Schaunard in _La bohème_, in 2011 as Gregorio in _Romeo and Juliet_, 2012 as Captain Gardiner in _Moby-Dick_, Hortensio in _The Daughter of the Regiment_ and the Second Tempter/Second Knight in _Murder in the Cathedral_ in 2013, and in 2014 as Sgt. Belcore in _The Elixir of Love_. Recent engagements include Roger Chillingworth in Opera Colorado’s _The Scarlet Letter_, Stubbs in _Moby-Dick_ with Los Angeles Opera, Enrico in _Lucia di Lammermoor_ with Eugene Opera, Dancaïre in _Carmen_ at the Metropolitan Opera, George in _Of Mice and Men_ with Phoenix Festival, Giorgio Germont in _La traviata_ with Virginia Opera, the title role in _Simon Boccanegra_ with Kentucky Opera, Iago in _Otello_ with Nashville Opera, Count di Luna in _Il trovatore_ with Arizona Opera, Alfio/Tonio in _Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci_ with Arizona Opera, and
Jack Rance in *La fanciulla del West* with Nashville Opera. On the concert stage, Mr. MacKenzie has performed frequently as the baritone soloist for Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, most recently with Los Angeles’ New West Symphony, the Symphony Orchestra of the University of California, Davis and the Savannah Symphony. He has also appeared with the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the Pacific Chorale, the Los Angeles Mozart Orchestra, and the Madison Symphony.

**Marcy Stonikas**, Mother
San Diego Opera debut. American soprano Marcy Stonikas is a graduate of the Young Artist Program at Seattle Opera, she performed the roles of Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. She was First Prize winner in the Wagner Division of the 2013 Gerda Lissner Foundational Vocal Competition, and was a finalist in Seattle Opera’s 2014 International Wagner Competition. Notable appearances include the title role in *Tosca* for Arizona Opera and Opera Santa Barbara, the High Priestess in *Aida*, Magda Sorel in Menotti’s *The Consul*, and Gertrude for Seattle Opera, Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* for Cincinnati Opera, the title role of Turandot with Atlanta Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and Opera Naples, Ariadne at the Berkshire Opera Festival, Leonore in *Fidelio* with the Princeton Festival and the Vienna Volksoper, Gerhilde in *Die Walküre* and Third Norn in *Götterdämmerung* with Washington National Opera, Donna Anna with Opera Santa Barbara, the title role of *Salome* for Utah Opera, Donna Anna, Antonia in *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and Rosaura in Wolf-Ferrari’s *Le donne curiose* with Wolf Trap Opera Company, and Irene and Mary in the American premiere of *Jerry Springer – the Opera* at the Bailiwick Repertory Theatre in Chicago. She is a recipient of the Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshana Foundation, winner of the 2009 Elgin Opera Vocal Competition, and was a winner of the 2006 International Meistersinger Competition.

**Joel Sorensen**, Witch

**Devon Guthrie**, Dew Fairy/Sandman
San Diego Opera debut. Notable roles by American soprano Devon Guthrie include Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* for English National Opera, Mary Johnson in the world premiere of *Fellow Travelers* at Cincinnati Opera, Daisy Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby* at the New England Conservatory and Tanglewood, First Lady in *The Magic Flute* with Opera Philadelphia, Chocholkha in *The Cunning Little Vixen* for New York Philharmonic, Bubikopf in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with Central City Opera, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Tanglewood Music Festival, and Donna Elvira, Sidonie in *Armide*, Drusilla in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* and Laurie in *The Tender Land* at Juilliard. Other recent appearances include Pamina in The Magic Flute at English National Opera, Pulcheria in *Riccardo Primo* for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Marzelline in *Fidelio* and Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* at Santa Fe Opera.
Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Saito Kinen Festival, Konstanze in *Abduction from the Seraglio* at Kentucky Opera, and the Brahms *Requiem* with the Madison Symphony. A dedicated recitalist and contemporary music interpreter, she has appeared several times at the Opera America Salon and has performed pieces such as *Lonely Child* by Claude Vivier; *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* by Lukas Foss, Schubert’s *Der Hirt auf dem Felsens*, and *Orpheus and Euridice* by Ricky Ian Gordon. She has won several awards and prizes in competitions such as the Gerda Lissner Competition, Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers, Licia Albanese Competition and Liederkranz. She was also an apprentice at the Santa Fe Opera and Tanglewood Music Festival.

**Brenna Corner**, Director
San Diego Opera debut. Canadian stage director Brenna Corner has worked as a director, actor, singer, choreographer, and fight director across Canada, the United States and Europe. Past directing projects include *Hansel and Gretel for Vancouver Opera, Sweeney Todd* for New Orleans Opera, *La Clemenza di Tito and Giulio Cesare* for Manitoba Underground Opera, *Turn of the Screw*, *Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi*, and *Don Giovanni* for Accademia Europa dell’Opera, Indiana University’s Opera Workshop (2012 & 2013), and *1791: Mozart Finale* (Prince George Symphony Orchestra). Past assistant directing projects include: *Macbeth* for Shakespeare in Action, *Otello*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and *L’italiana in Algeri* for Calgary Opera. *The Marriage of Figaro* for Vancouver Summer Opera Studio, *The Velveteen Rabbit* for The Little Opera Company. Past roles include: Dorabella in *Cosi fan tutte*, Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*. She is a member of Fight Directors Canada and has choreographed many fights for both opera and theatre. She has a degree in music from the University of Manitoba, and has studied theatre at both Grant MacEwan College and The British American Drama Academy.

**Ari Pelto**, Conductor
San Diego Opera debut. Conductor Ari Pelto is the Music Director of Opera Colorado. At the age of 24 he was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival and has gone on to conduct on stages worldwide. His international appearances include symphonic performances with the Bochumer Philharmoniker, productions of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Falstaff* at New National Theatre of Tokyo, and *Faust* at the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City Opera conducting *La traviata*, after which he became a regular guest conductor, returning for productions of *Madama Butterfly, La bohème*, and *Carmen*. In 2015, Pelto was named Opera Colorado’s first ever Music Director, where he has conducted acclaimed performances of *Don Giovanni, Madama Butterfly, Aida*, and *The Scarlet Letter*. Other notable highlights include *Aida* at Utah Symphony and Opera, *La Voix Humaine* and *Gianni Schicchi* at Chicago Opera Theater, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Salome* at Virginia Opera, *The Rake’s Progress* at Portland Opera, *Rigoletto, Don Pasquale, The Barber of Seville* and *Don Giovanni* at Opera Memphis where he serves as Principal Guest Conductor, *La bohème* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Chautauqua, *Rusalka* and *La bohème* at Boston Lyric Opera, *Romeo and Juliet* at Minnesota Opera, *The Magic Flute, The Marriage of Figaro* and *Hansel and Gretel* at Portland Opera and *Hansel and Gretel* at Utah Opera. From 2000-2002 he was Assistant Conductor of the Florida West Coast Symphony (now the Sarasota Symphony). In addition to conducting over 30 concerts in Sarasota, Pelto also was a frequent guest with the Florida Orchestra and the Toledo Symphony and led tours of the Western Opera Theatre (the touring company of San Francisco Opera) conducting *La bohème* and *Cosi fan tutte* in over 20 States. He regularly works with leading conservatories and young artist programs including The Juilliard School, The Curtis Institute, Manhattan School of Music and Oberlin Conservatory and the Young Artist Programme at Covent Garden’s Royal Opera House. With San Francisco Opera’s Merola Program, he conducted the 2014 Grand Finale as well as productions of *Cosi fan tutte* and *The Rape of Lucretia*. At Wolf Trap Opera, he inaugurated a new production of *The Marriage of Figaro* and led *Don Giovanni*. 
Old Trout Puppet Workshop, Puppet, Costume, Scenic Design
San Diego Opera debut. The Old Trout Puppet Workshop is a puppet theatre company, founded on a ranch in southern Alberta in 1999. The Trouts now travel the world, performing at festivals that celebrate the art of the extraordinary. The Old Trout Puppet Workshop is dedicated to making professional puppet theatre, for both children and adults. The Trouts explore the outer edges of the puppet medium, and create original, unique, and exuberant art. An Old Trout show strives for delightful allegory, joyful tragedy, and purity of spirit. The company has written, designed, built, and performed the following plays: Ignorance, The Erotic Anguish of Don Juan, Famous Puppet Death Scenes, The Unlikely Birth of Istvan, Beowulf, The Tooth Fairy, The Last Supper of Antonin Careme, Pinocchio, The Ice King, and Jabberwocky.
Filmography includes Comedia Moderna, for Canada's cinematic underground, funded in part by the Bravo television network. The Feist video Honey, Honey features the work of the Old Trouts. Founding members are Judd Palmer, Peter Balkwill and Steve Kenderes.

Thomas C. Hase, Lighting Designer
American-born lighting designer, Thomas Hase, made his Company debut in 2015 with La bohème and Don Giovanni, and returned to light 2018’s The Marriage of Figaro. He has earned both national and international recognition as a lighting designer who is known for dynamic designs in opera, new theatrical productions and avant-garde dance. His design for the Tony-Award winning revival of Company on Broadway received critical acclaim. He has worked at many of the major opera houses in the United States including: Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera, BAM Next Wave, Seattle Opera, The Minnesota Opera, The Dallas Opera, Florida Grand Opera, The Goodspeed Opera, The Portland Opera, New Orleans Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera. He has also worked extensively at the regional theaters in the United States. His designs have lit the stages at the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Center Stage Theatre, Alliance Theatre, The Dallas Theater Center, The Milwaukee Repertory Theatre, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Maine State Music Theater, Syracuse Stage and Geva Theatre. As lighting designer with Ping Chong + Company his work was seen worldwide. He has worked at theaters and opera houses in Europe, Canada, South America and Asia, including: The Finnish, Columbian, Dutch National Operas, Opera North, The Canadian Opera Company, Malmö Opera in Sweden, Opera de Marseille, Staatsoper Kassel, Theater Erfurt, The Bavarian State Opera, The Vancouver Opera, The Singapore Arts Festival, and Tokyo Metro Arts Center. In 2010, he was on the original design team for the world premiere of Rufus Wainwright’s opera Prima Donna at Sadler’s Wells in London, which was later produced by New York City Opera and at The Luminato Festival in Toronto. As resident lighting designer for Stadttheater Giessen in Germany, he produced over one hundred designs for theater, opera and ballet. Concurrent with his many freelance projects, he is the resident lighting designer and director the Cincinnati Opera Summer Festival.

Performance Schedule
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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Get Connected

Pre-Opera Lectures
These 30-minute informative lectures for the main stage operas take place in the Civic Theatre one hour prior to every performance and offer wonderful insights into the production audience members are about to see. These lectures are free to all ticket holders.
Post-Opera Talkbacks
Join the cast, crew, musicians and artists right after the performance of the main stage operas for an engaging, entertaining and informative Q&A session moderated by a San Diego Opera staff member. These talk-backs are held in the Civic Theatre and are free to all ticket holders.

San Diego Opera Podcast Series
Get to know the artists and operas of the season. These insights into the singers and productions can be enjoyed by opera fans as well as those who are new to the art form. Casual and fun, this is a great way to learn about our artists and the operas they star in. Watch online at http://www.sdopera.org/Company/Education/Podcasts. These videos are also available on our YouTube Channel: http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera

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Now viewers can watch a large portion of San Diego Opera’s programming at their convenience on YouTube. Archived versions of OperaTalk!, Stars in the Salon, Opera Spotlight, our video podcast series and much more can be found on the San Diego Opera channel at: http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera

San Diego Opera on Instagram
A picture is worth a thousand words! Take a look at what happens backstage and in the office on San Diego Opera’s Instagram page. http://instagram.com/sandiegoopera

Purchasing Tickets
Single tickets start at $45 for all mainstage performances. Single tickets start at $35 for all dētour Series operas. One Amazing Night tickets start at $45. Children prices exist, please visit www.sdopera.org or call 619.533.7000 for more information.

Senior citizen discounts of 15% are available to the Main Stage series on Tuesday and Friday subscription packages. Senior citizen discounts of 15% are available to the dētour Series on Saturday subscription packages.

Military discounts (active and retired) of 50% are available to the Main Stage series on Tuesday and Friday subscription packages. Military discounts of 50% are available to the dētour Series on Saturday subscription packages.

For information about tickets please visit www.sdopera.org or call 619.533.7000

San Diego Opera 2019-2020 Season
Aida Giuseppe Verdi October 19, 22, 25, and 27 (mat), 2019
One Amazing Night with Ailyn Pérez and Joshua Guerrero
Hansel & Gretel Engelbert Humperdinck February 8, 11, 14, and 16 (mat), 2020
Aging Magician Paola Prestini March 13 and 14 (evening and mat), 2020
The Barber of Seville Gioachino Rossini April 25, 28, May 1 and 3 (mat) 2020
The Falling and the Rising Zach Redler May 8, 9, and 10 (mat) 2020

San Diego Opera Mission Statement
The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional vocal performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community engagement and the transformative power of live performance.
San Diego Opera Vision Statement
San Diego Opera will be recognized internationally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability in the operatic arts, promoting diversified programming and unique performance venues with world-class and emerging talent.

San Diego Opera Core Values Statement
Through excellence in innovative programming and education, SDO provides a lasting cultural service to the community.
- Our tradition of excellence in fully staged opera is augmented with new models of opera and venues. Our unique and deep commitment to the community propels us to explore ways of increasing affordability and accessibility.
- Through fiscal responsibility and nimble adaptation to the changing marketplace, we protect the future of San Diego Opera.
- Our educational and community involvement coupled with relevant programming will build the audience of the future.

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