

# SD OPERA Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

November 17, 2015

Contact: Edward Wilensky (619) 232-7636

[Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com](mailto:Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com)

## **Puccini's *Tosca* Opens the 2015-2016 Mainstage Season**

*Important Company Debuts by soprano Alexia Voulgaridou as Tosca and tenor Gwyn Hughes Jones as Cavaradossi*

*Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley returns in his signature role as Scarpia*

*Conductor Massimo Zanetti returns to lead the San Diego Symphony*

*New Production Never Seen Before in San Diego*

**San Diego, CA** – San Diego Opera's 51<sup>th</sup> mainstage season opens at the San Diego Civic Theatre on **Saturday, February 13, 2016** with Giacomo Puccini's operatic thriller *Tosca*. Last performed by San Diego Opera in 2009, *Tosca* features the exciting Company debut of Greek soprano **Alexia Voulgaridou** as Tosca and Welsh tenor **Gwyn Hughes Jones** as Cavaradossi and who has been hailed by the London Times as "simply one of the best Cavaradossis London has heard..." Returning to San Diego to round out the cast are bass-baritone **Greer Grimsley** in his signature role of Scarpia, American bass **Kristopher Irmiter** as Angelotti/Sciarrone, American bass-baritone **Scott Sikon** as Sacristano and American tenor **Joel Sorensen** as Spoletta. Italian conductor, **Massimo Zanetti**, will conduct the San Diego Symphony in the pits and stage director **Lesley Koenig** directs.

Performed in Italian with English translations above the stage, *Tosca* is Giacomo Puccini's gripping drama filled with torture, treachery, lust, execution and suicide. Scarpia, the chief of police, wants only two things: to recapture the escaped prisoner Angelotti and to seduce Tosca, an opera singer of incredible voice and beauty. Tosca is in love with Cavaradossi, an artist and sympathizer of Angelotti. After arresting Cavaradossi for harboring Angelotti, Scarpia plays with Tosca's emotions, promising to free

Cavaradossi if Tosca will have sex with him. But Tosca has a plan of her own and Scarpia a secret order, all of which unfolds with tragic consequences from which no one can escape. Soaring and sensuous, filled with such beautiful arias as Tosca's "Vissi d'arte", Cavaradossi's "Recondita armonia" and the beautiful choral piece "Te Deum", *Tosca* has some of Opera's most beloved music, and one of Opera's most gripping plots.

This production is new to San Diego Opera and owned by San Diego Opera. It was originally designed by Ft. Worth Opera. The set designer is **Andrew Horn**. The costumes were originally created for New York City Opera and refurbished by the Seattle Opera Costume Shop. The original costume designer is **Andrew Marley** with additional designs by **Heidi Zamora**. The lighting designer is **Gary Marder**. These performances will be the eighth time *Tosca* has been performed by San Diego Opera with performances happening in 2009, 2002, 1996, 1986, 1981, 1974, and 1967.

*Tosca* will have a radio broadcast on Saturday, February 20, 2016 at 8 PM 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: <http://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/2016-PreProduction-Artwork/>

## **The Cast**

### **Alexia Voulgaridou, Tosca**

San Diego Opera Debut. Greek soprano Alexia Voulgaridou made her professional debut at the Prinzregententheater in Munich as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Notable performances include Mimì in *La bohème*, Marguerite in *Faust*, and Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly* for The Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Notable roles included Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Violetta in *La traviata*, Adina in *The Elixir of Love* and the three heroines in *The Tales of Hoffmann*. She sings regularly with the Hamburg State Opera, where her many roles include Marguerite, Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Cio-Cio-San, Nedda in *Cavalleria rusticana* and Desdemona in *Otello*. Notable engagements elsewhere include the title role of Tosca and Magda in *La rondine* for Opera Australia, Mimì, Massenet's Manon and Micaëla in *Carmen* at La Scala, the title role of Luisa Miller for Stuttgart State Opera, Maria in *Mazepa* for De Vlaamse Opera, Amelia Grimaldi in *Simon Boccanegra* in Toulouse and Anna Bolena in Turin and Palermo. Her concert performances include Verdi's *Requiem* at the Ravenna Festival under Riccardo Muti. Her recordings include a solo album with Nicola Luisotti and the Munich Radio Orchestra on the Arte Nova label.

### **Gwyn Hughes Jones, Cavaradossi**

San Diego Opera debut. Welsh tenor Gwyn Hughes Jones has sung at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Opéra de Lyon, La Monnaie Brussels and Norwegian National Opera. In America, he has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Washington National Opera and Sante Fe Opera. Roles include Manrico in *Il trovatore*, Calaf in *Turandot*, Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love*, Chevalier des Grieux in *Manon Lescaut*, and the title role of *Faust*. He has appeared with orchestras including the Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Trondheim Symfoniorkester, Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Flanders Philharmonic Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and in recital at St Olaf Festival, Trondheim, Musashino Civic Cultural Hall, Tokyo, Wigmore Hall and Purcell Room, London, and Auditorium du Louvre, Paris. Recordings include Macduff in Verdi's *Macbeth*. Recent roles include Pinkerton at the Metropolitan Opera and Walther von Stolzing *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* for English National Opera.

**Greer Grimsley, Scarpia**

American bass-baritone Greer Grimsley made his San Diego Opera debut as Telramund in *Lohengrin* in 2000, returned for Pizarro in *Fidelio* in 2003, The High Priest of Dagon in *Samson and Delilah* in 2007, Scarpia in *Tosca* in 2009, Méphistophélès in *Faust* in 2010, and in 2012 as Jochanaan in *Salome*. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Captain Balstrode in *Peter Grimes* and has returned as Escamillo in *Carmen*, Jochanaan, Scarpia, Telramund, and Amfortas in *Parsifal*. Recent engagements include Wotan in Seattle Opera's Ring Cycle, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* with Opera Company of Philadelphia, Portland Opera and the Portuguese National Opera, Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, John the Baptist with the companies of Santa Fe, Vancouver and San Francisco and Scarpia with L'Opera de Montreal, Opera Colorado and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Other roles include *The Flying Dutchman* in Lithuania and Seattle Opera, the title role of *Macbeth* with Vancouver Opera, Amonasro in *Aida* with Portland Opera, Méphistophélès in *Faust* with New Orleans Opera, and the title role of *Sweeney Todd* with Vancouver Opera. A frequent singer in Europe, Grimsley has performed leading roles at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Royal Danish Opera, Prague National Theatre, Aarhus-Den Jyske Opera in Denmark, the Scottish Opera and the Stadttheater Basel in Switzerland, among others.

**Kristopher Irmiter, Angelotti/Sciarrone**

American bass-baritone Kristopher Irmiter made his San Diego Opera debut as Ned Keene in *Peter Grimes* in 2009, returning to sing Dr. Grenvil in *La traviata* in 2010, the Fifth Jew in *Salome* in 2012, The Second Priest in 2013's *Murder in the Cathedral*, and Masetto in last season's *Don Giovanni*. The 2007 Grammy nominee has performed over 90 roles with more than 45 opera companies and made his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Scarpia in *Tosca*. Other credits include Daland in *The Flying Dutchman* for Opera Carolina, the title role of *The Flying Dutchman* for Michigan Opera Theatre and Utah Festival Opera, Scarpia for Arizona Opera, Méphistophélès in *Faust* for Lyric Opera Baltimore, The Immigration Officer in *Flight* for Austin Lyric Opera, Escamillo in *Carmen* and Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* for Opera Carolina, Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Opera Cleveland, Méphistophélès in *Faust* for Baltimore Lyric Opera, Rucker Lattimore in *Cold Sassy Tree* with Utah Opera and Atlanta Opera, the title role of *Don Giovanni* with Opera Carolina, Escamillo with San Francisco Opera, Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* with Atlanta Opera, T.J. Rigg in the world premiere of *Elmer Gantry* with Nashville Opera, Mr. Redburn in *Billy Budd* with Pittsburgh Opera, Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* with the Todi Music Festival, and The Four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann* with Opera Lyra in Ottawa.

**Joel Sorensen, Spoletta**

American tenor Joel Sorensen made his San Diego Opera debut as Curley in *Of Mice and Men* in 1999, returning as Camp Williams in *Cold Sassy Tree* in 2001, as Andres in *Wozzeck* in 2007, Rodriguez in *Don Quixote* in 2009, Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet* in 2010, as Pang in *Turandot* and Valzacchi in *Der Rosenkavalier* in 2011, the First Tempter/First Knight in *Murder in the Cathedral* in 2013, and Beppe in *Pagliacci* and Rodriguez in *Don Quixote* in 2014. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2000 in *Samson and Delilah*, returning for *Sly*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *War and Peace*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Tosca* and *The Magic Flute*. He made his debut with New York City Opera as Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*, returning in *Madama Butterfly*, *Falstaff*, *Turandot*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Prince Igor*, *La rondine*, *The Seven Deadly Sins* and *Margaret Garner*. Other appearances include *Tosca* with Los Angeles Opera, King Herod in *Salome* with Florentine Opera, Pedrillo in *Entführung aus dem Serail* for Atlanta Opera and Mime in *Siegfried* for Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh and Longborough Festival. Other companies with which he has sung include San Francisco Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, Portland Opera and Palm Beach Opera.

**Scott Sikon, Sacristano**

Since his San Diego Opera debut in 1991 as Superintendent Budd in *Albert Herring*, American bass-baritone Scott Sikon has sung more than twenty roles here including Schaunard in *La bohème*, Dikoi in

*Katya Kabanova*, Steve Hubble in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Montano in *Otello*, Curio in *Julius Caesar in Egypt*, the Second Philistine in *Samson and Delilah*, the First Journeyman in *Wozzeck*, Antonio in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Reinmar von Zweter in *Tannhäuser*, Sacristan in *Tosca*, Count Monterone in *Rigoletto*, The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, a Mandarin in *Turandot*, Wagner in *Faust* and Morales in *Carmen*, Nazarene in *Salome*, Fiorello in *The Barber of Seville*, a Corporal in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, the Second Philistine in *Samson and Delilah*, Christian in *A Masked Ball*, and last season as Alcindro and Benoit in *La bohème* and as a soloist in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Concert. He has performed throughout the United States with Utah Opera, Arizona Opera, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, The Dallas Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Cincinnati Opera and Cleveland Opera. His European debut was at the Vienna Volksoper in the premiere of *The Number 11 Bus*. An active concert artist, Sikon has performed with the Spoleto Festival USA, the San Antonio Symphony and the Arkansas Symphony.

### **Massimo Zanetti, Conductor**

Italian conductor Massimo Zanetti made his Company debut in 2014 conducting both *A Masked Ball* and the Verdi *Requiem*. He has collaborated for many years with renowned opera houses such as Berlin Staatsoper, Semperoper Dresden, Opernhaus Zürich, Bayerische Staatsoper, Hamburgische Staatsoper, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Opéra de Paris Bastille, Teatro alla Scala di Milano, Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Teatro Regio di Torino and Teatro Carlo Felice di Genova. Zanetti recently held a residency in Japan conducting symphonic concerts with the Nagoya Philharmonic Orchestra. Other recent productions include *A Masked Ball* at Teatro Regio di Parma and Teatro las Palmas, *Don Carlo* and *La traviata* at Berlin Staatsoper, *Turandot* with the Royal Stockholm Opera and *Macbeth* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, where in 2007, he made his debut with *Luisa Miller*, followed by many revivals. Other notable performances include two concert performances of *Simon Boccanegra* with the Vienna Symphoniker that will subsequently be released on Decca. After a highly successful visit last season with the China Philharmonic and Guangzhou Symphony Orchestras, he returned to conduct these orchestras in a special Verdi/Wagner program for the 2013 anniversary. He also conducted Verdi's *Requiem* in Linz and *Otello* at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Over the last ten years, Zanetti has worked regularly at the Semperoper Dresden and has conducted productions of *Otello*, *Carmen*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Norma*, *Don Carlo*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *La bohème* as well as symphonic concerts with the Dresden Staatskapelle. He enjoys a close relationship with Opernhaus Zürich since his debut in 2008 where he most recently conducted *Luisa Miller* and revivals of *La Fanciulla del West*, *Anna Bolena*, *Turandot*, *Otello* and *La bohème*. As a symphonic conductor, he has worked with the Czech Philharmonic, Weimar Staatskapelle, Konzerthaus Orchestra (Berlin), Bamberg Symphony, Stuttgart Radio, NDR Symphony Hamburg, the City of Birmingham Symphony and the Hallé Orchestras as well as the New Zealand Symphony, Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France and the Finnish and Swedish Radio Orchestras, among others.

### **Lesley Koenig, Stage Director**

American Director Lesley Koenig made her San Diego Opera debut in 1995 directing *La bohème*, returned in 1998 for *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2013 for *Samson and Delilah* and *A Masked Ball* in 2014. Koenig has been a stage director of opera for almost twenty years in top houses and festivals worldwide. She began her career at San Francisco Opera at 17 as a stage manager and was engaged as a stage director at the Metropolitan Opera when just 23 – the youngest director then hired to date. She has directed over 30 productions at the Met, including a highly acclaimed new production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* with James Levine in 1996. She holds three shared Emmy Awards from the Met for Outstanding Classical Program in the Performing Arts. In 1998, Koenig took a sabbatical from her directing career to pursue further education and, in 2001, earned two Masters degrees from Stanford University, an MBA and an MA in Education. Shortly thereafter, she joined San Francisco Ballet as General Manager in charge of all operations, including managing the opening of over 60 new productions. Koenig

subsequently left the Ballet and returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Assistant Manager and Director of Production. Most recently, she was General Director for Opera Boston, accepted a Fellowship at Stanford University in the Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society and consults with the Stanford's Institute for Creativity and the Arts.

**Andrew Horn, Set Design**

San Diego Opera debut. British set designer Andrew Horn has designed sets for opera companies in Baltimore, Detroit, Minneapolis, Atlanta, Philadelphia, New York and Miami. He has designed for the Queen Elizabeth 2, and worked as an assistant designer on productions for American Repertory Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Atlanta Opera, Berkshire Theatre Festival (MA), and others. He started his career as the Resident Design Assistant for the La Jolla Playhouse. In addition to designing for theatre he has been a commercial designer for Tomar Lampart and Associates, Douglas Derkin Design, and Timothy Corrigan, Inc. He is also owner and principal designer of Andrew Horn Design. He holds a bachelor of arts in fine art from the University of Notre Dame, including a year of studies in Rome, and a masters in opera design and production from Indiana University.

**Gary Marder, Lighting Designer**

American Lighting Designer Gary Marder made his San Diego debut lighting *Norma* in 2003, returned in 2009 for *Peter Grimes*, 2011 for *Carmen*, 2012 for *The Barber of Seville*, 2013 for *Samson and Delilah*, and 2014 for *A Masked Ball*. He has been the Assistant Resident Lighting Designer for the Metropolitan Opera for the past 12 seasons. He has designed *The Makropulos Case* and *Samson and Delilah* for Houston Grand Opera, and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* for Palm Beach Opera. He served as Associate Resident Lighting Designer with the New York City Opera for five years and has worked in many opera houses on the East Coast including Boston, Connecticut and Washington DC. Marder has designed plays and musicals for The New York State Theatre Institute including *Big River*, *The Tempest*, *Pinocchio* and *Death of a Salesman*. He designed the Off-Broadway production of *A Terrible Beauty* and served as Assistant Lighting Designer on the Broadway productions of *Tru*, *Grand Hotel*, *Gypsy* and *Annie II*.

**Performance Schedule**

Saturday	February 13, 2016	7 PM
Tuesday	February 16, 2016	7 PM
Friday	February 19, 2016	7 PM
Sunday	February 21, 2016	2 PM

**Get Connected For Tosca**

**Stars in the Salon**

Meet the singers, conductor and director of *Tosca* in this informal panel discussion on **Thursday, February 4, 2016 at 5:30 PM** in the Beverly Sills Salon, Civic Theatre. Free.

**Pre-Opera Lectures**

These 30-minute informative lectures 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 – NEW**

Join the cast, crew, musicians and artists right after the performance for an engaging, entertaining and informative Q&A session moderated by a San Diego Opera staff member. These lectures are held in the Civic Theatre and are free to all ticket holders.

### ***San Diego Opera Spotlight***

Produced by San Diego Opera and UCSD-TV, the award-winning *San Diego Opera Spotlight* program gives viewers a unique and entertaining look behind-the-scenes of each of San Diego Opera's mainstage productions. Viewers will see how the singers, directors, conductor and crew work together to create each opera, get a sneak peek at rehearsal footage and hear exclusive interviews with the stars. *San Diego Opera Spotlight* repeats daily throughout the run of the production. For a complete listing of schedules and where to view it, visit: <http://www.sdopera.com/Company/Education/Spotlight>

### ***San Diego OperaTalk! with Nicolas Reveles***

Join Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Director of Education and Community Outreach, for these fascinating, half-hour overviews of our operas. He'll take you on an intriguing journey through the story, music and history of each opera. You'll pick up rich insight into the structure and composition of the music, along with recommendations of the best recordings. It's a wonderful prelude to your opera experience and a great way to pick up some tidbits to impress your friends at intermission! For a complete listing of schedules and where to view it, visit: <http://www.sdopera.com/Company/Education/OperaTalk>

### ***San Diego Opera Video Podcast Series***

In order to help audiences better appreciate the operas in our 2015-2016 Season, the Education and Community Engagement Department has developed a series of introductory podcasts hosted by Dr. Nicolas Reveles. These 15 to 20 minute "conversations" can be enjoyed by opera fans as well as those who are new to the art form. Informal yet informative, this is a great way to prepare for our season. <http://www.sdopera.com/Company/Education/Podcasts>. These videos are also available on our YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera>

### ***San Diego Opera on Twitter***

Get frequent updates about San Diego Opera and opera in general by following us on Twitter. Follow tweets from backstage during a performance and learn about special offers and contests before anyone else by following us @SDOpera.

### ***San Diego Opera on Facebook***

San Diego Opera's Facebook page offers a place for fellow opera fans to discuss performances, opera news, connect with other fans and get up-to-date information on upcoming events. Look for "San Diego Opera" at <http://www.facebook.com/>

### ***San Diego Opera Blog: Aria Serious***

Aria Serious is San Diego Opera's official blog. It focuses on the serious and not-so-serious world of opera with behind-the-scenes looks at our productions, artist interviews and industry as well as pop-culture news. Come and join in the conversation at: <http://ariaserious.blogspot.com/>

### ***San Diego Opera on YouTube***

Now viewers can watch a large portion of San Diego Opera's programming at their convenience on YouTube. *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 happen backstage and in the office on San Diego Opera's Instagram page. <http://instagram.com/sandiegoopera>

### **Purchasing Tickets**

Subscriptions range from \$105 for a three-opera series to \$1,305 for a full season package (Orchestra level subscription on Saturdays to the three mainstage operas, premiere tickets to René Barbera in recital, premiere tickets to Patricia Racette’s “Diva on Detour” plus reception, premiere tickets Ferruccio Furlanetto in Concert). Subscriptions can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at [www.sdopera.com](http://www.sdopera.com).

**The 2015-2016 International Season**

<i>René Barbera in Recital</i>		September 19, 2015
<i>Patricia Racette “Diva on Detour”</i>		November 14, 2015
<i>Tosca</i>	Giacomo Puccini	February 13, 16, 19 and 21 (mat), 2016
<i>Ferruccio Furlanetto in Concert</i>		March 5, 2016
<i>Madama Butterfly</i>	Giacomo Puccini	April 16, 19, 22 and 24 (mat), 2016
<i>Great Scott</i>	Jake Heggie	May 7, 10, 15 and 15 (mat), 2016

**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**

The 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.

[www.sdopera.com](http://www.sdopera.com)

###