

Contact: Edward Wilensky  
Phone: 619.232.7636 x248  
[Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com](mailto:Edward.Wilensky@sdopera.com)  
Afterhours: 619.384.7636

## Puccini's *La bohème* Opens 2010 Season

*Company debut of tenor Piotr Beczala pairs him with soprano Ellie Dehn for a star-studded cast*

**San Diego, CA** – San Diego Opera's 45<sup>th</sup> International Season opens on **January 30, 2010** with Giacomo Puccini's classic, *La bohème*, with a star studded cast of extraordinary singers that will prove to be the Company's strongest production of this beloved opera to date.

Last performed by San Diego Opera in 2005, *La bohème* features the exciting Company debut of Polish tenor **Piotr Beczala** as Rodolfo. One of the world's leading tenors, Beczala dazzled audiences last season in the Metropolitan Opera performance of *Lucia di Lammermoor* and returns to the Met to sing Rodolfo immediately after these performances in San Diego. Making a Company debut is exciting young soprano **Ellie Dehn** who sings Mimì in these performances. San Diego's very own soprano, **Priti Gandhi**, will make her important role debut as Musetta. American baritone **Jeff Mattsey** will sing Marcello. Rounding out the cast are American bass-baritone **Alfred Walker** as Colline, American baritone **Malcolm Mackenzie** as Schaunard and American bass-baritone **Scott Sikon** taking on the double roles of Alcandro and Benoit. San Diego Opera's resident conductor **Karen Keltner** will lead from the podium and stage director **E. Loren Meeker** will make her Company directing debut.

The sets of *La bohème* are owned by San Diego Opera and were designed by **John Conklin**. The costumes are owned by Seattle Opera and were designed by **Martin Pakledinaz**.

Performed in Italian with English translations above the stage, *La bohème* tells the story of friends Rodolfo and Marcello who share a studio in Paris's Latin Quarter. Rodolfo has fallen in love with his neighbor, Mimì, while Marcello is in love with Musetta, his ex-girlfriend and an unrepentant flirt. Tensions flare and relationships are challenged; Marcello and Musetta over his jealousy and Rodolfo and Mimì over the fact that she is very sick and Rodolfo is too poor to take care of her properly. The story takes a tragic turn when Mimì's health worsens and Rodolfo realizes even love is not a strong enough force to delay the inevitable. One of the greatest love stories ever told features some of the greatest music ever composed including the famed "Musetta's Waltz" and the melodic "Mi chiamano Mimì" ("They call me Mimì"). Audiences familiar with this opera are already enthusiastically welcoming Piotr Beczala to San Diego for these performances, while those new to opera will see why *La bohème* is one of the most popular operas in the entire repertoire.

Pre-production photos can be found online at:  
<http://www.sdopera.com/Company/News/PressKits>

Electronic Press Kits for this opera, including multimedia content can be found online at:  
<http://www.sdopera.com/Company/News/PressKits>

### **The Cast**

#### **Ellie Dehn, Mimi**

San Diego Opera debut. Not yet 30, American soprano Ellie Dehn's recent performances include her Los Angeles Opera debut as Freia in *Das Rheingold*, Agathe in *Der Freischütz* at Grand Théâtre de Genève and Madame Cortese in *Viaggio a Reims* at Spain's Bilbao as well as at Rome's Accademia di Santa Cecilia. She made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Mrs. Naidoo in *Satyagraha* and also appeared as Marguerite in *Faust* at the Metropolitan Opera in the Parks series. Other notable engagements include Jemmy in *Guillaume Tell* and Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* at Rome's Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Cressida in *Toilus and Cressida* at the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* at the Ravinia Festival. Upcoming engagements include her house debut at La Scala, Milan as Antonia in *The Tales of Hoffman*, Musetta in *La bohème* at The Metropolitan Opera, the Contessa in *The Marriage of Figaro* for her house debuts at San Francisco Opera and Houston Grand Opera, Donna Anna at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, and her Santa Fe Opera debut as Rosaura in *Life is a Dream*.

#### **Piotr Beczala, Rodolfo**

Polish tenor Piotr Beczala, makes his San Diego debut with these performances and is one of today's leading lyric tenors appearing outstandingly successful at numerous top class venues throughout the operatic world. Born and musically educated in Southern Poland he received his first engagement at the Theatre in Linz (Austria) and proceeded to the Zurich Opera where he is still frequently performing notwithstanding an intense international career in both opera and concert. His most successful operatic roles include Faust, Werther, Rodolfo, Alfredo, the Duke in *Rigoletto*, Riccardo, Edgardo, Lensky, Vaudémont in *Iolanta* and the Prince in *Rusalka*. Having made his US debut within concerts in Cleveland in 2004, he made his debut with the Metropolitan Opera in 2006. Since then he has been heard there most successfully as Duke in *Rigoletto*, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* and Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* joining the worldwide moviecast opposite to Anna Netrebko last season. He also appeared at San Francisco Opera recently singing Lensky, Tamino and Rodolfo. Within the current season Vienna, Chicago and Bilbao hear him sing *Faust*, Covent Garden, San Diego and the Met as Rodolfo in *La bohème* before joining a Zurich new-production of *Rusalka* as well as the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Christian Thielemann on tour. Piotr Beczala is closely connected to the leading European opera-houses in London, Milan, Berlin, Vienna and Paris too. He is very busy as a concert soloist joining frequently the leading orchestras of the world. Numerous CD- and DVD-releases demonstrate his international status as well as his wide range of repertoire.

#### **Priti Gandhi, Musetta**

Indian-born soprano Priti Gandhi made her San Diego Opera debut as the Mexican Woman in *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 2000, returning as Second Lady in *The Magic Flute* in 2001 and 2006, Emilia in *Otello* in 2003, Varvara in *Katya Kabanova* in 2004, Inez in *Il trovatore* in 2007, the High Priestess in *Aida* in 2008 and the Second Niece in *Peter Grimes* in 2009. Other appearances include her New York City Opera debut in *Carmen*, *Lakmé* and as The Fox in *The Little Prince* for Tulsa Opera, the High Priestess with Seattle Opera, Opera Pacific debut in *The Magic Flute*, Waltraute in *Walküre* with Paris Châtelet, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Theatre of the

Estates in Prague, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* with Austin Lyric Opera, Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Seattle Opera, the title role of *La Cenerentola* at Dayton Opera, her Los Angeles Opera debut in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, her role debut of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* with Caramoor Music Festival and her New York Philharmonic debut in *Elektra* at Lincoln Center.

**Jeff Mattsey, Marcello**

American baritone Jeff Mattsey made his San Diego Opera debut in 1995 as Schaunard in *La bohème* and returned in 1998 as Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, in 2001 as Valentin in *Faust* and in 2006 as Dancaire in *Carmen*. His Metropolitan Opera appearances include Ned Keene in *Peter Grimes*, Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*, Silvano in *A Masked Ball* and Schaunard in *La bohème*. Other appearances include Silvio in *Pagliacci* with Michigan Opera Theatre, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville* with Opera Tampa, Captain Corcoran in *H.M.S. Pinafore* with Utah Symphony and Opera, the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Central City Opera and Manitoba Opera, and Renato in *A Masked Ball* with Vancouver Opera. He has also sung with New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Washington National Opera, Portland Opera, Tulsa Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Utah Opera and Hawaii Opera Theater.

**Malcolm MacKenzie, Schaunard**

American baritone Malcolm MacKenzie first performed with San Diego Opera as Marullo in *Rigoletto* in 2002, returned in 2005 as Escamillo in *Carmen*, 2008 as Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers*, and last season as Marullo in *Rigoletto* and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. He was a finalist in Plácido Domingo's Operalia competition, and a winner of the Metropolitan Opera Western Regional Auditions. MacKenzie began his professional career in 1994 as Harlequin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Glimmerglass Opera and has since performed with Washington National Opera, Madison Opera, l'Opéra National de Paris, Los Angeles Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Sacramento Opera and Opera Pacific. His roles include Donald in *Billy Budd*, Masetto and the title role in *Don Giovanni*, Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*, Marcello and Schaunard in *La bohème*, Albert in *Werther* and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. He has also appeared with the San Diego Symphony, Los Angeles Master Chorale, Los Angeles Mozart Orchestra, Pacific Chorale and Savannah Symphony.

**Alfred Walker, Colline**

American bass baritone Alfred Walker made his Company debut in 2006 as Achilla in *Julius Caesar in Egypt*. Recent notable performances include the title role of *The Flying Dutchman* at Theatre Basel, Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* at Angers Nantes Opera, Parsi Rustomji in *Satyagraha* at the Metropolitan Opera and Orest in *Elektra* with Seattle Opera, Deutsche Opera Berlin, La Scala, as well as at the San Sebastian Festival and Aix-en-Provence Festival. Other performances include Porgy in *Porgy & Bess* with Los Angeles Opera, the Four Villains in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and Méphistophélès in *Faust* with Tulsa Opera, Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* with Minnesota Opera and Utah Opera, Colline with Atlanta Opera, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Opera North and Donner in *Das Rheingold* with New Orleans Opera. His appearances at the Metropolitan Opera include *Romeo and Juliette*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Les Troyens* and *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*. He is an active concert artist and has appeared with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra, among others.

**Scott Sikon, Alcindoro/Benoit**

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*, Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Dikoi in *Katya Kabanova*, Steve Hubble in *A Streetcar Named*

*Desire*, Montano in *Otello*, Morales in *Carmen*, 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* and Sacristan in *Tosca*, Count Monterone in *Rigoletto* and The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*. He has performed throughout the United States with 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.

**Karen Keltner, Conductor**

San Diego Opera's Resident Conductor, Karen Keltner, has been associated with the Company since 1982 and has conducted a broad repertoire including last season's *Don Quixote*. Other operas which she has conducted for San Diego Opera include *The Pearl Fishers*, *Samson and Delilah*, *Wozzeck*, *Carmen*, *The Conquistador*, *Così fan tutte*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Lighthouse*, *Cold Sassy Tree*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Rigoletto*. Recent engagements have been with Opéra National du Rhin, Strasbourg, New York City Opera, Anchorage Opera, Kansas City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Opera Carolina. Karen Keltner gives master classes for singers in universities and cities where she guest conducts.

**E. Loren Meeker, Director**

San Diego Opera debut. American stage director E. Loren Meeker was assistant director for San Diego Opera from 2005-2007. She has also served on the directing staff at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Florida Grand Opera and Central City Opera where she was the 2006 recipient of the John Moriarty Award. She has received critical acclaim for recent productions of *Die Fledermaus* at San Francisco Opera and Penn State University, *Hansel and Gretel* at Opera Providence, *Quilters* at The Opera House at Boothbay Harbor, *Albert Herring* at Red House Opera Group and *The Game* at the Kennedy Center as part of its Millennium Stage Series. Also known as a choreographer, her work includes *Vanessa* at Central City Opera, *Orpheus in the Underworld* at Glimmerglass Opera and *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni* with Houston Grand Opera. She recently returned to the Lyric Opera of Chicago where she worked on *Manon Lescaut*, *Lulu*, *Tristan und Isolde* and *The Abduction from the Seraglio*.

**John Conklin, Set Design**

John Conklin's designs have been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Santa Fe Opera, among others. For San Diego Opera he designed the premiere of Daniel Catan's *Rappacini's Daughter*, as well as *Don Pasquale*, *Ariodante* and *Idomeneo: King of Crete*, among others. On the other side of the Atlantic, Conklin has been responsible for production designs for the Holland Festival, Scottish Opera and the Munich Opera. His work has also included the Met's first presentation of *I Lombardi*, the Washington Opera's premiere of Argento's *The Dream of Valentino*, the Chicago Lyric's new production of *Die Walküre*, as well as *Tosca* for Seattle Opera and the English National Opera. Conklin's designs have also been seen in numerous ballet and theater productions.

**Martin Pakledinaz, Costume Design**

American Costume Designer Martin Pakledinaz made his San Diego Opera debut in *La bohème* in 1995 and returned in 2000 and 2005 for the same; 2005 also saw his return in *Vanessa* and again in 2007 for *Il trovatore*. He has worked in opera, dance, theater and television and made his Seattle Opera debut designing costumes for the 1988 production of *Orphée et Eurydice*, and

returned to design costumes for *Werther*, *La bohème*, *Lohengrin*, *Xerxes*, and *Vanessa* and EDDY Award-winning *Ring*, which previewed in 2000. Pakledinaz's work has also been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, the Salzburg Festival, New York City Ballet, Mark Morris, San Francisco Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet, among others. He is on the Faculty at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, works regularly on and off Broadway and received Tony® Awards for his costume designs for the Broadway revival of Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Thoroughly Modern Millie* in 2003. Recent works on Broadway include the revival of *Pajama Game* and his 2009 nomination in Costume Design for *Blithe Spirit*.

#### **Michael Whitfield, Lighting Designer**

Canadian Michael Whitfield made his company debut in 2006 designing *The Barber of Seville*, returning in 2007 for *Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci* and last season's *Rigoletto*. He has designed for many prestigious opera companies including L'Opera de Montréal, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, The Dallas Opera and Los Angeles Opera. He has designed lighting for over 70 productions at the Canadian Opera Company since 1979, including *Madama Butterfly*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Death in Venice*. During his over 25 years as Resident Lighting Director for the Stratford Shakespeare Festival of Canada he has lit over 100 productions including *The Trojan Women*, *Fuente Ovejuna*, *King Lear*, *Othello* and *The Mikado* (including the 1984 engagement at London's The Old Vic). Whitfield has also designed for numerous theatres, ballet companies and for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

#### **About the Production Sponsors**

These performances of *La bohème* are made possible by **Title Co-Sponsors Harry and Valerie Cooper** and **Producer Circle Members Todd and Jake Figi, Jennifer and Richard Greenfield, Lynda and Richard Kerr** and an **Anonymous Donor**.

#### **Performance Schedule**

Saturday	January 30, 2010	7 PM
Tuesday	February 2, 2010	7 PM
Friday	February 5, 2010	8 PM
Sunday	February 7, 2010	2 PM

#### **Get Connected For *La bohème***

##### **Artists' Roundtable**

Meet the singers, conductor and director of *La bohème* in this free and informal panel discussion on **Thursday, January 21, 2010 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 insight into the production audience members are about to see. These lectures are free to all ticket holders.

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

Join Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education, for a fascinating half-hour television program on *La bohème*. Viewers will learn about the story, music and history of each opera and will pick up rich insight into the structure and composition of the music.

*OperaTalk! with Nick Reveles* airs on UCSD-TV. For a complete listing of schedules and where to view it visit: <http://www.sdopera.com/Company/Education/OperaTalk>

##### ***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 four main-stage productions. Viewers will see how the singers, directors, conductor and crew work together to create each opera, get a sneak peak 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 Opera Podcast Series***

In order to help audiences better appreciate the operas in our 2010 International Season, the Education and Outreach 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>

### ***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 Facebook***

San Diego Opera's Facebook page offers a place for fellow opera fans to discuss performances, 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 on YouTube***

Now viewers can watch a large portion of San Diego Opera's programming at their convenience on YouTube. *OperaTalk!*, The Artist Roundtables and much more can be found on the San Diego Opera channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera>

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

Get real-time frequent updates about San Diego Opera 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 @\_SanDiegoOpera.

### **Purchasing Tickets**

Three and four-opera subscriptions for the 2010 International Season are now available. Regular subscriptions range from \$90 - \$720 (some Saturday subscriptions slightly higher) and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at [www.sdopera.com](http://www.sdopera.com). Senior citizen discount packages are available for full-season Tuesday night subscribers. Call (619) 533-7000 for more information.

For information about single ticket availability and prices please visit [www.sdopera.com](http://www.sdopera.com). or call (619) 533-7000 to speak to an opera representative.

### **The 2010 International Season**

<i>La bohème</i>	Giacomo Puccini	January 30, February 2, 5 and 7 (mat), 2010
<i>Nabucco</i>	Giuseppe Verdi	February 20, 23, 26 and 28 (mat), 2010
<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Charles Gounod	March 13, 16, 19 and 21 (mat), 2010
<i>La traviata</i>	Giuseppe Verdi	April 17, 20, 23 and 25 (mat), 2010

### **General Information**

A widely respected member of the international opera community, *San Diego Opera* brings the world's finest artists to San Diego. Founded in 1965, and led for the last 26 years by General Director and Artistic Director Ian D. Campbell, San Diego Opera produces performances of the highest artistic quality while remaining financially stable.

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