

Press contacts:

Virginia Perry, 408.437.4663 or 650.799.1341 perry@operasj.org

Elizabeth Santana, 408.437.2229 santana@operasj.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 14, 2010

Bold and Beautiful: *Anna Karenina*

Opera San José presents West Coast premiere of new David Carlson opera

SAN JOSÉ, CA—**Opera San José** proudly launches its 27th Anniversary Season with the West Coast premiere of ***Anna Karenina***, an American opera by composer **David Carlson** with libretto by the late **Colin Graham**. Eight performances are scheduled from **September 11 through 26** at the **California Theatre**, 345 South First Street in downtown San José. Opera San José will present ***Anna Karenina*** with a new scene added by the composer following the opera's 2007 world premiere at Florida Grand Opera. Tickets are on sale at the Opera San José Box Office, by phone at **(408) 437-4450** or online at **www.operasj.org**. ***Anna Karenina*** is sponsored by a grant from the **Carol Franc Buck Foundation** and is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

Anna Karenina - beautiful, wealthy, aristocratic—is nonetheless vulnerable, unhappy, and caught in a rigid society that crushes anyone who does not follow the rules of the game. Her deeply personal, tragic story has long been familiar through the practically perfect novel by **Leo Tolstoy** and the two most memorable film versions starring Greta Garbo and Vivien Leigh. Told with compassion and unsentimental observation, the story follows an upper-class woman in 19th-century Russia through a loveless marriage, burning love affair, wrenching heartbreak, and finally her sudden death. Yet more than a terminal end to an unfortunate existence, ***Anna Karenina*** concludes with the transcendent beginning of new life underscoring both the tragedy and the happiness of Tolstoy's masterpiece. It is opera at its most affecting, combining Tolstoy's very human drama with powerfully expressive American music that draws on Tchaikovsky for its orchestral models while utilizing arching melodic utterances unique to composer **Carlson's** personal style.

In collaboration with noted British librettist and stage director **Colin Graham**, Florida Grand Opera commissioned **David Carlson** to compose *Anna Karenina* in celebration of the 2007 opening of the Ziff Opera House in Miami, with a co-production by Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. The premiere production attracted sold-out audiences and received wide critical acclaim. *The New York Times* applauded Carlson's "well-crafted lyrical score" and "romantic and luxuriantly textured music." *Opera News* praised the "powerful, entertaining, and moving" orchestrations and *The Toronto Star* lauded the production as one of Graham's "major successes."

Anna Karenina at **Opera San José** is the third production of the opera, presented with a new scene written by **Carlson** and **Mark Streshinsky**, director of the world premiere in Florida. "Both director Mark Streshinsky and I felt that [the character] Vronsky needed further fleshing out, to have it make sense that Anna would fall for him, and we both saw that a new scene could fix that to some degree." Carlson remarked. "It's only four minutes long, but it seems to fill the missing link. I had a lot of fun with this new scene, evoking for a few moments the style of Tchaikovsky."

David Carlson, a native of California, has composed successfully in many genres including orchestral music, chamber music, and opera. His works have been performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, and the Tanglewood Festival, among others. In addition to symphonic works, **Carlson** has written three operas, *The Midnight Angel* (1993), *Dreamkeepers* (1996), and *Anna Karenina* (2007). Carlson has received an Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, as well as awards from Meet the Composer and Chamber Music America. His most recent work, *The Promise of Time*, was written through the Bay Area's Magnum Opus commissioning program, with performances by the Marin Symphony Orchestra, Oakland East Bay Symphony, and Santa Rosa Symphony.

Opera San José is pleased to welcome renowned music director and conductor **Stewart Robertson** to conduct *Anna Karenina*. Maestro Robertson conducted the premiere production in Florida and has long been associated with composer **Carlson**, having conducted the premieres of *The Midnight Angel* in 1993 and *Dreamkeepers* in 1996. Robertson was music director of Glimmerglass Opera from 1988 to 2006, and from 1998 until 2009 he was music director and principal conductor of the Florida Grand Opera. He has also served as music director of the Zurich Ballet and Scottish Opera Touring Company and conducted New York City Opera productions broadcast on *Live From Lincoln Center*.

Award-winning stage director **Brad Dalton** returns to **Opera San José** to direct ***Anna Karenina***. "I am thrilled to be staging this lush, highly emotive score in a new production that moves nimbly and evocatively through its many locations," says Dalton. "Rarely does an opera take us so many places." Dalton's previous credits with the company include *Così fan tutte* and *Madama Butterfly* for which he received critical acclaim. He has directed productions for opera companies throughout the United States and abroad, including San Francisco Opera, The Metropolitan Opera, Washington Opera, and the State Opera of South Australia.

Dalton is joined by a **distinguished creative team** to bring ***Anna Karenina*** to the opera stage - choreographer Lise La Cour, set designer Steven C. Kemp, costume designer Elizabeth Poindexter, lighting designer Kent Dorsey, and wig and makeup designer Jeanna Parham.

Alternating in the role of the beautiful and passionate Anna are sopranos **Jouvancia Jean-Baptiste** and **Jasmina Halimic**, two new members of **Opera San José's** resident company. Jean-Baptiste made her mainstage debut with Florida Grand Opera in the role of The Abbess in *Suor Angelica* and has been a semi-finalist in The Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition. Halimic received accolades for her Opera San José debut as Magda in the company premiere of Puccini's *La rondine* during the 2009 - 2010 season. Other recent performances include the Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*) for the Intermezzo Foundation in Belgium and Mimì (*La bohème*) with Amore Opera in New York City.

Three former artists from **Opera San José's** resident company return as guest artists for ***Anna Karenina***. Soprano, **Khori Dastoor** (resident company member 2007-2010) performs the role of the beautiful, yet vulnerable Kitty Scherbatsky. Dastoor thrilled Opera San José audiences during the 2009-2010 season with her performance as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro* and the title role in *Manon*. Recent performances featured Dastoor as Blondchen (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*) in her debut with the Midsummer Mozart Festival. Appearing in the role of Anna's elder brother Stiva Oblonsky will be tenor **Christopher Bengochea** (resident company member 2005-2008). During Opera San José's 2009-2010 season Bengochea received praise for his performance of Ruggero in Puccini's *La rondine*. His previous roles include Rodolfo in *La bohème*, the title role in *Roméo et Juliette*, and Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*. In addition to Opera San José, Bengochea has appeared with Opera Idaho, Atlanta Opera, and Opera Saskatoon, to name a few, and was a featured soloist with the San Juan Symphony and Modesto Symphony. Bass, **Kirk Eichelberger** (resident company member 2001-2003, 2005-2006) takes on the role of Alexei Karenin, Anna's husband and a highly placed politician. Eichelberger

has performed numerous roles with Opera San José including Frere Laurent in *Romeo and Juliette*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and Colline in *La bohème*. He was recently seen as The Emperor in Tan Dun's *Tea: A Mirror of Soul* with the Opera Company of Philadelphia and sang the roles of Timur in *Turandot* and Mephistopheles in *Faust* with The Festival Opera of Walnut Creek.

About Opera San José

Opera San José, performing at the historic **California Theatre** in downtown San José, is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of professional artists, Opera San José specializes in showcasing the finest young professional singers in the nation. In addition to mainstage performances, Opera San José maintains extensive educational programs in schools and in the community at large, and offers *Preview* lectures and *Introduction to Opera* talks for all mainstage productions.

Anna Karenina

West Coast premiere of new David Carlson opera

In English with English Supertitles

Cast:	<u>September 11, 14, 19, 25</u>	<u>September 12, 17, 23, 26</u>
<i>Anna Karenina</i>	Jasmina Halimic•	Jouvanca Jean-Baptiste•*
<i>Kitty Scherbatsky</i>	Khori Dastoor	Khori Dastoor
<i>Dolly Oblonsky</i>	Betany Coffland•	Tori Grayum
<i>Princess Betsy</i>	Megan Stetson*	Megan Stetson*
<i>Countess Lydia Ivanova</i>	Kindra Scharich*	Kindra Scharich*
<i>Agafia Mihailovna</i>	Heather McFadden	Heather McFadden
<i>Konstantin Levin</i>	Michael Dailey•	Alexander Boyer•
<i>Stiva Oblonsky</i>	Christopher Bengochea	Michael Mendelsohn
<i>Alexei Vronsky</i>	Krassen Karagiozov•	Torlef Borsting•*
<i>Prince Yashvin</i>	Paul Murray	Paul Murray
<i>Alexei Karenin</i>	Kirk Eichelberger	Isaiah Musik-Ayala•

• Resident Company * Company debut

What: **Opera San José** proudly launches its 27th Anniversary Season with the West Coast premiere of ***Anna Karenina***, an American opera by **David Carlson**.

Who: Composer - David Carlson; Librettist - Colin Graham
Conductors - Stewart Robertson, Bryan Nies (2 performances – September 25, 26)
Stage director - Brad Dalton
Choreographer - Lise La Cour

Designers - Steven C. Kemp (sets); Elizabeth Poindexter (costumes); Kent Dorsey (lighting); Jeanna Parham (wig/makeup)

Dates: September 11, 12m, 14, 17, 19m, 23, 25, 26m; 2010

Time: "m" indicates matinee at 3pm; all other performances are at 8pm

Location: **California Theatre**, 345 South First Street between San Carlos and San Salvador streets, downtown San José

Tickets: \$51–\$101 (includes city facility usage fee) from **Opera San José Box Office**, 2149 Paragon Dr., San José, CA 95131; **408-437-4450**; 408-437-4455 fax; www.operasj.org
Available 90 minutes prior to curtain at the California Theatre box office only: Seniors (65 and older) 10% discount; Students (25 and under, with student ID) \$11

Photos: <http://www.operasj.org/kareninahires.html>

Press Room: <http://www.operasj.org/pressroom.html>

Anna Karenina is sponsored by a grant from the **Carol Franc Buck Foundation** and is made possible, in part, by a Cultural Affairs Grant from the City of San José.

To learn more about *Anna Karenina*, please visit www.operasj.org and consider these opportunities:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library Gallery Exhibit: August 3 through August 30, 2nd floor exhibit area. 'Anna Karenina – The Making of a Modern American Opera.' Featuring composer David Carlson's personal collection of orchestral manuscripts. Free admission; open to the public all library open hours. www.sjlibrary.org

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library Film Screening: August 14, 2:00pm. Screening of *Anna Karenina*, 1948 film starring Vivien Leigh followed by a guided tour of the *Anna Karenina* exhibit by General Manager, Larry Hancock. Library 2nd Floor, Room 255/257. Free admission.

Preview at Noe Valley Chamber Music with David Carlson: August 29, 4:00pm. Tickets in advance and at the door, \$25. Call 415-648-5236 or visit www.nvcm.org.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library Public Preview/Panel Discussion with David Carlson: August 30, 12 noon. *Anna Karenina* preview performance by members of the cast and panel discussion with composer, David Carlson; moderated by San Jose State Professor, Arlene Okerlund. Library 2nd Floor, Room 225/229. Free admission.

Subscriber Preview with David Carlson: August 31, San Jose Woman's Club. Doors open at 6:30pm for wine and light hors d'oeuvres; program 7-8pm. Vocal preview with members of the cast, followed by a lecture by General Manager, Larry Hancock. For tickets (\$25), call 408-437-4450.

Gala Opening Night Dinner: September 11, 5:00pm. Reception with *Anna Karenina* composer, David Carlson, followed by a three-course meal; Arcadia Restaurant, Marriott Hotel. For tickets (\$125) call 408-437-4450.

Stanford Theatre Film Screening: September 11-14; 7:30pm (plus 3:55 pm Sat/Sun). Screening of 1935 film *Anna Karenina* starring Greta Garbo. For information call (650) 324-3700 or visit www.stanfordtheatre.org.

Introduction to Opera: Before each performance (except opening night), General Manager, Larry Hancock, will present a free 45-minute talk about the opera at the California Theatre, beginning at 6:30pm prior to evening performances and at 1:30pm prior to Sunday matinees. No reservations required.

Meet the Composer: Meet the composer, members of the cast, the stage director, and the conductor immediately after the close of the opening Sunday matinee, September 12, at the California Theatre. Free for matinee attendees.

Amici Night: September 23. Members of Opera San José's Amici Club (young professionals 35 and younger) are invited to the VIP Lounge at the California Theatre for wine and light hors d' oeuvres at 7pm, prior to attending the 8pm performance.

###