



## FESTIVAL OPERA ANNOUNCES 2010 SEASON:

### *Madama Butterfly* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* to feature exciting debuts of notable voices and artistic talent

Festival Opera is busy gearing up for a spectacular 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary season featuring two of the most famous works in operatic history, first-time appearances by several extraordinarily-gifted vocalists, and the operatic directorial debut of an award-winning Bay Area choreographer.

Under the leadership of artistic and music director Michael Morgan, the Walnut Creek-based company will present all-new productions of Giacomo Puccini's beautiful and heart-wrenching *Madama Butterfly* on July 10-18, 2010, and Gaetano Donizetti's bel canto masterpiece, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, on August 7-15, 2010.

Opening the company's 2010 season, *Madama Butterfly* will showcase company newcomers **Teresa Eickel** (soprano) in her seventh turn as Cio-Cio San and only her second Bay Area appearance, former San Jose Opera resident artist **Christopher Bengochea** (tenor) as B. F. Pinkerton, **Nicole Takesono** (mezzo-soprano) as Suzuki, and **Elizabeth O'Neill** as Kate Pinkerton. Returning to the Festival Opera stage will be former Adler Fellow and Merola alumnus **Bojan Knezevic** (baritone) as Sharpless, **John Bischoff** as The Bonze, **Andrew Whitfield** as Goro, and **Kurt Krikorian** as Prince Yamadori.

Last presented by Festival Opera in 2001, this latest production of *Madama Butterfly* will mark the first association with the company of one of the region's veteran directors, **Brian Staufenbiel**, who also heads the Opera Program at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Making his debut as conductor will be **Joseph Marcheso**, who studied under Michael Morgan in the San Francisco Conservatory's graduate program after serving as the music director for a small regional company in New York. Sets will be by **Matthew Antaky**.

*Lucia di Lammermoor*, opening August 7, brings Napa Valley native **Angela Cadelago** (soprano) as Lucia to Festival Opera audiences for the first time. A Metropolitan Opera Regional Audition finalist, she is currently singing with Opera Santa Barbara as their 2010 Young Artist. Returning will be such audience favorites as former Adler Fellow and

Merola alumnus **Thomas Glenn** (tenor) as Sir Edgardo di Ravenswood, **Brian Leerhuber** (baritone) as Lord Enrico Ashton, **Kirk Eichelberger** (bass) as Raimondo Bidebent, and **Darron Flagg** as Normanno.

Following two highly-successful collaborations with Michael Morgan on the stage direction for *Faust* in 2009 and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2008, critically-acclaimed dance choreographer and artistic director **Mark Foehringer** steps into the position of stage director, with Morgan as conductor. Set design will be by **Peter Crompton**.

All performances will take place at the Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek. Tickets for each production are \$39 to \$100, and go on sale May 1. They are available online at [www.LesharArtsCenter.org](http://www.LesharArtsCenter.org); by phone (925) 943-SHOW; and at the Leshar Center box office or Barnes & Noble Bookstore in Walnut Creek. For more information, visit [www.FestivalOpera.com](http://www.FestivalOpera.com).

## About Festival Opera

Festival Opera under Artistic Director Michael Morgan has emerged as the third-largest opera company in the San Francisco Bay Area and one of the top three professional arts companies based in Walnut Creek. Founded in 1991, the non-profit organization has become a showcase for providing young, emerging artists – many of them San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows and Merola Opera Program participants – with principal roles in professional productions. Festival Opera's season consists of two full productions presented each July and August. The company also provides complimentary lectures on opera throughout the community and before each performance, and internship opportunities for college and high school students. For more information, visit [www.FestivalOpera.com](http://www.FestivalOpera.com).

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**PHOTO ID: Teresa Eickel as Madama Butterfly; photo courtesy of Boheme Opera NJ.**

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