UC SANTA BARBARA
Department of Music

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UC SANTA BARBARA OPERA THEATRE PRESENTS VIRTUAL DON GIOVANNI
Associate Professor Dr. Isabel Bayrakdarian brings Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Don Giovanni to life in new virtual format

Santa Barbara, CA (January 28, 2021)—UC Santa Barbara Opera Theatre and the Department of Music will present a virtual performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s two-act opera Don Giovanni on Friday, February 26, 2021 at 6 pm PST as a YouTube Premiere. Directed by UC Santa Barbara Associate Professor Dr. Isabel Bayrakdarian, the abridged version of the opera will be sung in the original Italian with English surtitles. The video will be free and available to the public via the Department of Music’s YouTube channel.

Students in the UC Santa Barbara Opera Theatre Program began preparing for the virtual production in Fall 2020, rehearsing and later recording scenes in their own homes, in locations all over the country, with some students as far away as Italy and South Korea. The remote format of the project challenged the students both musically and technologically, requiring them to learn recording techniques and become familiar with new equipment. Dr. Bayrakdarian, who quickly adapted her own performances to a virtual format at the start of the pandemic, directed the project and provided valuable advice and feedback during the rehearsals and recording process.

“Directing this opera during the pandemic—and presenting it virtually—posed many challenges, but it also offered the rare chance to assign the dual roles of Don Giovanni and Leporello to the same singer, thus alluding to the notion that the servant and his master are alter-egos, opposite sides of the same person,” noted Dr. Bayrakdarian. “This opera has a timeless quality, and it’s a great psychological thriller. Having sung the role of Zerlina in countless productions around the world, from the Salzburg Festival to the Metropolitan Opera, it’s an incredible honor for me to be able to pass on the experience and knowledge that I learned from the greatest conductors and stage directors, back to the new generation of singers and to our talented UCSB voice students.”

The virtual production will include performances by both graduate and undergraduate Voice Program students, with piano accompaniment by UC Santa Barbara Continuing Lecturer Dr. John Ballerino and doctoral student Erik Lawrence. Second year doctoral student Valdis Jansons will sing the dual roles of the infamous Don Giovanni and his personal attendant, Leporello, while first year doctoral student April Amante will sing the challenging role of Donna Anna. Students in the master’s program for Voice will sing the roles of Don Ottavio (Gianni Becker) and Zerlina (Marta Hovhannisyan). Doctoral candidate Naomi Merer will sing the role of Donna Elvira and Steven Browning Thomson, a master’s student in the Choral Conducting Program, will sing the role of Masetto. The choir will consist of undergraduate students Megan Ashley, Tyler Fulgham, Violet Joy Hansen, Keith Romero, Soohyun Ryu, Kartik Sundaram, and Matthew Thayer.

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“DON GIOVANNI” 2-2-2

Don Giovanni features music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and an Italian libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte, whom Mozart also collaborated with for Le Nozze di Figaro (1786) and Così fan tutte (1790). Classified by Mozart as an opera buffa, Don Giovanni received its premiere on October 29, 1787 by the Prague Italian Opera at the National Theater, now called the Estates Theatre, in Prague, Czech Republic. Based on the legend of the notorious libertine Don Juan originally brought to life by the Spanish writer Tirso de Molina, the opera is set in Seville, Spain in the mid-18th century, and follows the demise of the shameless seducer Don Giovanni over the course of a mere 24 hours.

MORE INFORMATION

UC Santa Barbara Opera Theatre’s virtual production of Don Giovanni will be available to view as a YouTube Premiere on the Department of Music’s YouTube channel (tinyurl.com/ucsbmusicytoutube) on Friday, February 26, 2021 at 6 pm PST. The direct link to the video of the performance will be available on the event page on the Department of Music’s website by mid-February. For more information, please visit music.ucsb.edu/news/event/2171.

CAST

Don Giovanni: Valdis Jansons
Donna Anna: April Amante
Donna Elvira: Naomi Merer
Don Ottavio: Gianni Becker
Leporello: Valdis Jansons
Zerlina: Marta Hovhannisyan
Masetto: Steven Browning Thomson
Choir: Megan Ashley, Tyler Fulgham, Violet Joy Hansen, Keith Romero, Soohyun Ryu, Kartik Sundaram, Matthew Thayer
Pianists: Dr. John Ballerino and Erik Lawrence

ABOUT THE UC SANTA BARBARA OPERA THEATRE PROGRAM

The award-winning UC Santa Barbara Opera Theatre Program offers promising young artists the opportunity to work with world-renowned faculty who have sung with many of the world’s major opera companies and orchestras. Undergraduate and graduate students participate in fully-staged operas, as well as productions of semi-staged opera scenes. Recent fully-staged productions include Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro (2018) and the North American premiere of Franz Lehár’s The Mock Marriage (2019) at the historic Lobero Theatre in downtown Santa Barbara. Graduates of the UC Santa Barbara Voice Program have performed at festivals such as the Tanglewood Music Center, Music Academy of the West, Merola Opera Program, and the Chautauqua Music Festival, and have been admitted to graduate programs at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, Peabody Conservatory, Northwestern University, and many more.

ABOUT THE UC SANTA BARBARA DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

From an institution that began life dedicated to training the next generation of music educators, to what is now a multi-faceted department with a fully established research and professional graduate program with degrees in composition, ethnomusicology, musicology, music theory, and performance, the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music has produced many hundreds of graduates who have distinguished themselves both nationally and internationally. Alumni have gone on to teach on faculties of major colleges and universities in the United States and abroad, or in outstanding secondary school positions. Many graduates of the program have published extensively and become widely renowned, prize-winning

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scholars, while others are award-winning and frequently performed composers writing for television and film. Alumni are also establishing fine reputations as conductors of orchestras, opera, and choruses. Graduates of the instrumental programs have gone on to solo and orchestral careers with leading orchestras, and graduates of the voice program can be heard in opera companies around the world.

With over 150 events presented annually, the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music offers something for every music lover. The department boasts 26 unique performing ensembles, each with a quarterly concert calendar. Chamber music, large ensembles, opera, contemporary groups, world music, and jazz ensembles make up the department’s rich performance calendar, along with lectures, master classes, and presentations from the ethnomusicology, musicology, theory, and composition programs. For a complete listing of performances and lectures for the quarter, please visit the UC Santa Barbara Department of Music website at music.ucsb.edu.

For additional information, photos, or to request an interview with an artist, please contact Adriane Cleary at adrianecleary@ucsb.edu (remote work number available upon request).

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