



FESTIVAL  
OPERA

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**FESTIVAL OPERA CONTINUES 2006 ANNIVERSARY SEASON  
WITH MOZART'S *DON GIOVANNI***

**DATES:** August 12, 15, 18 at 8:00pm and August 20 at 2:00pm

**LOCATION:** Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek

**COST:** \$35 - \$100

**TICKETS:** (925) 943-SHOW

**Walnut Creek, CA**, July 17, 2006 – Festival Opera, the largest regional opera company in the East Bay, continues its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary season with Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, opening August 12<sup>th</sup>. This new production features baritone **Brian Leerhuber** in the title role and marks the debut, as operatic staging director, of the company's artistic and music director **Michael Morgan**. All performances will be held at the Dean Leshner Regional Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek.

Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the timeless story of the charming and heartless Don Juan, is one of his best-known operatic works. Director Michael Morgan's fascinating staging concept retains the story's complex personal relationships and musically rich score, while setting the opera in a modern-day nightclub. Contributing to the intimacy of the theater experience, the orchestra will be placed on stage, becoming a visual part of the production and moving the stage action closer to the audience. Assisting Morgan with staging will be **Heather Carolo**, joined by **Matthew Antaky** as production designer. Morgan will also conduct.

Since his last appearance with Festival Opera in 2004 as Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette*, baritone **Brian Leerhuber** (Don Giovanni) has made his debuts with Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Tulsa Opera. His mainstage debut for San Francisco Opera, as Falke in *Die*

More...

**The Festival Opera Association, Inc.**

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*Fledermaus*, is scheduled for this November. Bass **Kirk Eichelberger** (Leporello) most recently appeared with Festival Opera in 2004 as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. A former Opera San Jose principal artist, Eichelberger was recently praised for his turn as Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress* for West Bay Opera.

Last seen with Festival Opera in 2002's *Don Pasquale*, soprano **Kristin Clayton** (Donna Anna) was recently heard with San Francisco Opera as Nedda in *Pagliacci* and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*. Clayton stepped in for Renée Fleming to perform an original work by Jake Heggie for the grand opening of the Ellie Caulkins Opera House in Denver. Mezzo-soprano **Layna Chianakas** (Donna Elvira) made her Festival Opera debut in 2004 as Maddalena in *Rigoletto*. She has appeared in leading roles throughout the United States and makes her debut this season with Sarasota Opera as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Festival Opera's artistic and music director, **Michael Morgan**, makes his opera staging debut this year with *Don Giovanni*. Morgan served as Assistant Conductor of the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra under Leonard Slatkin. He made his operatic debut in 1982 at the Vienna State Opera and became Assistant Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1986. Now in his sixteenth year as music director of the Oakland East Bay Symphony, Morgan also serves as Artistic Director of the Oakland Youth Orchestra, Music Director of the Sacramento Philharmonic, makes frequent guest conducting appearances throughout the United States, and is on the board of the American Symphony Orchestra League. He is very involved in schools throughout the Bay Area and nationally, and is widely regarded as an expert on the importance of arts education and minority access to the arts.

### **About Festival Opera**

Festival Opera, founded in 1991, is the largest regional opera company in the East Bay. It is considered a showcase for young American artists and strives to make opera accessible to a diverse audience.

[Opera cast lists, bios, downloadable photos, and other information at <http://www.festivalopera.com>]