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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 19, 2023

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San Diego Opera Presents the World Premiere of
Ghosts
By Composer Nicolas Reveles

***Three one-act horror-inspired operas: Eden, Dormir
and House***

***Return of mezzo-soprano Emily Fons, bass-baritone
Ashraf Sewailam, and stage director John de los Santos***

San Diego, CA – San Diego Opera’s 2022-2023 season continues with another world premiere evening when the Company presents *Ghosts*, an evening of three horror-inspired one-act operas by local composer Nicolas Reveles on **Friday, April 14, 2023 at 7:30 PM at the Balboa Theatre (868 4th Ave. San Diego, CA)**. Additional performances are April 15 at 7:30 PM and April 16 at 1 PM.

Ghosts is comprised of the three operas: *Eden*, with libretto by **John de los Santos**, who also directs the evening, explores the boundaries of madness and obsession and is a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe; *Dormir*, with libretto by **Michael Vegas Mussman**, is an imaginative exploration of what might happen when Old World spiritual practices meet the Christian belief system, when portals open and unknown, powerful entities appear; and *House*, with libretto by the composer, explores the idea that trauma haunts many of us, and that trauma remains in our bodies like ghosts. The evening stars mezzo-soprano **Emily Fons**, last heard as Rosina in the Company’s drive-in performances of *The Barber of Seville* in 2021 and bass-baritone Ashraf Sewailam, last heard as Bartolo in 2019’s *The Marriage of Figaro*. Rounding out the cast is mezzo-soprano **Ann McMahon Quintero** and tenor **Andres Acosta** in Company debuts. **Bruce**

Stasya conducts the performances. Sets are by Tim Wallace and costumes are by **Faith James Steenbergen**.

“I have always loved the horror genre: short stories, novels, and especially film. It’s a wonder to me why more opera composers aren’t drawn to the genre because it is full of opportunities for dramatic music and passionate vocal expression,” shares the composer, Nicolas Reveles. “*Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Pagliacci*, and *Il tabarro* are notable exceptions in the standard repertory. And a smattering of Poe-influenced operas and even operas based on novels by Stephen King (*Dolores Claiborne* and *The Shining*) have appeared more recently. *Dormir*, completed just before the pandemic of 2020, and *House*, written during the early months of the pandemic, are an attempt to bring the genre of operatic horror into a smaller space where, in my mind, they would have more of an impact on audiences than in a grand theatre.

Pre-production photos can be found online at: <https://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/2019-2020-Preproduction-Artwork>

About at the Artists

Emily Fons,

American mezzo-soprano Emily Fons made her Company debut as Zerlina in 2015’s *Don Giovanni* and returned as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* in 2018, and Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* in 2021. Notable appearances include Ruby Thewes in *Cold Mountain* for the world premiere at Santa Fe Opera and again for Opera North Carolina, Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking* for Kentucky Opera, the title role in Ravel’s *L’enfant et les Sortilèges*, with the Berlin Philharmonic, and in Japan as part of the Seiji Ozawa Music Academy in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Nagoya, the title role in *Cinderella* for Opéra de Lille, Stéphane in *Roméo and Juliette* with the Santa Fe Opera, Cherubino for the Canadian Opera Company and The Dallas Opera, Dorabella in Opera Omaha’s *Così fan tutte*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with the Florentine Opera, the title roles in Handel’s *Susanna* and *Faramondo* with the International Händel Festspiele, Sièbel in *Faust* with the Atlanta Opera, Prince Orlovsky in *Die Fledermaus*, and Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann* with Chicago Opera Theatre. She made her European debut in the role of Megacle in Vivaldi’s *L’Olimpiade* with Garsington Opera. She also appeared as Sesto in Michigan Opera Theatre’s production of *Julius Caesar*. From 2010-2012 Fons was a member of the Ryan Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago where she portrayed, among others, Fyodor in *Boris Godunov*, Mercedes in *Carmen*, and Peep Bo in *The Mikado*.

Ashraf Sewailam, Mr. Costello

Egyptian bass-baritone Ashraf Sewailam made his San Diego Opera debut in 2012 as Cappadocian in *Salome*, appeared as the Third Tempter/Third Knight in *Murder in the Cathedral* and as the King in *Aida* in 2013, was heard in 2014 as Count Horn in *A Masked Ball*, in 2015 as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, in 2016 as Alidoro in *Cinderella*, and in 2019 as Bartolo in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Recent engagements include his mainstage Metropolitan Opera debut in *The Magic Flute* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In addition, he returned to Seattle Opera as Colline in *La bohème*, joined Tulsa Opera for their production of *Salome*, took on the title role of *Maometto II* for Washington Concert Opera, and rejoined Opera Carolina as Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. As a director, Sewailam headed Opera Louisiane’s production of *Lucrezia*. In concert, he was seen at the Denver Philharmonic Orchestra in their performances of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* and *Choral Fantasy*. Previous engagements include the role of Osmin in *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Queequeg in *Moby Dick* with Opera San Jose, Colline with Austin Opera, Basilio in *The Barber of Seville* with New Zealand Opera, the title role in *Ali Baba* with Opera Southwest, the role of Capitán in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Madison Opera, Monterone in *Rigoletto* with Opera Grand Rapids, Toledo Opera, and Opera Carolina, Lignieres in *Cyrano* with Opera Carolina, Ramfis in *Aida* with Opera Rockies in Colorado Springs, sang on a recording of *The*

13th Child, a new opera by Danish composer Poul Ruders, Die Sprecher in *The Magic Flute* with Central City Opera, and Ferrando in *Il trovatore*. He made his début with New Zealand Opera as the assassin Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, returned to sing Alidoro which he later performed for Queensland Opera. Ashraf made his United States début in 2004 with Opera Colorado performing the role of Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. Quickly becoming a house favorite, he subsequently performed there as Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, Bartolo Basilio, and The King of Egypt in *Aïda*. He made his New York City directorial debut directing a production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* with dell'Arte Opera Ensemble. He his career as a Cairo Opera Company house soloist, where he performed many roles including Dulcamara in *The Elixir of Love*, Gaudenzio in *Il signor Bruschino*, Ramfis in *Aïda*, Palémon in *Thaïs*, and Sparafucile. He was named a prize winner at the New Voices (Neue Stimmen) international competition in Gütersloh, Germany and was featured in the opening concert of the New Alexandria Library singing Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* in Arabic. In addition to his singing engagements, Mr. Sewailam has taught at the American University in Cairo, and served as music director for Disney Character Voice International (DCVI) dubbing Disney productions into Arabic, and performed several of the characters. He earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Ann McMahon Quintero, Yadira / caregiver

San Diego Opera debut. Recent engagement for Mezzo-soprano Ann McMahon Quintero include Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* at Santa Fe Opera, and Madame Flora in *The Medium* with Chelsea Opera. She is known for her Verdi and Baroque work. Her previous work has included many enjoyable turns with Boston Baroque singing their annual *Messiah* as well as performances of Mozart's *Requiem*, Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9.*, M. Haydn's *Requiem in c minor*, Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*, Juditha in *Juditha Triumphans*, and Storgé in *Jephtha*. She enjoys a rewarding relationship with the Defiant Requiem Foundation, performing their special presentation of the Verdi *Requiem* in *Defiant Requiem: Verdi* at Terezin. In addition, she has also performed the piece Hours of *Freedom: The Story of the Terezin Composer*, a program of music composed at Terezin. She has performed the Verdi *Requiem* with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Cathedral Choral Society Washington D.C., Brevard Music Center, Berkshire Choral International, Southwest Florida Symphony, the South Bend Symphony, and the Boston Landmarks Orchestra, with whom she also performed de Falla's *El amor brujo*. Her operatic roles include Azucena *Il trovatore* at both Musica Viva Hong Kong and Opéra Royal de Wallonie; Amneris in *Aïda* with Annapolis Opera; Mistress Quickly with Virginia Opera, Opera Delaware and Opéra de Lausanne; Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* with Austin Lyric Opera, Suor Paziienza in *Mese Mariano* with the Spoleto Festival USA, Mary in *The Flying Dutchman* and Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Boston Lyric Opera; and The Old Lady in *Candide* with Arizona and Portland Operas. She made her international operatic debut with New Israeli Opera as La Haine in *Armide* and returned to the company as Marquise Melibea in *Il viaggio a Reims*. She sang Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress* with Angers Nantes Opera; Olga Olsen in *Street Scene* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri* with Palm Beach Opera; Gertrude in *Roméo et Juliette* with Toledo Opera; and Glaša in *Kátya Kabanová* and Teresa in *La sonnambula* with The Santa Fe Opera. Other roles include Auntie in *Peter Grimes*, Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*, and Dritte Dame in *The Magic Flute* with Washington National Opera. She is a 2006 winner of the Sara Tucker Study Grant from the Richard Tucker Music Foundation; second place winner of the Licia Albanese-Puccini Foundation International Vocal Competition; the George London Foundation; Sullivan Foundation and was a semi-finalist in Plácido Domingo's Operalia. She sang at the National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors Inaugural Awards Concert in 2008. She was a 2002 Grand National Finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and made her first appearance on the MET stage in the Grand Finals Concert with Julius Rudel.

Andres Acosta, Javier, her son/Clay

San Diego Opera debut. Recent engagements by Cuban-American tenor **Andres Acosta** include appearances at Madison Opera for his role debut as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and to Houston

Grand Opera for the world premiere of *The Snowy Day*. He workshopped the role of the Pigeon Keeper in Santa Fe Opera's commission of *The Pigeon Keeper* by David Hanlon and Stephanie Fleischmann and made house debuts with Bard SummerScape Festival, San Antonio Opera, and Florentine Opera. He made his debut with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in the world premiere of *Awakenings*. Other engagements include his Ravinia Festival debut in Bernstein's *Mass*, his Atlanta Opera debut as Alejandro in *Frida*, the role of Arcadio in *Florenca en el Amazonas* in his house debut with Pittsburgh Opera, his Houston Grand Opera debut as Father Matias in *El Milagro del Recuerdo*, the role of Timothy Laughlin in *Fellow Travelers* in his house debut with Madison Opera. Other appearances include Timothy Laughlin at Minnesota Opera, and Arcadio with Pensacola Opera. In concert he debuted with the Cincinnati Symphony for their autumn Pops Concert, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra in Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, and LOFTrecital for Bernstein's *Songfest*. He was part of Theatre Latté Da's national tour of Peter Rothstein's *All is Calm* as Victor Granier. He is a recipient of Opera America's 2018 Career Blueprints grant and a Gerda Lissner and Sullivan Foundation Award semifinalist. He received an Encouragement award as a Central Regional finalist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council competition in 2017 and won awards in the Dorothy Lincoln-Smith competition and the National Society of Arts and Letters competition. He was awarded the Judy George Junior Young Artist First Prize Award in the 2015 Young Patronesses of the Arts competition and is recognized as a Braulecht Estate Endowed and Music Guild Scholar. Acosta attended Indiana University for his Masters of Music as a student of Carol Vaness.

John de los Santos, Director/Librettist for *Eden*

Director/choreographer John de los Santos made his choreography debut in 2016 with *Great Scott* and his Company directorial debut with 2018's *Maria de Buenos Aires*. He has staged a range of productions that include opera, musicals, plays, ballet, concerts, and workshop readings. His productions include the world premiere of *The Astronaut Love Show* at the Kraine Theater, *The Rose and the Knife* and *Le Comte Ory* for LoftOpera, *La Cage Aux Folles* for Skylight Music Theatre, *The Daughter of the Regiment* for Arizona Opera, *Carousel* for Ashlawn Opera, *Maria de Buenos Aires* for Lexington Philharmonic, and *Green Sneakers* for the Southside Theatre. He choreographed the world premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Great Scott*, directed by Jack O'Brien, for The Dallas Opera. His choreography has also been seen at the Washington National Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Des Moines Metro Opera, Utah Festival Opera, and Austin Lyric Opera. As a librettist he worked with composer Clint Borzoni for *When Adonis Calls*, which was selected for inclusion in Fort Worth Opera's Frontiers showcase, and then performed in concert by operamission in New York. John's new collaboration with Borzoni, *The Copper Queen*, won the top prize Arizona Opera's commission program, Arizona SPARK. He was then commissioned by Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative to create a new original work with composer Christopher Weiss. The resulting piece, *Service Provider*, premiered at The Kennedy Center in 2015. In 2003, he became the resident choreographer for the Fort Worth Opera, where his choreography has been seen in *Rigoletto*, *Salome*, *La traviata*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and the world premieres of *Frau Margot* and *Before Night Falls*. John then made his directing debut with the company with a 2009 production of *Carmen*, followed by *The Mikado* and *The Pearl Fishers*. In 2010 he made his choreographic debut for The Dallas Opera with *Don Giovanni*. John has served on the directing faculty of the Seagle Music Colony in Schroon Lake, NY, where his productions have included *Anything Goes*, *Crazy for You*, *The Medium*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Mikado*, *La Boheme*, *Guys & Dolls*, *Brigadoon* and *L'Italiana in Algeri*. John has also coached young artists with the Washington National Opera, Arizona Opera, Fort Worth Opera, and Des Moines Metro Opera, and served on the faculty of the KD Conservatory of Film and Dramatic Arts in Dallas.

Bruce Stasyna, Conductor

Conductor Bruce Stasyna made his Company conducting debut with *As One* in 2017, returned to conduct *Maria de Buenos Aires* in 2018, and conducted *One Amazing Night* with Stephen Costello and Stephen

Powell in 2019, the holiday sing along concert for *All is Calm* in 2020, *One Amazing Night: When I See Your Face Again* and *The Barber of Seville* in 2021, and *Così fan tutte* in 2022. He has been on the conducting rosters of the New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, and Sugar Creek Opera, and has held positions as Chorus Master for New York City Opera, Minnesota Opera, Wolf Trap Opera and Des Moines Opera. He was Artistic Director and Principal Conductor for the Green Mountain Opera Festival, and Head of Music and Director of the Young Artist Program at Palm Beach Opera. He has collaborated on many notable North American premieres including *Anna Nicole*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, *Orazi e Curiazi*, and *Joseph Merrick dit Elephant Man*. As a pianist he has concertized with such artists as Marcello Giordani, Deborah Voigt, J'nai Bridges, Irene Roberts, Marina Costa-Jackson, and Richard Troxell. The Canadian born conductor is currently the Chorus Master and Music Administrator for San Diego Opera, Chorus Master and Assistant Conductor for Washington Concert Opera, and Music Director of Vero Beach Opera.

Nicolas Reveles, Composer

San Diego Opera debut. Composer, opera educator and pianist Nicolas Reveles began his composing career at the age of 8 by entering a Young Composer's Competition for the San Diego Symphony in 1956, taking away second place and having the honor of his composition (*Arabian Dance*) performed by the symphony at a Young People's Concert. He continued to compose for the piano, and in a long career as an organist and choirmaster, he produced numerous sacred works for choir, congregation and organ. His compositions were featured during the visit of Pope John Paul II to California (Monterey) in 1987. Many of his sacred works, including *The Passion According to St. John* for chorus, soloists, string quartet and percussion, were published by Cooperative Ministries in Washington, DC. His first two operas, with librettist J. Sherwood Montgomery, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Rumpelstiltskin*, were written for family audiences and were performed over four touring seasons by the San Diego Opera Ensemble (2004-2008). His theatre credits include scores and musical arrangements for The Old Globe Theatre, North Coast Repertory Theatre and Arizona Repertory Theatre, where his mariachi score for Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro* was cited 'Best Musical of the Year' by the Arizona Republic. His opera *Sextet: A Queer Opera in Six Scenes for Six Singers* was produced by Diversionary Theatre in 2010 through a grant given by the Irvine Foundation (2010). A fully orchestrated version of *Rumpelstiltskin* was produced by Lyric Opera San Diego the same year. His opera *Aftermath* (music and libretto both by the composer) was produced by Bodhi Tree Concerts for the San Diego International Fringe Festival in June 2022. *Ghosts* includes his fifth, sixth and seventh operas: *Eden* (librettist John de los Santos), *Dormir* (librettist Michael Vegas Mussman) and *House*, to the composer's own libretto.

Michael Vegas Mussman, Librettist for *Take Care of Him*

San Diego Opera debut. Michael Vegas Mussman is a playwright, lyricist, and composer. Michael wrote the lyrics for a 15-minute musical called *Against the Grrrain*, which premiered at the Hollywood Fringe in 2018. He also wrote the book and lyrics for *In Security*, a full-length musical that premiered at the 2017 San Diego International Fringe Festival. Michael earned his Bachelor of Arts in English from San Jose State University and currently lives in San Diego with his husband and a street dog named Mathilde.

Tim Wallace, Scenic Designer

Tim Wallace has been a scenic artist, theatrical environment and concert tour designer. Currently, he is the Technical Director for the San Diego Opera where he designed sets for *All is Calm* in 2018, *The Barber of Seville* in 2021, *Così fan tutte* in 2022, and 2023's *Puccini Duo*. He started his scenic career as a shop person and became the Charge Scenic Artist in 2011 and moving to Technical Director in January 2019. He has worked on many productions seen on stage for the San Diego Opera. Tim started his design career with the local rock band Rocket From the Crypt in 1995 doing their stage backdrops and scenery. With the band his work has been seen on stages around the world. He has designed for local theater companies as well, most notably at New Village Arts where he served as resident designer from 2009-2012. Highlights from his career have been *Seven Year Itch* at New Village Arts working with his

(director) wife, art direction for a Rocket From the Crypt music video, interior design for play structures at KidVentures and designing the Jungle Tour set for Drake which was seen in the U.S., Canada and England, Glenner Centers Town Square; an immersive replica of a city built in a warehouse set in the style of the late 50's to help patients suffering from Alzheimer's. His most recent design/creative work has been for the San Diego Zoo, designing themed holiday decorations for HalGLOWeen, Jungle Bells and Aurora. Tim is a member of IATSE Local 800 Art Directors Guild.

Faith A. James, Costume Designer

Company debut. Faith's Puppet and Costume design experiences range from *MALA* produced by The Old Globe; *Cinderella* with the The Rose Theatre; *Lying With Badgers* produced by Native Voices at the Atrium; *Azul* at Diversionary Theatre; *The Niceties* at Moxie Theatre; *Beehive: The Sixties Musical* at New Village Arts; and a specialization in wire bending at Trinidad & Tobago Carnival. She has worked as a craft artisan at The Old Globe and LA Opera. She earned her MFA in Design & Technology from the School of Theatre, TV and Film at San Diego State University.

Performance Schedule

Friday	April 14, 2023	7:30 PM
Saturday	April 15, 2023	7:30 PM
Sunday	April 16, 2023	1:00 PM

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Pre-Opera Lectures

These 30-minute informative lectures for the main stage operas take place in the Civic Theatre one hour prior to every performance and offer wonderful insights into the production audience members are about to see. These lectures are free to all ticket holders.

Post-Opera Talkbacks

Join the cast, crew, musicians and artists right after the performance of the main stage operas for an engaging, entertaining and informative Q&A session moderated by a San Diego Opera staff member. These lectures are held in the Civic Theatre and are free to all ticket holders.

San Diego Opera Podcast Series

These insights into the singers and productions can be enjoyed by opera fans as well as those who are new to the art form. Casual and fun, this is a great way to learn about our artists and the operas they star in. Watch online at <http://www.sdopera.org/Company/Education/Podcasts>. These videos are also available on our YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera>

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San Diego Opera on YouTube

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Single tickets start at \$30.

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San Diego Opera 2022-2023 Season

<i>El último sueño de Frida y Diego</i>	Gabriela Lena Frank	October 29, November 1, 4, and 6 (matinee), 2022 December 1, 2022
Isabel Leonard and Pablo Sáinz-Villegas		
<i>The Puccini Duo: Suor Angelica/Gianni Schicchi</i>	Giacomo Puccini	February 11, 14, 17, and 19 (matinee), 2023
<i>Tosca</i>	Giacomo Puccini	March 25, 28, 31, and April 2 (matinee), 2023
<i>Ghosts</i>	Nicolas Reveles	April 14, 15, and 16 (matinee), 2023
<i>The Falling and the Rising</i>	Zack Redler	May 12, 13, and 14 (matinee), 2023

Mission:

The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community partnerships, and the transformative and expressive power of the human voice.

Vision:

San Diego Opera will be recognized globally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability, promoting diversity on stage, in our repertoire, and in our staff and leadership, with a commitment to world-class and emerging talent, and innovative use of technology.

Values:

- Through excellence in innovative programming and education and a commitment to equity, San Diego Opera provides a lasting cultural service to our diverse community.
- Our tradition of exceptional productions of grand opera is augmented with new expressions of opera in diverse settings.
- Our deep commitment to our community propels us to embrace inclusivity, accessibility and affordability.
- Through fiscal responsibility and nimble adaptation to changing environments, we ensure the future of San Diego Opera for our community.

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