

BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES



Photo of Jeni Houser by Michael Yeshion

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ON SITE OPERA ANNOUNCES CAST CHANGE FOR NORTH AMERICAN PREMIERE OF MARCOS PORTUGAL'S *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* JUNE 14-17 AT 632 ON HUDSON IN WEST VILLAGE

American Soprano Jeni Houser Makes Her New York City Debut in the Role of Susanna, Replacing Ashley Emerson Who Has Withdrawn Due to Injury

On Site Opera (OSO) announces today that soprano **Jeni Houser** has been added to the cast of the North American premiere of **Marcos Portugal's *The Marriage of Figaro*** (1799). Making her New York City debut in the role of Susanna, Jeni Houser replaces Ashley Emerson, who has withdrawn due to an injury. The production is the latest installment of *The Figaro Project*, in which OSO is staging lesser-known operatic adaptations of French playwright **Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais' (1732-1799)** famed trilogy of *Figaro* plays. It is presented in partnership with **The New School's Mannes School of Music** and **The Portuguese Consulate in New York**, and will take place at **632 on Hudson**, a stunning triplex in the West Village that will serve as Count Almaviva's summer palace.

Jeni Houser's "extraordinary soprano" (*The Capital Times*) has been praised by *Opera News* as "commanding and duplicitous, yet also vulnerable. She has a bright future above the staff." As a member of Minnesota Opera's Resident Artist Program in 2015-2016, she performed Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, The Queen of the Night in *The Magic Flute*, and Mrs. Grady in the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Shining*. In 2016, Ms. Houser also returned to Madison Opera to perform Amy in Adamo's *Little Women* and Olympia in *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. She has also recently appeared with the Glimmerglass Festival, Fort Worth Opera, Virginia Opera, and Opera Saratoga. In future seasons, Ms. Houser joins the roster of the Lyric Opera of Chicago for *Die Zauberflöte* and performs a leading role for her debut with Austin Opera.

Of working with Houser, **Eric Einhorn, OSO's General & Artistic Director**, says, "We're excited to welcome Jeni to the cast! Her work in just the first few days of rehearsal clearly shows that Portugal's Susanna is a great fit for her musically and dramatically. Jeni is an incredibly talented artist, and we are thrilled to be presenting her to New York audiences for the first time."

Just four years into its existence, On Site Opera has established itself as one of New York City's most imaginative and nimble opera companies by doing more than simply staging musically and dramatically rich works outside of the opera house. OSO's team of Einhorn, Music Director **Geoffrey McDonald** and Executive Director/Producer **Jessica Kiger** have pushed the boundaries of operatic storytelling, producing operas in locations that allow singers and audiences alike

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to immerse themselves in the narrative. Reviewing the first chapter of *The Figaro Project*, Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* wrote, “This visionary company could be on to something big.” He noted that the “space proved ideal for the intrigues of the opera.” *The Figaro Project* will conclude with the U.S. premiere of Darius Milhaud’s *The Guilty Mother* (1966) in the summer of 2017.

Performances of *The Marriage of Figaro* will take place June 14-16 at 7:30 pm and June 17 at 6:30pm and 9:00pm. Tickets for the run are sold out, but a waiting list is available at www.osopera.org or by phone at [866.811.4111](tel:866.811.4111). Running time is approximately 100 minutes. Sung in English in a translation by Gilly French and Jeremy Gray, with dialogue adapted by Joan Holden.

Portuguese composer Marcos Portugal’s (1762-1830) prolific catalog of over 70 dramatic works – including 40 operas, and more than 140 sacred works – earned him international success in 18th-century Europe. He secured a special place in Portuguese musical history by composing the first official national anthems of Portugal and Brazil. Portugal’s *La pazzo giornata o sia il matrimonio di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), with a libretto by **Gaetano Rossi**, was written for Carnival season of 1800 at the Teatro San Benedetto – just 13 years after Mozart’s *Figaro*. This North American premiere production gives New York audiences a rare opportunity to hear Portugal’s vibrant music – with its beautiful melodies, buoyant comedy and moving pathos – in an inventive new chamber orchestration by guitarist **José Luis Iglésias** and OSO’s Geoffrey McDonald, based on the new critical edition of the score edited by **David Cranmer**. From the moment the doors open, audience members will be surrounded by the world and characters of the opera. Before the opera begins, patrons can visit the many rooms of 632 on Hudson to see the world of the opera already in progress. The performance itself features singers and audience members moving throughout multiple stories of the venue as the opera progresses.

The Marriage of Figaro will be conducted by On Site Opera’s Music Director, Geoffrey McDonald, and directed by the company’s General & Artistic Director, Eric Einhorn. In addition to Houser, the accomplished cast includes **Jesse Blumberg** (baritone) as Figaro, **David Blalock** (tenor) as Count Almaviva, **Camille Zamora** (soprano) as Countess, **Melissa Wimbish** (soprano) as Cherubino, **Margaret Lattimore** (mezzo-soprano) as Marcellina, **Ryan Kuster** (bass-baritone) as Don Basilio, **David Langan** (bass-baritone) as Don Bartolo, **Ginny Weant** (soprano) as Cecchina, and **Antoine Hodge** (bass-baritone) as Antonio/Gusmano. The production features costume design by **Haley Lieberman** and lighting design by **Shawn Kaufman**.

2016 marks continuation of a growing partnership between On Site Opera and **New School’s Mannes School of Music**. As part of the partnership, OSO will be in residence at Mannes during rehearsals for Portugal’s *The Marriage of Figaro*. Opportunities for Mannes students are created within OSO productions, on- and offstage. In addition to Mannes School of Music, On Site Opera is excited to partner with the **Portuguese Consulate in New York** to welcome this opera to New York.

About On Site Opera

Now in its fifth season of producing immersive site-specific opera, On Site Opera has been praised by *BBC News* as “innovative” and by *The New York Times* as a “vital” and “visionary company.” On Site Opera has presented Shostakovich at The Bronx Zoo, Gershwin at Harlem’s legendary Cotton Club, Rameau at Madame Tussauds New York and the Lifestyle-Trimco mannequin showroom, Paisiello at Fabbri Mansion, as well as a site-specific workshop of *Clarimonde*, a new work by Frederic Chaslin and P.H. Fisher. Committed to exploring new technology in opera, On Site Opera implemented the first-ever Google Glass supertitles during its 2014 run of Rameau’s *Pygmalion*, of which *The Verge* reported “Few things seem like obvious fits for Google Glass so far, but this is one of them.” Founded in 2012, On Site Opera is dedicated to producing site-specific opera in non-traditional venues throughout New York. On Site molds its productions to specific locations using physical space to create an environment in which the concept, storytelling, music, and performers unite to form an immersive, cohesive, and meaningful whole. www.osopera.org

About 632 on Hudson

Beginning shortly after its inception as an Events Venue in 2000, when MTV rented 632 on Hudson for its 10th Season of the Real World, the Venue has enjoyed a myriad of diverse activities: as a location for fashion, film, and video shoots, lodging for celebrities while doing film or theater work in New York, product launches, culinary and branding events,

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private cocktail parties, corporate meetings, banquet-style dinners, chef demonstrations, weddings and rehearsal dinners, even intimate musical and theatrical performances. Karen Lashinsky, the owner and designer of 632 on Hudson, comes from a background of 20 years of performing in the theater as well as touring all over the world; first as a ballet dancer, then a modern dancer, then actor, and finally as an Associate member of The Wooster Group with whom she worked for twelve years. Her years spent in the theater also inspired a great passion for creating what she calls “living sets”; magical worlds or vignettes in which she can picture “perfect imaginary lives might be lived”. With the arts being Lashinsky’s first love, she looks forward to collaborating with On Site Opera and to initiate more partnerships with not-for-profit organizations in the Arts. www.632onhudson.com

About The New School’s Mannes School of Music

Founded in 1916, Mannes School of Music at The New School seeks to develop citizen artists who engage with the world around them in and through music, in traditional, new, and emergent forms of practice. Our eminent faculty of artists, scholars, and educators of international stature, including active professionals from all areas of the music world foster close, constructive relationships with students and are committed to advancing the creative role of music throughout all aspects of our rapidly changing society. In the fall of 2015, Mannes moved downtown into a new performing arts hub designed by Deborah Berke Partners in Arnhold Hall, where the conservatory joined The School of Jazz and The School of Drama to create a unified College of Performing Arts.

Notable Mannes faculty include Jeremy Denk, multi-award winning and MacArthur Fellow pianist; Dave Douglas, multi-award winning and MacArthur Fellow trumpeter; Cynthia Phelps, principal violist of The New York Philharmonic; David Chan, Concertmaster of The Metropolitan Opera; Joan La Barbara, vocalist and pioneer in contemporary vocal music; William Burden, renowned operatic tenor; David T Little, composer; Missy Mazzoli, composer; Paul Moravec, composer; and many more. www.newschool.edu/mannes

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