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ECSO closes its 78th Season with “Love and Hope, Italian Style”
Saturday, April 26, 2025 7:30pm at the Garde Arts Center, New London

This concert is generously sponsored by Upton Bass String Instrument Co.

The ECSO will tie a red-white-and-green bow around its 2024-25 season with a program of achingly romantic duets from famous Italian operas—*La bohème* and *Madama Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini and *Il trovatore* and *La traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi—performed by soprano Sarah Joyce Cooper and Mexican-born tenor Jesús Daniel Hernández. The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus will join the orchestra for “Va, pensiero (Go, thought, on wings of gold)” from Verdi’s *Nabucco*, the chorus of the Hebrew slaves, an anthem of Italian unification and, later, of other oppressed peoples.

The orchestra will also play the stirring overtures to Verdi’s *La forza del destino* and *Luisa Miller*, the triumphal march from his *Aida*, and the intermezzo from Puccini’s *Manon Lescaut*.

There will be a **pre-concert chat** at 6:30pm prior to the concert on April 26. This event is free and open to the public. It will be in the Oasis room located in the Garde Arts Center through the side “G” door entrance. No need to RSVP, just arrive and enjoy. There will be limited seating on a first-come, first-served basis. While you don’t need a ticket to enjoy the lecture, you will need a ticket to get into the concert hall afterwards and ticket scanners will be standing by. These chats are generously sponsored through a Connecticut Humanities Quick Grant and through partnership with the Garde Arts Center’s P:ACE initiative.

Sarah Joyce Cooper:

Soprano Sarah Joyce Cooper has been hailed for her “meltingly beautiful” (Opera News) singing and “passionate power” (Parterre Box). Upcoming performances include the role of Gretel in an abridged production of Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel* with Boston Lyric Opera, a New England Conservatory-sponsored recital celebrating the 70th anniversary of Coretta Scott King’s graduation from the school, and a debut with Seattle Opera as Minnie in Tazewell Thompson’s *Jubilee* in October 2024. Ms. Cooper also looks forward to performing as the soprano soloist in a performance of Haydn’s *Lord Nelson Mass* in the spring. Recent concert performances include her Carnegie Hall debut as the soloist in Poulenc’s *Gloria* with the New England Symphonic Ensemble, *Eva and Gabriel* in Haydn’s *Creation* with the MIT Concert Choir and Handel and Haydn Society Chamber Choir, and soloist with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra in Brahms’ *Ein Deutesches Requiem*. Recent operatic

performances include Adina in *L'Elisir d'amore* (Geneva Light Opera), Clorinda in *La Cenerentola* (Syracuse Opera), *La Charmeuse* in *Thaïs* (Maryland Lyric Opera), Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* (Opera Western Reserve), Violetta in *La Traviata* (MassOpera), Mimì in *La Bohème* (Opera Theater of Cape Cod/ Boston Opera Collaborative), Micaëla in *Carmen* (Prelude to Performance), Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* (Boston Opera Collaborative), Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Savannah Voice Festival). Also at home on the musical theater stage, Ms. Cooper performed the role of Maggie Porter in Tazewell Thompson's *Jubilee* with the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. In concert, Ms. Cooper has appeared as a soloist with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Oratorio Society, and the Radcliffe Choral Society at Harvard University. In 2019, she was invited to perform as a soloist with the Du Bois Orchestra in the historic world premiere of Florence Price's long-lost cantata, *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*.

As a competition winner, Ms. Cooper received first place in The American Prize Competition for Opera and Operetta and second place for Art Song. Most notably, Ms. Cooper has received encouragement awards from the George London Foundation and Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and was nominated for a study grant from the Sarah Tucker 74 Foundation. Most recently, she advanced to Round Two of the 2023 BBC Cardiff Singer of World Competition. As a premed, Ms. Cooper completed her Bachelor's Degree in French at Princeton University, where she first began to develop the foundation for her "mastery of French style" (Opera News) while conducting research for her undergraduate thesis on sacred themes in the *mélodies*, romances, and cantiques of Gabriel Fauré. She earned her Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from Westminster Choir College, where she received the Gwynn Moose Cornell Endowed Award, given to the student who shows the most promise for a career in vocal performance.

In addition to performing, Ms. Cooper serves as volunteer Executive Assistant for Help!ComeHome!, a nonprofit dedicated to meeting the needs of under-served communities throughout the US in Jesus' Name. Ms. Cooper is a regular volunteer with the organization, offering both her musical and administrative skills to further its mission. In June 2018, she planned, programmed, and performed in *A Nod to Our Neighbors*, a benefit concert and the first major fundraiser for Help!ComeHome! In her free time, Ms. Cooper enjoys gardening, playing cello, and being active outdoors. A former competitive gymnast, she was awarded top prizes at the annual Massachusetts State Championship meet while competing for the Gymnastics Academy of Boston.

Jesús Daniel Hernández Bio:

Tenor Jesús Daniel Hernández was born and raised in the lovely town of Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México. As a child, his biggest dream was to be a singer. He wanted to sing like Pedro Infante and Jorge Negrete, two big idols of Mexico. It was very common to hear young Jesús singing around the halls of his middle school in Juárez, Mexico. It was during that time

that he saw on TV the concert with the Three Tenors, and his interest in classical music was born.

After hearing that concert, he would try to imitate his new idols, providing new kinds of headaches to his family with his higher singing notes. He bought his first guitar at the age of 14, a wonderful companion that has lasted until this moment. On this instrument, he learned how to accompany himself. When he was 16 years old, he immigrated to the United States, where he finished his high school and, for a brief moment, sang with a mariachi band.

Even though life took him down different paths, taking different types of jobs to sustain his family, his dream to be a singer never disappeared from his mind. In 2003, Jesús enlisted in the U.S. Army. At the end of that same year, he volunteered to go to Iraq to serve in OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom). One night outside of the military camp of Taji while in Iraq, the tenor remembered his dreams of being an opera singer while reading *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Even though he enjoyed his job as a soldier, he felt that something was missing in his life, and that was his desire to sing. In 2007, while stationed in Texas, the tenor learned that one of his childhood idols was going to perform in San Antonio, TX. Upon seeing the price of the tickets, he wrote an email to the then director of the San Antonio Opera, Mark Richter, asking him if they offered a military discount so he could see his idol Plácido Domingo. The opera director graciously told him not to worry about it, that the ticket was free for him for serving his country.

At the end of the concert, the young tenor went backstage to ask his idol for an autograph. While Maestro Domingo was signing his program, he asked the young tenor if he liked his concert and his music, to which the 76 young soldier responded that he always wanted to sing like him. Maestro Domingo invited him to sing for him in his dressing room in an impromptu audition, and after listening to the young tenor, Maestro Domingo invited him to be part of his prestigious Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program in Washington, DC, in 2008.

While in the program, Jesús participated in different concerts and operas with Plácido Domingo. Since then, tenor Jesús Daniel Hernández has been dedicated to singing to all kinds of audiences with his beautiful, sweet, and powerful voice all over the world, all thanks to a dream of a young boy, which he pursued until his dream became reality.

To purchase tickets:

Single tickets to events can be purchased by visiting the Garde Arts Center website at gardearts.org, calling the Garde Arts Center Box Office at 860-444-7373 x 1 or the ECSO office at 860-443-2876. Subscription packages provide a significant discount (up to 40%) versus purchasing individual tickets and are available by calling the ECSO office. In addition to a range

of affordable single-ticket options from \$70 to as low as \$12. The ECSO offers those under 40 years of age and active or retired military members \$12 tickets in selected sections. Reduced price tickets are sponsored by Chelsea Groton Bank.

ECSO general copy:

We are thrilled to announce our 2024-25 Season lineup, curated by Music Director and Conductor Toshiyuki Shimada. Season Highlights include Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No. 3 (Organ)*, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 4*, Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3* featuring our Instrumental Competition winner, Puccini & Verdi selections with the Eastern Connecticut Symphony Chorus and international guest artists. From early fall to late spring, the 75-plus member professional Symphony Orchestra presents six subscription concerts annually, most of which feature guest soloists. Subscription concerts are primarily performed at the historic award-winning Garde Arts Center on State Street in New London.

Visit www.ectsymphony.com for more information and follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) @ectsymphony.

Founded in 1946 by Norwegian immigrant, Victor Norman, the ECSO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization serving the eastern Connecticut region, including New London, Norwich, Waterford, Groton, Mystic, Old Lyme, and East Lyme. Recent concerts in Norwich, Willimantic, and Stonington reflect our renewed dedication to serving a broader area.

Our mission is to inspire, educate, and connect our communities through live orchestral music.