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USC THORNTON OPERA PRESENTS “BÉATRICE ET BÉNÉDICT”
April 20-22 at 8PM & April 23 at 2PM • USC’s Bing Theatre

LOS ANGELES – This month, USC Thornton’s celebrated Opera Program will bring a new production of Hector Berlioz’ sparkling comedy, Béatrice et Bénédict, to the Los Angeles stage. In a contemporary twist, the opera, which is based on Shakespeare's Much Ado About Nothing and originally set in 16th Century Italy, has been charmingly updated to the setting of a Southern California beach wedding.

The innovative production is the brainchild of guest stage director Joachim Schamberger, who also designed video projections for Béatrice et Bénédict. To capture just the right “beachy” setting for the opera’s projections, Schamberger, an accomplished designer, personally shot special footage along the Venice Beach waterfront.

“Much Ado About Nothing is maybe Shakespeare’s most famous comedy and makes for a delightful opera,” said Schamberger, who also created new English dialogues for the production based on Shakespeare’s original text. “Our contemporary approach will show how our confusions about love, our lively arguments and clever schemes, are timeless.”

“Or, as Shakespeare put it, ‘Thou and I are too wise to woo peaceably.’”

The boisterous prelude to a summer wedding provides the perfect backdrop for the will-they-or-won’t-they romantic entanglement between the headstrong Béatrice and a Sicilian soldier, Bénédict. Two alternating casts of Thornton Vocal Arts & Opera students will present the French-language work in four performances at USC’s Bing Theatre, from April 20-23.
“Ever since first seeing *Béatrice et Bénédict* in Santa Fe in 1998, I've wanted to do it,” said conductor Brent McMunn. “This year we have two mezzos and two tenors who are perfect for the lead roles.”

“For Berlioz’ last work, he turned to a comedy, and the music is, in a word, enchanting. There are mesmerizing ensembles for the women, big comedic ensembles, and solo scenes that are both deeply felt and virtuosic.”

For the New York City-based Schamberger, who has directed operas throughout the U.S. and Europe, the production has offered a chance to cultivate talented student artists. “The level of Thornton students is really high,” he said. “We are having a great time finding and developing these characters.”

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**Thursday, April 20 through Saturday, April 22 at 8PM**

**Sunday, April 23 at 2PM**

**USC’s Bing Theatre**

*Free for USC students, faculty, and staff with valid ID. General public, $18. Seniors, alumni, and non-USC students, $12. For tickets, call (213) 740-4672.*

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**ABOUT THE USC THORNTON SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

For more than 130 years, the USC Thornton School of Music has prepared students to excel as performers, composers, industry leaders, and educators on stages and in studios around the world. Founded in 1884 and today the oldest continually operating cultural institution in Los Angeles, USC Thornton is internationally recognized as one of the finest conservatories and music schools in the U.S. By blending the rigors of a traditional conservatory-style education with the benefits of a leading research university, USC Thornton offers a curriculum designed to prepare students for successful careers in the 21st century.