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Tristan & Isolde

BY RICHARD WAGNER

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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Vol. 102, No. 3 • 2024–25 Season • October/November 2024

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Tristan and Isolde

MUSIC AND LIBRETTO BY RICHARD WAGNER

Structure: 3 acts

Running time: 4 hours, 35 minutes

Language: German with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Tristan*, Cornish knight who falls in love with Isolde; nephew of Marke
- *Isolde*, Irish princess being forced to marry Marke
- *King Marke*, Ruler of Cornwall
- *Brangäne*, Isolde's attendant
- *Kurwenal*, Tristan's man-at-arms

Midway through working on his massive, four-opera *Ring* cycle, Richard Wagner developed two obsessions that led him to put everything aside to compose *Tristan and Isolde*: one was with the writings of the philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, and the other was with Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of one of Wagner's patrons. Rooted in medieval legend, *Tristan and Isolde* is about a love that endures all, even death itself. Wagner's score

marshals the orchestra to embody the title characters' sensual and spiritual yearnings using unresolved harmonies (sometimes called "infinite melody") that build an ecstatic tension over the course of the entire opera. The listener's expectations and need for musical resolution are prolonged to extreme lengths in *Tristan*, spanning the first voicing of the enigmatic "Tristan Chord" in the opera's first 15 seconds to Isolde's climactic Liebestod ("Love Death") nearly four and a half hours later. In the libretto, Wagner's text for the lovers is often highly symbolic, employing metaphors of night and day; light and dark; life and death to illustrate the union as something that is of this world but also archetypal, transcendent, and timeless.

Did you know? When Wagner finished the opera in 1859 some critics and artists dismissed the score as impossible to perform. This forbidding reputation seemed all too warranted when the opera finally had its world premiere in 1865 and Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, widely considered the only tenor capable of singing the exacting role of Tristan, fell ill from exhaustion after the fourth performance and died.

Leonidas Kavakos, *violin*
**Bach's Complete Sonatas
 and Partitas for Solo Violin**

In a rare and powerful musical experience, the virtuoso Greek violinist performs Bach's complete works for solo violin over two nights, groundbreaking compositions that conjure vast sonic landscapes. Kavakos performs Partita No. 3 and Sonatas No. 2 and 3 on night one; and Partitas No. 1 and 2 and Sonata No. 1 on night two.

Nov 15–16
 ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY



Igor Levit, *piano*

Praised for his extraordinary technique and musicianship, the German pianist enjoys assembling bold recital programs, and here matches Brahms' moody Ballades with Liszt's fiendishly challenging transcription of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.

"A superlative interpreter of Beethoven, whose power is always cumulative in effect."
 —The New Yorker

Nov 19
 ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY



Asmik Grigorian, *soprano*
Lukas Geniušas, *piano*

Among the most electrifying performers of her generation, the Lithuanian soprano makes her first West Coast appearance with an all-Russian-language Cal Performances debut recital, performing rarely heard songs—"small pieces of opera in a few minutes"—by Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff.

Dec 15
 HERTZ HALL, BERKELEY



**Orchestra of the
 Age of Enlightenment**
Julia Bullock, *soprano*

For her second engagement of the season, Artist in Residence Julia Bullock is joined by one of the world's pre-eminent period-instrument ensembles in a program that highlights her gleaming voice in arias from operas by Handel, Lully, Rameau, and Purcell sung in Italian, French, and English. Plus instrumental showpieces by Vivaldi, Bach, Pachelbel, and Handel.

Jan 19
 ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY



Maria Manetti Shrem and Elizabeth Segerstrom
 California Orchestra Residency

Vienna Philharmonic
Yannick Nézet-Séguin, *conductor*

A season highlight! "Devoted to tending the fire of tradition" (The New York Times), the magnificent orchestra returns with three programs of symphonic masterworks featuring star conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. With his signature energy and dramatic flair, Nézet-Séguin leads the Philharmonic through repertoire at the very core of the ensemble's more than 180-year history.

Mar 5–7
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 and *choral composer*
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 Mwenya Kabwe, *dramaturg*

The internationally acclaimed South African artist returns to campus with his latest creation for the stage, a chamber opera set on a 1941 sea voyage from Marseille to Martinique. The production merges surrealist imagery with real-life historical events, lush South African choral music, dance, and poetry.

An *Illuminations*: "Fractured History" event.
calperformances.org/illuminations

Mar 14–16
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WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to San Francisco Opera! It has already been a busy fall; we've been to eighteenth-century Sweden with *Un Ballo in Maschera* and dystopian Gilead with *The Handmaid's Tale*. Now we head to a stylized medieval Ireland and Cornwall with Wagner's vast, romantic epic, *Tristan and Isolde*.

Tristan is one of the great orchestral scores in the operatic repertoire. Wagner employs a rich variety of orchestral colors to take us deep into the emotional intensity of our protagonists. We are so excited to welcome you to the next chapter of Music Director Eun Sun Kim's journey through the works of Wagner following her extraordinary *Lohengrin* last season. Eun Sun is building a new generation of Wagnerian music making in this house, honoring the legacy of Wagner in this company that dates back to 1927 when we performed *Tristan* for the first time, but envisioning it anew for the second century of the Company. (We encourage you to read Jeffery McMillan's article on page A9 of the *Tristan* program book to learn more about the opera's history on our stage.)

October also sees the release of a new film by San Francisco Opera and Lumahai Productions that takes us into Eun Sun's creative process as she brings *Lohengrin* to life. It's a fascinating exploration of the multifaceted layers that must all be brought together to create these incredible Wagnerian scores. And, on October 26, Eun Sun will lead the first full performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony—his great choral symphony—by San Francisco Opera. Another great testament to the power of music making on this stage and in this community.

Thank you for being a part of this incredible institution and for joining us in defining a new chapter for opera that moves us, connects us, and allows us to understand our shared humanity. *Tristan and Isolde* is a work unlike any other in its distillation of emotions. It is a testament to our entire community that we have one of the great opera companies of the world—one equipped to present it at a transcendent level of artistry.

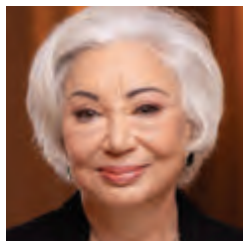
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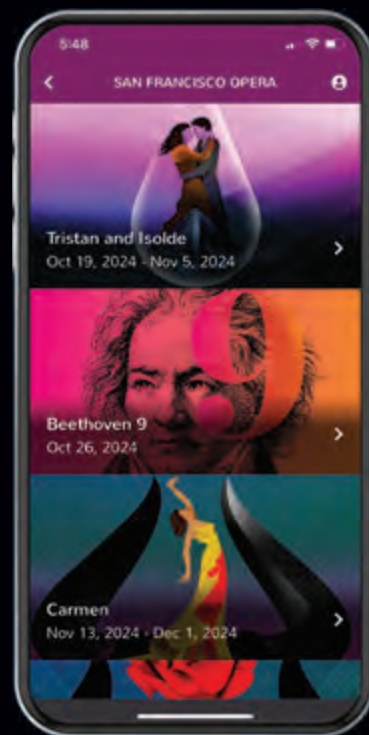
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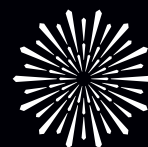
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Marieke & Jeff Rothschild



NOAH BERGER

“**T**he central theme of our philanthropy has been to have a positive impact on the lives of others who have not had the opportunities and good fortune we have enjoyed,” note Marieke and Jeff Rothschild. As new champions of San Francisco Opera, they are doing precisely that.

“Marieke and I were raised with the expectation that one should participate in philanthropy, and we feel very fortunate to be able to engage at the scale, scope, and impact that our success has enabled,” remarks Jeff. “We are attracted to projects that have the potential for meaningful and enduring social impact.”

The Rothschilds’ philanthropic investments span health care, education, economic development, and land preservation. They are equally passionate about art. “Great art is something that you need to have a good life,” reflects Marieke. “You could live without beauty, but why would you?”

Live performance is especially close to their hearts. “We come together, taking time out of our busy lives, for

this shared experience,” Marieke explains. “The lights go down, there is a hush. Talented people work in harmony to create something extraordinary for us. By the end, we are all changed. Live music is life-affirming.”

The Rothschilds’ commitment to San Francisco Opera comes at a critical moment for the Company. “Marieke and Jeff are propelling forward the Opera, allowing us to remain bold and courageous in our programming, our innovations, and our community engagement,” observes General Director Matthew Shilvock. “Their philanthropy is a wonderful exemplar of a soaring vision that uplifts the Bay Area. I am profoundly grateful for the trust they are placing in us to produce art that showcases the creative vitality of San Francisco on the global stage.”

“San Francisco Opera is at an interesting crossroads,” Marieke concludes. “I like that they are willing to take chances, to think outside of the box. To adapt this old art form to the modern world requires new audiences and new directions, and we find those here.”

Barbara A. Wolfe

Production Sponsor, *Tristan and Isolde*



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Barbara Wolfe has been a longtime opera fan and supporter of San Francisco Opera. Works of Mozart and Wagner, and operas in the classical Italian tradition are particular favorites. Most recently, Barbara supported the Company's new productions of *Partenope*, *La Traviata*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Tosca*, as well as the 2018 *Ring* cycle and *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. With her late husband Tom, Barbara also sponsored *Tannhäuser*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *The Magic Flute*, *Mefistofele*, *Norma*, and *Don Carlo*. Barbara assumed the role as Chair of the San Francisco Opera Board on August 1, 2024, making her just the seventh Chair in the history of the Company and the first woman to hold the role. Barbara also serves on the boards of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco and San Francisco SPCA and was a longtime trustee at Mills College. She has supported educational programs and scholarships at several primary and secondary schools, graduate scholarship and fellowship programs at UCSF Foundation, and the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists program in Northern California. Barbara is also a supporter of numerous humanitarian and animal welfare organizations.

John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



TERRENCE MCCARTHY

Once again, the unprecedented generosity of Cynthia and John Gunn has set the stage for a dazzling season at San Francisco Opera. Since 2002, when John joined the Opera Board, the couple has underwritten numerous productions and provided exceptional support for many of the Company’s innovative endeavors. In September 2008, the Gunns made a historic commitment—believed to be the largest gift ever made by individuals to an American opera company—to help fund the signature projects of then General Director David Gockley, including new operas and productions, multimedia projects, and outreach programs, and they have proudly continued that support for General Director Matthew Shilvock. This season, the Gunns’ inspired generosity is helping make possible four productions—*Un Ballo in Maschera*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *Tristan and Isolde*, and *La Bohème*—and the Beethoven 9 concert. The Gunns invite everyone to give and join them as a part of San Francisco Opera’s donor community. John comments, “Opera is a dynamic art form, and all of us play a role in keeping it a meaningful part of our social fabric. With you we can propel San Francisco Opera into its next 100 years of artistic history.” John is the former chairman and CEO of

Dodge & Cox Investment Managers. He joined the firm in 1972, the year he received his MBA from Stanford Business School and married Cynthia, who graduated from Stanford with an A.B. in political science in 1970. Early in her career, Cynthia was the editor and director of *The Portable Stanford* book series for 10 years. She edited 28 books by Stanford professors on a vast array of topics, including *Economic Policy Beyond the Headlines* by George Shultz and Ken Dam. In addition to their support of San Francisco Opera, the Gunns are active members of the community. John is a former trustee of Stanford University and is Chairman Emeritus of the Advisory Board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Cynthia currently serves as a trustee of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, is a former overseer of Stanford’s Hoover Institution, and has been a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services and the board of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. John served as Chair of San Francisco Opera’s Board of Directors for 16 years and recently became Chair Emeritus in 2024. He continues to serve on its Executive Committee. Opera lovers are grateful to Cynthia and John and applaud their commitment to keeping San Francisco Opera a leading-edge company.

Donor Spotlight



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Bernard and Barbro Osher (Production Sponsor, *Beethoven 9* and *Tristan and Isolde*)

A native of Maine, Bernard Osher became involved with San Francisco Opera as a subscriber 50 years ago, shortly after moving here from New York. He and his wife, Barbro, a native of Sweden, have supported every aspect of the Company's work, from artist appearances to production facilities. Established in 1977, The Bernard Osher Foundation has funded virtually every major arts organization in the area, including youth programs. Higher education initiatives include scholarships for community college students in California and Maine and for baccalaureate students at universities in every state and the District of Columbia; Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes serving seasoned adults on 123 campuses nationwide; and Osher Centers for Integrative Medicine at six of the nation's leading medical schools and at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm,

Sweden. Bernard is a longstanding member of the Opera's Board of Directors, serving on the Chairman's Council. Barbro is Honorary Consul General of Sweden for California and serves as Chairman of the Board of the Osher Foundation.



Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem (Production Sponsor, *Beethoven 9*, through the Luminaries Concert Fund)

Jan and Maria both developed a love of opera at a young age, although they grew up half-a-world apart. Jan Shrem, after a career devoted to his publishing businesses in Japan and Europe, created Clos Pegase Winery in California's Napa Valley, collecting some of the world's greatest modern and contemporary art. Maria Manetti Shrem internationally succeeded with her fashion-based entrepreneurial companies, bringing Gucci and Fendi in the departments and specialty stores in the USA. In joyous partnership the Manetti Shrem couple is bringing their focus and affection to philanthropic causes that advance education, the performing and visual arts, and medicine.

While their lives led them each around the globe, their individual passions eventually brought them to San Francisco Opera and to each other. As Company Sponsors for more than a decade, Jan and Maria have established four generous funds:

- The Conductors Fund helps ensure the continued appearances of noted conductors on the podium.
- The Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund helps bring today's most compelling artists in Italian repertoire to San Francisco Opera.
- The Emerging Stars Fund supports the Company in showcasing exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season.
- The Luminaries Concert Fund enables San Francisco Opera to bring legendary artists to the stage for special events and performances.

In December 2022, Maria received The Spirit of the Opera award for her devotion to San Francisco Opera, her high level of commitment to advancing the success of the Company, and her ongoing support of the art form. She is the 2023 UC Davis Medal recipient for her profound arts legacy and passion for creating opportunities for exploration and education. In April 2024, Maria Manetti Shrem made history by donating eight endowments in perpetuity to the College of Letters and Science at UC Davis—the most significant gift ever—benefiting over 30,000 students a year, top faculty members, best talents, and world-renowned artists. Her visionary leadership continues to shape the cultural landscape and enrich lives across the globe.

Donor Spotlight



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jerome & Thao Dodson (Production Sponsor, *Beethoven 9* and the Dodson Orchestra Shell)

“A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty, ‘Hi-Yo, Silver!’” Those words, accompanied by the galloping excitement of Rossini’s *William Tell* Overture, transfixed a young Jerry Dodson as he listened to *The Lone Ranger* on the family radio in Oak Park, Illinois. Just as Bugs Bunny’s *Rabbit of Seville* had done for many, a lighthearted entertainment sparked a future operatic devotion.

That little boy grew up to attend Berkeley in the 1960s, serve with the American Embassy in Vietnam where he and Thao met, and attend Harvard Business School. Eventually, the couple married, settled in the Bay Area, and raised a family. In the 1980s, Jerry was a pioneer in the field of socially responsible investing with little interest in opera. But in 1992, when San Francisco Opera celebrated Rossini’s bicentennial with the rarely performed *William Tell*, Thao, already an opera lover, suggested to Jerry that they go.

William Tell was praised for its striking Lotfi Mansouri production, and the Dodsons began attending regularly. They became season ticket holders in 1999 and supporters “in a small way,” as Jerry puts it. A friendship with then General Director David Gockley, which endures to this day, led to a larger role as Company Sponsors. “I so admired what he did for the opera, but it was not very good for my pocketbook,” Jerry laughs. Jerry also lends his financial expertise to the audit committee.

In 2016, Dodson considered the import of Gockley’s departure. He met with Matthew Shilvock and joined the board that year. “We hit it off right away!” Jerry says. He felt a similar affinity with Keith Geeslin, then President of the San Francisco Opera Association. Eager to continue support, the Dodsons see this as a perfect time to revitalize and energize the Company within the San Francisco community. The initial fire ignited by *William Tell* continues to burn brightly.



Dianne and Tad Taube (Production Sponsor, *Beethoven 9*)

For more than 30 years, Dianne and Tad Taube have been catalysts for growth and innovation at San Francisco Opera. Their relationship with the Company dates back to 1991, and since then, they have played an instrumental role in shaping its future through their visionary support and generous contributions.

The Taubes’ impact can be seen in numerous facets of the organization. Their major funding of the **Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater** has created a space for dynamic performances, while their support of the **General Director’s position**, named in their honor, underscores their commitment to leadership and excellence at the highest levels. They also have been pivotal in advancing the Company’s reach and influence through media, providing lead funding for

the groundbreaking **Taube Media Suite** and supporting the renowned *Opera at the Ballpark simulcasts*, which have been instrumental in transforming the Company’s impact in the wider community.

“As ongoing company sponsors, Dianne and Tad Taube exemplify the very spirit of philanthropy, inspiring others to give with the same generosity and vision,” says Matthew Shilvock, the Tad and Dianne Taube General Director.

The Taubes’ dedication goes beyond financial support. Dianne has served on the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors for over 20 years, contributing her expertise and leadership to the organization’s long-term success. Together, Dianne and Tad have sponsored more than 10 productions, helping to bring both classic and contemporary works to life.

“Our many years of involvement with San Francisco Opera are an investment in the cultural life of our community,” notes Dianne Taube. “It is an honor to help the Opera evolve. We are especially proud that our matching gifts in recent years help the Opera carry out its vision to bring this beautiful art form to people all over the Bay Area and beyond.”



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SCAN TO GIVE

Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

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COAT CHECK

Check your coat at the north and south ends of the Main Lobby. For the safety and comfort of our audience, large bags are strongly discouraged and are subject to search.

DINING

CAFES: Enjoy a variety of sandwiches, snacks, and refreshments
Café Express (Lower Level, Open 2 hours before curtain)
Dress Circle Lounge (Level 3, South, Open 1 hour before curtain)

RESTAURANTS: Dine pre-show or reserve a table for intermission.
Prelude at The Opera House • Lower Lounge
Prelude at the Opera House (formerly known as The Café at the Opera) offers a changing seasonal buffet (including brunch) and elevated à la carte dishes.

North Box Restaurant and Bar • North Mezzanine Level
Overlooking the magnificent main lobby, North Box Restaurant offers California cuisine with global influences and is an ideal destination for pre-performance and intermission dining.

Restaurants are open two hours prior to performances. Reservations are strongly recommended. Reserve a table online at sfopera.com/dine or email operahousepreorder@ggcaterring.com, or call **(415) 861-8150** (email preferred over phone).

PRE-ORDER!

Avoid lines during intermission by pre-ordering beverages and snacks with a food and beverage server upon your arrival at any point of service.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SHOP

Take home a memento! Located in the South Mezzanine lobby, the Opera Shop sells branded merchandise, jewelry, books, and gift items. The Shop is open 90 minutes before performances, at intermissions, and afterward. All proceeds benefit San Francisco Opera.

ALL ARE WELCOME. HELP US MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!

- Turn off all electronic devices during the performance, including digital watches and cell phones. We ask this out of respect for the artists and everyone in the theater enjoying a live, in-the-moment experience.
- Take photos before or after the performance, during intermission, or during the bows, and leave cameras and recording devices off during performances.
- Enjoy food and drinks, purchased onsite pre-show and during intermission, before entering the theater. You may bring purchased drinks into the theater, but please be mindful of your fellow patrons.
- As a courtesy to those who may have fragrance allergies, please avoid wearing perfume or cologne.
- Get to know and enjoy this wonderful community of opera lovers. Say hello to one another pre-show, at intermission, or leaving the theater.

The Opera reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

FIRST AID STATION

Our First Aid Station is located on the South Lower Level. In case of emergency, please ask the nearest usher to assist you.

ACCESSIBILITY

San Francisco Opera is committed to providing easy access for all of our patrons. If you need assistance for a future performance, please contact the Opera Box Office prior to your visit so that we can ensure your comfort.

FOR PATRONS USING WHEELCHAIRS: San Francisco Opera offers wheelchair-accessible seats at a range of prices. All entrances at the War Memorial Opera House are wheelchair accessible. Wheelchair-accessible stalls in restrooms can be found on all floors (except the Main Lobby and 5th floor Balcony levels). Accessible drinking fountains are located on all floors except the Balcony Level. We are unable to provide patrons a wheelchair nor personal assistance. If you arrive with a caregiver, they will be granted unseated entry to assist you and invited to wait in the lobby until the performance concludes.

LARGE-PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSES

Visit the North Lobby coat check for large-print versions.

LISTENING DEVICES

Assistive listening devices are available at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit required.

LIVE TITLES: TEXT-TO-VOICE SUPERTITLES

Headsets that provide a spoken version of the supertitles are available at the North Lobby coat check.

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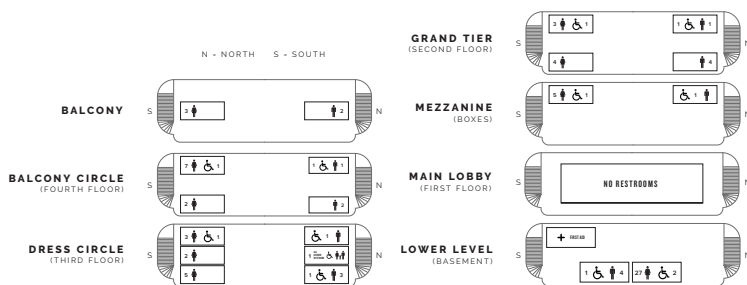
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LOST AND FOUND

Items may be turned in or claimed at the North coat check during the performance. All unclaimed items are delivered to the War Memorial Performing Arts Center at 401 Van Ness Ave., Room 110, (415) 621-6600 (8 a.m.–5 p.m., Monday–Friday).

RESTROOMS

Restrooms are located on all levels of the Opera House except on the Orchestra Level (Main Lobby).



IMPROVING YOUR SAFETY

Meet Your Civic Center Ambassadors!

As you leave the theater, be on the lookout for friendly community ambassadors in orange vests or coats on the front steps of the War Memorial Opera House. These ambassadors are there to assist you.



WALKING GROUPS

Civic Center Ambassadors lead walking groups to BART and the Civic Center & UC SF Law garages after evening performances. They will be holding signs on the Opera House steps facing Van Ness once the performance concludes.

RIDESHARE

Rideshare services pick-up and drop-off at the white loading zone at 301 Van Ness Avenue (located in front of the Opera House).

TAXI SERVICE

Patrons desiring a taxi after a performance should come to the Grove Street Taxi Ramp located on the south side of the Opera House. Taxis cannot be guaranteed as service is based on availability of licensed taxis. Please note the Taxi Ramp is not staffed.

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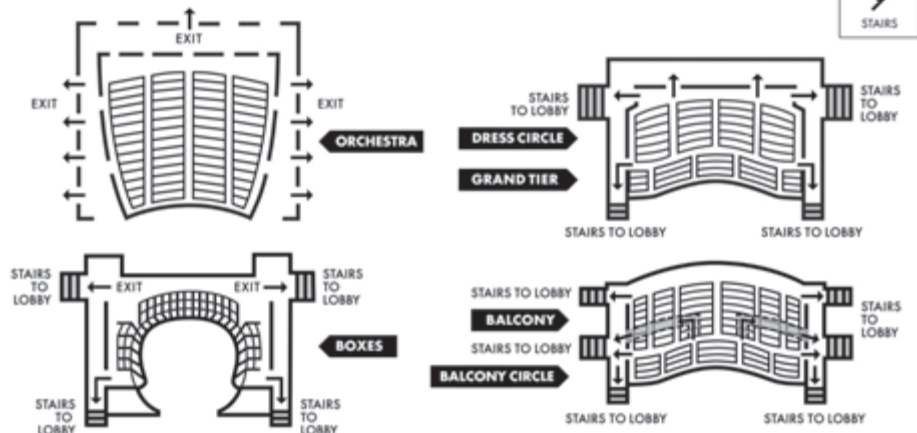
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The San Francisco War Memorial acknowledges that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders, and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

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OCTOBER 9, 2024
BROADCAST ON KQED 9
NOVEMBER 1, 2024 AT 8PM

EUN SUN KIM: A Journey Into *Lohengrin*

A SAN FRANCISCO OPERA / LUMAHAI PRODUCTIONS FILM



DIRECTED BY ELENA PARK

FEATURING EUN SUN KIM,
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRINCIPALS, ORCHESTRA, CHORUS,
CREW & MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY



LUMAHAI
PRODUCTIONS

Tristan & Isolde

OPERA IN THREE ACTS BY RICHARD WAGNER

This production is made possible, in part, by

Barbara A. Wolfe

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Annika Schlicht's appearance is made possible by
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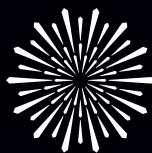
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San Francisco Opera production, originally created by Teatro La Fenice, Venice

OCTOBER 19, 23, 27; NOVEMBER 1, 5, 2024



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Tristan and Isolde

ACT I

The Irish princess Isolde is being forcibly delivered across the sea by the knight Tristan to marry King Marke of Cornwall. Angered by a sailor's carousing, Isolde sends her servant Brangäne to summon Tristan. Tristan refuses to come. His attendant Kurwenal tells Brangäne that Isolde has no right to make demands of Tristan given his victory over Ireland. He insults Brangäne further, defaming Morold, Isolde's former betrothed, who was slain by Tristan in battle.

Upon learning of Tristan's rebuke, Isolde recalls how she once healed the wounded Tristan rather than exacting her rightful vengeance. She reveals she has feelings for Tristan, and he is now abusing those feelings, taking her to marry his uncle, King Marke. When Brangäne suggests the love potion Isolde's mother sent to ensure the happiness of her marriage, Isolde requests the death potion.

Land is sighted, and Kurwenal tells Isolde to prepare to meet the king. She demands to see Tristan; this time successfully. After much hesitation, he agrees to share a drink of atonement with her, realizing that this may mean death. Isolde signals Brangäne to prepare the death potion, but Brangäne subversively prepares the love potion instead. As the ship lands, Isolde and Tristan drink, each expecting death but instead find their love for one another has been awakened. Their embrace is interrupted as the sailors hail the arrival of King Marke.

ACT II

On a summer night in the garden outside King Marke's castle, Brangäne and Isolde listen as the king's hunting horns recede in the distance. Isolde is waiting impatiently for Tristan to come to her while the king is away. Brangäne warns that she suspects this hunting party is a trick devised to entrap them. Ignoring the warning, Isolde insists that the torch be extinguished—a prearranged signal to Tristan that it is safe to approach. When Brangäne tries to dissuade her, Isolde throws the torch to the ground herself.

Soon Tristan appears in the darkness, and, while Brangäne keeps a lookout, the lovers unite in a night of rapture. They are so lost in each other that they do not hear Brangäne's warning of the approaching dawn. Only her scream of terror and Kurwenal's hurried warning can

disrupt them, but it is too late. The king and his men suddenly appear, and Marke bitterly reproaches Tristan, whom he had trusted above all others. Tristan has no reply. He turns to Isolde and asks her to accompany him to the "land of night" where he must go. Melot, one of the king's knights, draws his sword at this insult. Tristan allows himself to be mortally wounded.

ACT III

At his castle in Brittany, Tristan is dying on a bank overlooking the sea. Kurwenal bids a shepherd to keep watch for ships and pipe a merry tune should he see any vessels. Tristan awakens and feverishly calls for Isolde. Kurwenal explains that he has sent for her to work her magic cures. Tristan imagines he can see her ship. Kurwenal doubts this, but, as the shepherd's tune becomes jovial, he sees the approaching sails. He goes to welcome Isolde.

Tristan struggles to his feet, tearing at his bandages—knowing that "she who can close his wounds forever" is coming. Frantic, Tristan falls and dies in Isolde's arms.

The shepherd tells Kurwenal that another ship has appeared carrying Melot, King Marke, and Brangäne. Kurwenal kills Melot but is wounded in the fight. He falls to the earth near Tristan as Marke and Brangäne tell him that they come in peace. As Marke weeps over the body of Tristan, Brangäne explains that the king has come to forgive Isolde and unite her with her lover. Isolde hears none of this; she is focused only on Tristan, and, in her love-death song of farewell, she sees him transfigured. The two lovers are united at last in death.

First performance: Munich, June 10, 1865

First performance in the US: New York, Metropolitan Opera, December 1, 1886

First San Francisco Opera performance: September 16, 1927

Personnel: 9 principals, 30 choristers 4 supernumeraries;
43 total

Orchestra: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 1 English horn, 2 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 5 horns (1 assistant horn), 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, 1 timpani, 2 percussion, 45 strings (12 first violins, 11 second violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, 6 basses); **72 total**

Banda: 3 trumpets, 3 trombones (Act I), 6 horns (Act II), 1 English horn, 1 wood trumpet (Act III)

Conductor
Eun Sun Kim

Director
Paul Curran*

Production Designer
Robert Innes Hopkins

Lighting Designer
David Martin Jacques*

Chorus Director
John Keene

Assistant Conductor
Emmanuel Tjeknavorian

Prompter
Matthew Piatt

Musical Preparation
Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad
Andrew King
Yang Lin†
John Churchwell
Fabrizio Corona

Diction
Anja Burmeister

Supertitles
Christopher Bergen

Assistant Director
Roy Rallo

Stage Manager
Thea Railey

Assistant Stage Managers
Jonathan S. Campbell
Megan Coutts
Collette Berg

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Technical Supervisor
Scott Cavallo

Costume Supervisor
Galen Till

Hair and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2024 • 6 PM
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23 • 6 PM
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 27 • 1 PM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 1 • 6 PM
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5 • 6 PM

Tristan and Isolde

Opera in three acts by **Richard Wagner**

(Sung in German with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

A Sailor **Christopher Oglesby**

Isolde **Anja Kampe**

Brangäne **Annika Schlicht***

Kurwenal **Wolfgang Koch***

Tristan **Simon O'Neill**

Melot **Thomas Kinch†**

King Marke **Kwangchul Youn**

A Shepherd **Christopher Oglesby**

A Steersman **Samuel Kidd†**

Courtiers, hunters, sailors

* San Francisco Opera debut † Current Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Medieval Cornwall and Brittany

ACT I

A ship en route to Cornwall

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

A garden outside King Marke's castle in Cornwall

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III

Outside Tristan's castle in Brittany

The performance will last approximately four hours and thirty-five minutes with two intermissions.

Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be reseated until intermission.

The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden during the performance.

Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

A Transcendental Experience



Scene from *Tristan and Isolde* at Venice's Teatro La Fenice, directed by Paul Curran. / MICHELE CROSEIRA

Directing a production of Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* presents immense challenges in every department: musically, vocally, and certainly directorially. *Tristan und Isolde* revolutionized opera with its musical innovations, exploring shockingly intense emotional themes of love, death, and longing. It also provoked as much outrage as it did admiration after its 1865 premiere. That it is still one of the most important and challenging pieces in any artistic field today is a testament to its genius.

First and foremost, a challenge lies in its length and pacing. The opera runs over four hours, with extended musical and vocal passages that unfold slowly and meditatively. This can be testing for modern audiences, who may be more accustomed to fast-paced storytelling—thanks HBO! The director must find ways to keep the audience engaged throughout these long, emotional arcs. This often involves using lighting, set design, and thoughtful movement to create visual interest while staying true to the work's meditative quality. Directors must also contend with Wagner's preference for symbolism and myth over direct action, meaning that much of the drama takes place internally. The challenge is



Paul Curran / DIETMAR SCHOLZ

to translate this psychological depth into a physical production that remains visually and dramatically compelling. I think the key is in the approach to the experience—for *Tristan* is most certainly an experience like few others. Part of my job is to trust the performances and engagement of the singers in their roles: that is always my goal as a director. There are passages of this work where the greatest experience is just to sit back and allow the ears and the

eyes to be seduced by the magic created in the music making—that is a lot more difficult than it sounds.

Tristan places immense pressure on the singers, who must balance the technical demands of the music with the need to express deep emotion. Today's audiences have, perhaps, a slightly different expectation of drama thanks to the predominance of TV and film. It is ever present in my mind that nearly every movie any of us have seen in the last 90 or so years has been underscored with music and emotions directly taken from this great work.

A modern staging of *Tristan* can be a transcendental experience, drawing audiences into the deep emotional currents of Wagner's masterpiece. I am deeply humbled to be given the opportunity to explore this piece with this world-class cast and conductor. 🌟



Tristan, nineteenth-century mural by August Spless. PHOTO © NPL - DEA PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

The Music of Love

BY JOSHUA KOSMAN

An acquaintance once recounted her first chance encounter, as a curious tweener, with the music of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. "It made me feel all kinds of things I'd never felt before," she told me, adding, "I wasn't sure I was supposed to be feeling them, either."

She wasn't wrong. Listeners making their first encounter with *Tristan*, and even practiced aficionados,

will find it a work suffused to an unprecedented degree with tingly eroticism. Many operas take love as their subject matter, and many of those conceive it as an emotion rooted in physical attraction. How else can we understand the magnetic lightning bolt that crackles on their first meeting between, say, Mimì and Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème* or between Sophie and Octavian in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*?

***“This is music
of love,
of eros,
of pure physical desire—
categories that in
Wagner’s world
can overlap
almost to
the point of identity”***



Portrait of Richard Wagner,
oil on canvas, by Giuseppe Tivoli, 1883.

BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

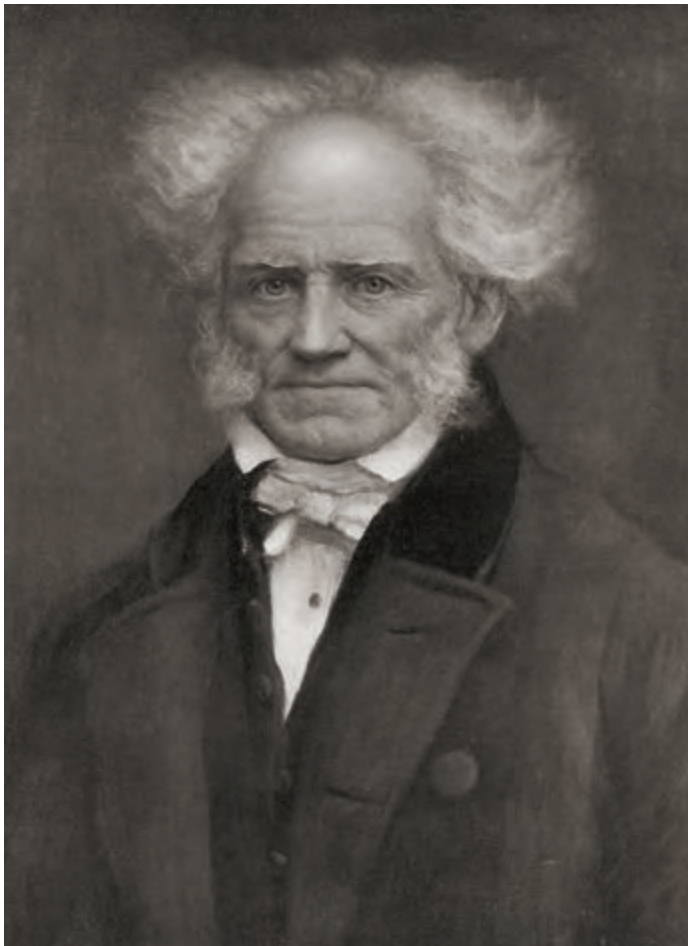
But *Tristan* is perhaps the purest distillation of sexual urgency ever brought to life on the operatic stage. This is music of love, of eros, of pure physical desire—categories that in Wagner’s world can overlap almost to the point of identity. Little wonder that it opened my friend’s young consciousness to an entirely new realm of sensation.

It’s worth noting, though, how much of the opera’s subject matter is conveyed through a purely musical vein. *Tristan* runs a seat-numbing four and a half hours (counting intermissions), and yet to a first approximation, nothing much actually happens. Act I, filled in characteristic Wagnerian fashion with explanatory exposition, drives toward the drinking of the love potion. The title characters’ one night of passionate and illicit rapture—illicit because Isolde is betrothed to King Marke, who is not only Tristan’s liege lord but also his uncle—occupies Act II, and their respective deaths and transfigurations take up Act III. Of plot twists there are none, unless you find yourself as surprised as the lovers themselves when their tryst is interrupted.

The stripped-down, primal contours of the tale are a result of Wagner’s decision to ruthlessly pare away

extraneous elements of the source material in writing his own libretto. As with so many of his mature works, Wagner drew the premise for *Tristan* from medieval literature. The story of two doomed lovers and their forbidden passion derives from an ancient Celtic legend that found a variety of literary expressions throughout the thirteen and fourteen centuries, but Wagner encountered it in an early thirteenth-century version by the poet Gottfried von Strassburg. In its original form, the story contained several other characters and a wealth of chivalric conflict.

The traces of that tale live on to some extent in Isolde’s Act I narrative, a virtuosic outburst of rage and wounded pride that recounts how their paths first crossed. Tristan had killed a knight named Morold, Isolde’s betrothed, in the course of a battle in which he had also received a grievous wound. Isolde encountered Tristan going by the pseudonym Tantris (a Clark Kent-level disguise that would scarcely fool a first-grader, but let it pass) and nursed him back to health. On finally recognizing the identity of her patient through a bit of



Arthur Schopenhauer, from *Bibby's Annual*, published in 1910.

© HILARY MORGAN / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



Portrait of Mathilde Wesendonck, German poetess and friend of Richard Wagner, by Johann Conrad Dörner.

© A. DAGLI ORTI / © NPL - DEA PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

forensic sleuthing—she matched a chip in his sword to a splinter left in Morold’s corpse—Isolde moved to kill him with his own sword.

But Tristan’s look of pitiful pleading, combined with a burst of emotional tenderness on Isolde’s part, led her to spare him. In other words, the enchanted love potion that the two title characters drink near the end of Act I doesn’t so much create a new bond as free them to express the passion that already exists, mystically and inexplicably, between them. Before the curtain even goes up, love is already in the air.

When Wagner began work on *Tristan* in 1857, he had been immersed for nearly a decade in the task of creating his massive four-opera opus, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. He had completed all four libretti, writing them in reverse order from *Götterdämmerung* through *Das Rheingold*, and then composing the scores of *Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*. But halfway through composing *Siegfried*, the third opera in

the cycle, he set the project aside for what would ultimately become a 12-year hiatus.

In the mid-1850s, two major events took place in Wagner’s life that prompted him to shift his attention. One was a romantic fixation on the poet Mathilde Wesendonck, the wife of a prosperous silk merchant who had offered the composer extensive financial support. A group of five settings of her poems that Wagner composed in 1857–58, now known as the *Wesendonck-Lieder*, represents one of his few mature compositions not intended for the opera house. Whether there was ever an affair between them worthy of the name, or whether Mathilde even returned the composer’s ardor, is unknown; but the plight of a hero in love with another man’s wife must surely have struck a chord.

The deeper and more formative development, though, was Wagner’s discovery in 1854 of the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), in particular his magnum opus *The World as Will and Representation*. Schopenhauer’s central ideas—that the world as we experience it reflects our own perception rather than transcendent reality, and

that the gap between what we can know and what truly exists is the source of human suffering—had a profound and lifelong effect on Wagner, who came to regard the philosopher as his one true forerunner. (Just days before his death, according to a diary entry by his wife Cosima, Wagner had a dream in which he drew Schopenhauer's attention to a beautiful flock of starlings. Schopenhauer, alas, had already noticed them.)

As the British philosopher Bryan Magee notes in *The Tristan Chord*, his richly illuminating 2000 study of the links between philosophy and Wagnerian opera, Schopenhauer identified three paths by which humanity could attain the transcendence denied us in the everyday world: through love, through art, and through religion. And as if taking marching orders from his influential predecessor, Wagner devoted the remainder of his creative life—in addition to completing the *Ring*—to a series of operas that can be seen in a certain light as a Schopenhauer trilogy.

First came *Tristan*, in all its exultant eroticism. After that, Wagner turned his attention to matters of art and esthetics in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, his only mature comedy, in which he grafted elements of romance onto a manifesto about artistic tradition, innovation, and (unfortunately) nationalism. Finally, *Parsifal* represented Wagner's attempt to engage operatically with a range of religious myths and morality, drawing on Christian, Buddhist, and pagan traditions.

If *Tristan* had its roots partly in German philosophy, the essence of Wagner's achievement lay in its musical innovation—an achievement that is often misunderstood. A common piece of conventional wisdom is that the score of *Tristan* represented a new and more expansive view of the rules of tonal harmony, the system that had governed Western classical music for some 250 years, and that this expansion was encapsulated in the so-called “*Tristan* chord,” the eerie stack of four notes that appears at the beginning of the opera and returns at key dramatic junctures throughout.

This is close to the truth but not entirely accurate. The function of the *Tristan* chord is not to stand outside of traditional tonality. (In *The Oxford History of Western Music*, his mammoth six-volume survey, the late UC Berkeley musicologist Richard Taruskin wittily demonstrated the point by splicing the *Tristan* chord effortlessly into a

Mozart piano piece.) Rather, it maximizes the pattern of harmonic tension and release that lies at the foundation of all tonal music.

When we sing “Shave and a haircut—two bits,” the last notes in the tune embody this pattern in its most elemental form. “Two” creates a feeling of tension for the listener, and “bits” resolves it. That's tonal music in a nutshell; everything else, from Bach to Taylor Swift, is an elaboration on this simple truth.

What Wagner accomplished in *Tristan* had little to do with loosening or weakening that system (that task was begun later by Franz Liszt and carried on by Arnold Schoenberg). Instead, he used his compositional virtuosity to extend the listener's wait from harmonic tension to resolution to unprecedented and almost excruciating lengths. What “Shave and a haircut” does in a second, *Tristan* stretches over a period of more than four hours.

The process begins with the orchestral prelude, the music that so unnerved my friend all those years ago. Again and again, Wagner creates moments of tension, promises resolution, then pulls the rug out from under the listener. Each false resolution creates a new level of tension, over and over as the music crests, falls, and rises again—an uncannily accurate rendering in sound of the ever-renewing pull of love in both its physical and personal aspects. It isn't until the closing moments of the opera, when the *Tristan* chord finally resolves with cheeky simplicity into a radiant B-major chord, that the listener feels any sort of release from the struggle and longing of what's come before. It happens as Tristan and Isolde are at last transported to the realm of the transcendent, exactly as Schopenhauer promised.

Perhaps my friend was right to be wary of the feelings stirred up by Wagner's music. (If so, she wouldn't be alone—history is full of testimonies from great artists and thinkers who found themselves profoundly shaken by the piece, for better or worse.) Sex, love, and desire represent dangerous knowledge, and Wagner gives them to us unvarnished.

But I don't think so. I would argue that the yearning depicted in the music of *Tristan* is central to our lives and worth exploring in full. It is one of the things that makes us, to borrow a phrase from Wagner's follower-turned-antagonist Friedrich Nietzsche, “human, all too human.” 🌟

Joshua Kosman is the former classical music critic for the San Francisco Chronicle.

Love Duet

TRISTAN AND ISOLDE WAS SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S FIRST GERMAN-LANGUAGE OPERA IN 1927, AND IT CONTINUES TO HOLD A SPECIAL PLACE IN COMPANY HISTORY

BY JEFFERY S. MCMILLAN

1927: Stepping up to the plate

In the early 1920s, San Francisco Opera founder Gaetano Merola was often asked (maybe “pestered” is the word) when his presentations of Italian and French operas would also include the German works of Richard Wagner. Merola coyly responded that he would produce Wagner when the performances would be a credit to his company and to the city of San Francisco. After three artistically ambitious seasons, San Francisco Opera posted a \$2,000 profit in 1925. For Merola, the time for Wagner had come: he announced *Tristan und Isolde* for the 1927 Season.

Tristan was a surprising choice for such a young company. The Wagner operas all pose challenges for their length, orchestral forces, and scenic demands, but *Tristan* also requires two singers of a kind that were as uncommon then as they are today. Merola first enlisted San Francisco Symphony Music Director Alfred Hertz, a veteran orchestra leader for Wagner's works, to conduct. He then addressed the *mise-en-scène* by hiring Fritz Kraencke, a German designer who had recently moved to America to work in Hollywood. Kraencke was the Berlin State Opera's head scenic artist and had painted sets for Hanover, Cologne, and the Wagner festival in Bayreuth. Specialist singers Rudolf Laubenthal and Elsa Alsen were brought in to perform the exacting title roles. This artistic core for *Tristan*, so steeped in the German tradition, all but guaranteed a resounding success for the premiere. Within the next eight seasons, San Francisco Opera added *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tannhäuser*, and the four-opera *Ring of the Nibelung* cycle to its repertory.

1939: The Orchestra records with two supersingers

The mid- to late-1930s were a golden age for Wagnerian singing in America thanks largely to Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad and Danish tenor Lauritz Melchior. The twosome galvanized operagoers with their thrilling and seemingly inexhaustible voices, making Wagner's four-



Operatic power couple: Kirsten Flagstad and Lauritz Melchior in *Tristan und Isolde*, 1937.
MORTON

hour epics, especially *Tristan und Isolde*, the hottest ticket in show business. San Francisco Opera featured the power couple on multiple occasions in 1936, 1937, and 1939, and the *Chronicle* reported on the duo's impact on business: “Flagstad plus Wagner equals good business. Melchior plus Wagner equals fair business. Flagstad plus Melchior plus anything—boy, go out and buy a bottle of black ink!”

Flagstad and Melchior were a box office juggernaut, but, unbeknownst to the public, their personal relationship was mostly acrimonious due to their completely opposite natures. The artists performed together hundreds of times but barely spoke a word to one another offstage. After years of tension, they finally were convinced to forge a less strained



The big Act II Love Duet in *Tristan* is actually a trio; Brangäne sings a few lines. For Flagstad and Melchior's hastily organized and now-legendary 1939 recording with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, there was no mezzo-soprano on hand so Flagstad also sang parts of Brangäne's music.



Members of the 1947 *Tristan und Isolde* cast: Walter Oltzki (Melot), Blanche Thebom (Brangäne), Set Svanholm (Tristan), Helen Traubel (Isolde), William Steinberg (conductor), Lorenzo Alvary (King Marke). / R. STROHMEYER

partnership in late 1939. Seizing the moment, RCA Victor booked studio time to record them in Los Angeles while they were on tour with San Francisco Opera. Two minutes before the session was set to begin, nerves were on edge as Flagstad sat looking increasingly frustrated because Melchior had not shown up. In the nick of time, the tenor, still dirty and disheveled from an overnight duck hunt, arrived ready to sing. With the musicians of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra accompanying them, opera's golden duo recorded the Love Duet from *Tristan und Isolde*, the first of only a handful of commercial recordings they made together.

1947: A new Isolde in town

In 1941, Kirsten Flagstad returned to occupied Norway to be with her family, leaving a void in the American opera landscape. With opportunity knocking, St. Louis-born soprano Helen Traubel answered the call. Traubel's unpretentious, downhome-gal persona and huge, radiant voice matched perfectly with Lauritz Melchior, and this Wagner power couple 2.0 were a hit during the war years. Traubel brought her *Isolde* to San Francisco Opera in 1945, Melchior's final season with the Company, and two seasons later opposite Swedish tenor Set Svanholm. The stalwart Wagnerian soprano left opera in the early 1950s to sing in night clubs and eventually starred in Hollywood comedies.



Kirsten Flagstad with Gaetano Merola in 1949. / LILLIAN PAGNINI/CAL PICTURES

1949: Merola stands by Flagstad

Kirsten Flagstad's reentry into American operatic life was dogged by a misinformation campaign of lies and innuendos about her conduct during the war perpetuated by, among others, the powerful gossip columnist Walter Winchell. As a result, Flagstad's recital at Carnegie Hall in April 1947 drew pickets bearing signs like "Let freedom sing, not Flagstad." Two days later, her recital at the Philadelphia Academy of Music was interrupted by paid hecklers and stink bombs. Flagstad refused to be intimidated. "I'm not a bit afraid," she said. "I've done nothing wrong, and I'm not going to let them win, whoever they are." While incidents at her recitals quickly receded, the attempts to "cancel" her had a chilling effect on her opera engagements.



Georg Solti, seen holding his passport in 1953, made his American opera debut with San Francisco Opera that September. He conducted *Elektra*, *Die Walküre*, and *Tristan und Isolde* in the War Memorial Opera House and with the Company on tour in Los Angeles.

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Ludwig Suthaus as *Tristan* (holding the flag) and Margarete Klose as *Brangäne*, 1953. / SKELTON STUDIOS



Gaetano Merola was among the first to welcome Flagstad back to the American opera stage, announcing her for his 1949 Season. Fearing potential controversy, the War Memorial trustees voted to officially “disapprove” of the engagement which prompted Merola to declare: “No Flagstad, no season.” Letters flooded in and editorials were published in support of the soprano until the protest vote was reversed. Alfred Frankenstein wrote about her September 30 return as *Isolde* in the *Chronicle*: “No ‘Tristan’ in local history seemed so intense, so totally absorbing, so completely overwhelming in its impact ... Nothing has happened to dim Flagstad’s luster as the supreme Wagnerian soprano of our time ... Her voice remains an instrument of incomparable golden glory.”

1953: US debuts of Experienced Wagnerians

Two weeks before the opening of the 1953 Season, Gaetano Merola collapsed and died while conducting a concert at Stern Grove. Without its founder and leader of 30 years, San Francisco Opera rallied to present a season filled with marquee works like Boito’s *Mefistofele*, Strauss’ *Elektra*, Puccini’s *Turandot*, Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov*, Verdi’s *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and *Tristan und Isolde*. The *San Francisco Examiner* review of *Tristan* opened with a reprimand of the audience. “Will they never learn that an opera doesn’t end until the curtain is all down and the orchestra has played its very last tones as a sort of cadence or commentary or benediction on all that has come before.” Critic Alexander Fried might have cut San Francisco a little slack for applauding too soon. They had just witnessed extraordinary proof that a new generation had risen to succeed the legends of the recent past and a new chapter for the Company was decidedly underway. Appearing in their first seasons in America, soprano Gertrude Grob-Prandl, tenor Ludwig Suthaus, mezzo-soprano Margarete Klose, and conductor Georg Solti created a *Tristan und Isolde* experience that bordered on the sacred. Solti, still a young firebrand and not yet the paragon of opera and symphonic conducting he would become, earned Fried’s



Jess Thomas as
Tristan, 1974.
RON SCHERL



Wolfgang Windgassen with Birgit Nilsson, 1970.
ROBERT CAHEN



Lauritz Melchior, the great *Tristan* of the 1930s
and 1940s, at Stern Grove in 1972.
EDMUND SHEA

praises along with another scolding. “He must learn that a conductor who excitedly stamps his foot on the podium simply adds a loud and superfluous drum part to the composer’s original music.”

1967–1972: When heldentenor giants walked the Earth in San Francisco

While pursuing an MA in psychology at Stanford University, Jess Thomas abruptly decided to change careers and become an opera singer. His 1957 operatic debut with San Francisco Opera was quickly followed by a series of international triumphs that pointed him toward the heavy Wagner roles. In 1967, already one of the leading heldentenors of his generation, Thomas made his role debut as Tristan in San Francisco Opera’s new production. The *Oakland Tribune*’s Paul Hertelendy remarked, “There had been question whether the honey-voiced tenor Jess Thomas could sing such a big role as Tristan. He sang it to perfection ... In case he was not quite the world’s leading Wagnerian tenor yesterday morning, he is that today without any question.” Thomas reprised the role for San Francisco in 1974, sharing the stage with one of the century’s greatest Isolde, Birgit Nilsson.

By the 1970s, Wolfgang Windgassen, who had emerged on the operatic scene in 1951, was the living gold standard for Wagner performance in Europe. American audiences had to be content with the German tenor’s records because Windgassen had only visited the United States once, in 1957, to sing the *Ring* operas at the Metropolitan Opera. Nearing retirement in 1970, the esteemed mastersinger surprised

everyone when he accepted San Francisco Opera General Director Kurt Herbert Adler’s invitation to sing Tristan on short notice (tenor Jon Vickers had canceled during rehearsals). The chivalrous Windgassen quickly boarded a flight from Germany; he simply could not let a great artist like Birgit Nilsson sing the *Tristan* duets by herself! Through five legendary performances, Windgassen and Nilsson gave San Franciscans a taste of the new, modern paradigm for singing Wagner where, according to Martin Bernheimer, great voices “had to be at the command of singers with brains, singers with a sense of poetry, singers capable of deep psychological insights, singers able to project maximal character and mood with minimal movement and gesture. Wolfgang Windgassen was the very model of such a singer” (*Los Angeles Times*).

In 1972, Lauritz Melchior returned to San Francisco Opera for the Company’s 50th anniversary celebrations. In one of his final public appearances, the tenor conducted the Orchestra in a waltz number at Stern Grove, signed hundreds of autographs, and regaled patrons with tales from the old days. He died a few months later, a day shy of his 83rd birthday.

1980: A royal lineage

Along with its inimitable roster of interpreters for the title roles, San Francisco Opera’s honor roll of King Markes is also impressive. In 1980, the American bass-baritone Simon Estes added his name to the royal line that included Emanuel List, Alexander Kipnis, and Kurt Moll. Estes had recently starred in *Der Fliegende Holländer* at

The long-standing relationship between artist David Hockney and San Francisco Opera includes Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Puccini's *Turandot*, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (pictured here in 2006), and Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.
TERRENCE MCCARTHY



Bayreuth, becoming the first male African American artist to appear at the Festival. The newly minted Wagnerian, who had performed in *La Bohème*, *Aida*, and other works with San Francisco Opera since 1967, brought his acclaimed portrayal of the Dutchman to San Francisco in 1979 and King Marke the following season. As Marke, Estes "... invested the monologue of the betrayed monarch with rolling bel-canto tones, even in scale, poignant in inflection, sympathetic in expression" (*Los Angeles Times*).

2006: An unforgettable fairy-tale presentation

Former San Francisco Opera Music Director Donald Runnicles has led many of Wagner's music dramas in the War Memorial Opera House, including *Tristan* in 1998 and 2006. Maestro Runnicles' conducting of the latter, presented in David Hockney's fairy-tale production, prompted Georgia Rowe of the *Oakland Tribune* to say "... the vitality, the expansiveness, the lush Romanticism of his approach Thursday amounted to something truly unforgettable." The Isolde of soprano Christine Brewer, a frequent Runnicles collaborator, impressed the *Chronicle's* Joshua Kosman: "she sounded as fresh and tireless in the concluding 'Liebestod' as she had in the extended narrative of Act I."

2024: *Tristan* sails back into the Bay Area

This season, Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim leads her first performances of *Tristan und Isolde* in the new-to-San Francisco Opera production by director Paul Curran. Anja Kampe, who made her Company debut as Sieglinde in the 2011 *Ring* cycle, is Isolde and

renowned heldentenor Simon O'Neill takes on Tristan, Kwangchul Youn is the King, and Wolfgang Koch and Annika Schlicht make their Company debuts as Kurwenal and Brangäne, respectively. 🌟

Public Relations Director Jeffery S. McMillan is a writer on opera and jazz. He is the author of *Delightfulee: The Life and Music of Lee Morgan* and a repeat guest on the *Metropolitan Opera's* broadcast *Opera Quiz*.



Artist, educator, and activist Simon Estes, who was San Francisco Opera's King Marke in 1980, was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor, in 2023. / KRISTEN LOKEN

Artist Profiles

American Debut * San Francisco Opera Debut † Role Debut ‡ Current Adler Fellow ◆ Merola and Adler Fellowship Graduate + Merola Opera Program Graduate



EUN SUN KIM
(Seoul, South Korea)
Caroline H. Hume
Music Director of San Francisco Opera
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Rusalka*;

Fidelio; *Tosca*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Madame Butterfly*; *Il Trovatore*; *Lohengrin*; *The Magic Flute*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Homecoming Concert*; *Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi*; *The Future Is Now: Adler Fellows Concert*; *Opera Ball*; *Opera in the Park*; *100th Anniversary Concert*

Recent and Upcoming: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (San Francisco Opera); *Idomeneo* (San Francisco); *Tosca* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera); *Simon Boccanegra* (Berlin State Opera); *La Bohème* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris Opera); Verdi Requiem (Dutch National Opera); *Carmen* (Zurich Opera); *Hänsel und Gretel* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); concerts with Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, Berlin Philharmonic, Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Seoul Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, National Brass Ensemble
Instagram: @eskconductor



ANJA KAMPE
Soprano
(Munich, Germany)
Isolde
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Sieglinde in *Die Walküre*

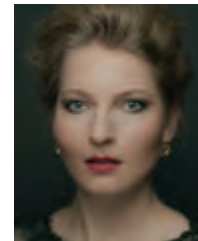
Recent and Upcoming: *Isolde in Tristan und Isolde* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Berlin State Opera, Dresden Philharmonic, Monte-Carlo); Brünnhilde in the *Ring* cycle (Berlin, Vienna State Opera); Kundry in *Parsifal* (Vienna, Paris Opera); Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* (Bayreuth, Munich, Berlin, London); Minnie in *La Fanciulla del West* (Munich, Berlin); Marie in *Wozzeck* (Vienna); Brünnhilde in *Die Walküre* (Sydney Symphony Orchestra); title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Hamburg State Opera); Ortrud in *Lohengrin* (Semperoper Dresden, Vienna, Munich); Giorgetta in *Il Trittico* (Vienna); Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Metropolitan Opera, Vienna, Munich, Dresden, Dallas); Leonore in *Fidelio* (Vienna, Munich, Zurich)



SIMON O'NEILL+
Tenor
(Auckland, New Zealand)
Tristan
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Title role

of *Lohengrin*
Recent and Upcoming: *Tristan und Isolde* (Hamburg State Opera, Santa Fe Opera); Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder* (NDR Hamburg, Sydney Symphony Orchestra); title role of *Siegfried* (Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Basel Symphony Orchestra); Loge in *Das Rheingold* (Paris Opera); Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (Strasbourg, Düsseldorf); title role of *Parsifal* (Paris,

Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Florestan in *Fidelio* (Sydney); Boris in *Katya Kabanova* (London Symphony Orchestra); Der Kaiser in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Berlin State Opera)
Merola Opera Program: 2002



ANNIKA SCHLICHT#
Mezzo-Soprano
(Berlin, Germany)
Brangäne
Recent and Upcoming:

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (San Francisco Opera, Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin, Brussels Philharmonic); *Brangäne in Tristan and Isolde* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); Adriano in Wagner's *Rienzi* (Berlin); Fricka in the *Ring* cycle (Berlin, Stuttgart State Opera, Bregenz, Ravello Festival, Cologne Philharmonic, KKL Luzern); Waltraute in the *Ring* cycle (Berlin); Magdalene in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Berlin, Frankfurt Opera); Fenena in *Nabucco* (Berlin); Mrs. Quickly in *Falstaff* (Berlin, Hamburg State Opera); Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* (Berlin); title role of *Carmen* (Berlin); Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel* (Berlin, Royal Opera House Muscat); Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito* (Bergen National Opera); Page of Herodias in *Salome* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Berlin State Opera); Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (Austria, Santa Fe); Mahler's Third Symphony (Dresdner Philharmonie); Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Edinburgh Festival); Igor Kuljerić's *Croatian Glagolitic Requiem* (Munich, Zagreb); Verdi Requiem (Berlin); Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* (Berlin); Claude Vivier's *Wo Bist Du Licht* with Klangforum Wien (Salzburg Festival)
Ensemble member of Deutsche Oper Berlin

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



KWANGCHUL YOUN
 Bass
 (Seoul, South Korea)
King Marke
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Sarastro
 in *The Magic Flute*

Recent and Upcoming: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (San Francisco Opera); Fasolt in *Das Rheingold* (Paris Opera); Fafner and Hunding in the *Ring* cycle (Vienna State Opera); Gurnemanz in *Parsifal* (Hamburg State Opera, Paris, Vienna); King Heinrich in *Lohengrin* (Paris); Comte des Grieux in *Manon* (Metropolitan Opera); Abimélech in *Samson et Dalila* (Berlin State Opera); Ramfis in *Aida* (Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); Daland in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Hamburg); Landgraf Hermann in *Tannhäuser* (Hamburg)



WOLFGANG KOCH*
 Baritone
 (Vienna, Austria)
Kurwenal
Recent and Upcoming:
 Borromeo in Hans

Pfitzner's *Palestrina* (Vienna State Opera); Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Tonio in *Pagliacci* (Munich); Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Munich); Telramund in *Lohengrin* (Munich); Wotan and the Wanderer in the *Ring* cycle (Munich); Hans Sachs in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Munich); Klingsor in *Parsifal* (Munich); Scarpia in *Tosca* (Metropolitan Opera); title role of *Falstaff* (Vienna, Munich); title role of Dallapiccola's *Il Prigioniero* (Berlin Philharmonic); Barak in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Vienna, Baden-Baden, Berlin, Munich, Hamburg); Michele in *Il Trittico* (Munich); title role of von Einem's *Dantons Tod* (Vienna)



CHRISTOPHER OGLESBY
 Tenor
 (Woodstock, Georgia)
A Shepherd/A Sailor
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Dancaïro

in *Carmen*; Benvolio in *Romeo and Juliet*; Edmondo in *Manon Lescaut*; Jaquino in *Fidelio*; First Commissioner in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; Chief Magistrate in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Luke in Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*
Recent and Upcoming: Dancaïro in *Carmen* (San Francisco Opera); Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* (Calgary Opera); Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (Utah Opera, Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera); Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Sarasota Opera); Puccini concert (Sarasota); Lt. B.F. Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* (Grand Teton Music Festival, Sarasota)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2019, 2020, 2021
 Merola Opera Program: 2018



THOMAS KINCH
 Tenor
 (Cardiff, Wales)
Melot
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: First

Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*; Amelia's Servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*

Recent and Upcoming: Don José in *Carmen* (Nov 26) and *Carmen Encounter* (San Francisco Opera); title role of *Otello* Act II (Merola); Macduff in *Macbeth* (Paisley Opera); Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Paisley Opera, Sri Lanka, Iford Arts); Licinio in Gaspare Spontini's *La Vestale* (Teatro Grattacielo); First Armored Man in *The Magic Flute* (Welsh National Opera); Canio in *Pagliacci* (Iford Arts); Lt. B.F. Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* (Opera Bohemia, Opera Up Close)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2024
 Merola Opera Program: 2023



SAMUEL KIDD
 Baritone
 (Ann Arbor, Michigan)
A Steersman
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Cristiano

in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Marcello in *Bohème Out of the Box*

Recent and Upcoming: Moralès in *Carmen* and *Carmen Encounter* (San Francisco Opera); Tarquinius in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola, Yale Opera); Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Yale); title role of *Eugene Onegin* (Music Academy of the West); "Perennials" concert (New York Festival of Song); Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder* (Cincinnati Song Initiative)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2024
 Merola Opera Program: 2023

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



PAUL CURRAN*
(Glasgow, Scotland)
Director
Recent and Upcoming: *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Venice's La Fenice, Bologna's

Teatro Comunale); Euripides' *Fedra* (Siracusa's National Institute of Ancient Drama); *Turandot* (Bari's Teatro Petruzzelli); *The Golden Cockerel* (Santa Fe Opera, Dallas Opera); *The Queen of Spades* (Grange Festival); *Tosca* (Canadian Opera Company); *The Bartered Bride* (Garsington Opera); *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Bologna, Florence's Maggio Musicale Fiorentino); *Peter Grimes* (Venice); *Carmen* (Opera Philadelphia, Irish National Opera, Seattle Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Grange Festival); *My Fair Lady* (Naples' Teatro di San Carlo, Palermo's Teatro Massimo); *Iolanta* (Chicago Opera Theater); *Il Trovatore* (Turin's Teatro Regio); *La Traviata* (Philadelphia)
Instagram: @paulcurranopera
Website: paulcurrandirector.com



ROBERT INNES HOPKINS
(London, UK)
Production Designer
San Francisco Opera Highlights:
Production Designer

of *Tosca*, *Lohengrin*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *La Traviata*, *The Elixir of Love*; Set Designer of *L'italiana in Algeri*
Recent and Upcoming: *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Bologna's Teatro Comunale); *1923* (Istanbul's Zorlu Performing Arts); *Orfeo ed Euridice/Dido and Aeneas* (Grange Festival); *All's Well That Ends Well* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Tamerlano* (Grange Festival); *Die Fledermaus* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis); the *Ring* cycle (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *War and Peace* (Welsh National Opera);

L'italiana in Algeri (Santa Fe Opera); Handel's *Belshazzar* (Grange Festival); *Casino Royale* (Secret Cinema London and Shanghai); *Solar* (Linz Klangwolke, Austria)



DAVID MARTIN JACQUES*
(Long Beach, California)
Lighting Designer
Recent and Upcoming: *Carmen*

(Music Academy of the West); Uljas Pulkkis and Glenda D. Goss' *All the Truths We Cannot See* (Helsinki's Sibelius Academy); *Tosca* (Canadian Opera Company); *My Fair Lady* (Naples' Teatro di San Carlo, Palermo's Teatro Massimo); *Rigoletto* (Central City Opera); *Die Zauberflöte* (Central City Opera); Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* (Chicago Opera Theater); *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Florence's Maggio Musicale Fiorentino) Light Talk with The Lumen Brothers podcast
Professor Emeritus at California State University Long Beach



JOHN KEENE
(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
Chorus Director
San Francisco Opera Highlights: *Don Giovanni*; Bright

Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eugene Onegin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Orpheus and Eurydice*; *Madame Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *100th Anniversary Concert*; *Il Trovatore*; Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; *Lohengrin*;

Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *The Elixir of Love*; *The Magic Flute*; Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Recent and Upcoming: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; *Carmen*; *La Bohème*; *Idomeneo*
Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and San Francisco Conservatory of Music Voice Concerto Competition judge
Instagram: @keenejohn



DAVE MAIER
(El Cerrito, California)
Fight Director
San Francisco Opera Highlights:

Il Trovatore; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Carmen*; *Tosca*; the *Ring* cycle; *Pagliacci*; *Rigoletto*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Billy Budd*
Recent and Upcoming: *Rigoletto* (Opera San José); *1984* (Aurora Theatre Co.); *Misery* (Palo Alto Players); *As You Like It* (Cal Shakes); *Of Mice and Men* (Livermore Valley Opera); *The Untime* (Marin Shakespeare); *Private Lives* (Arizona Theatre Co.)

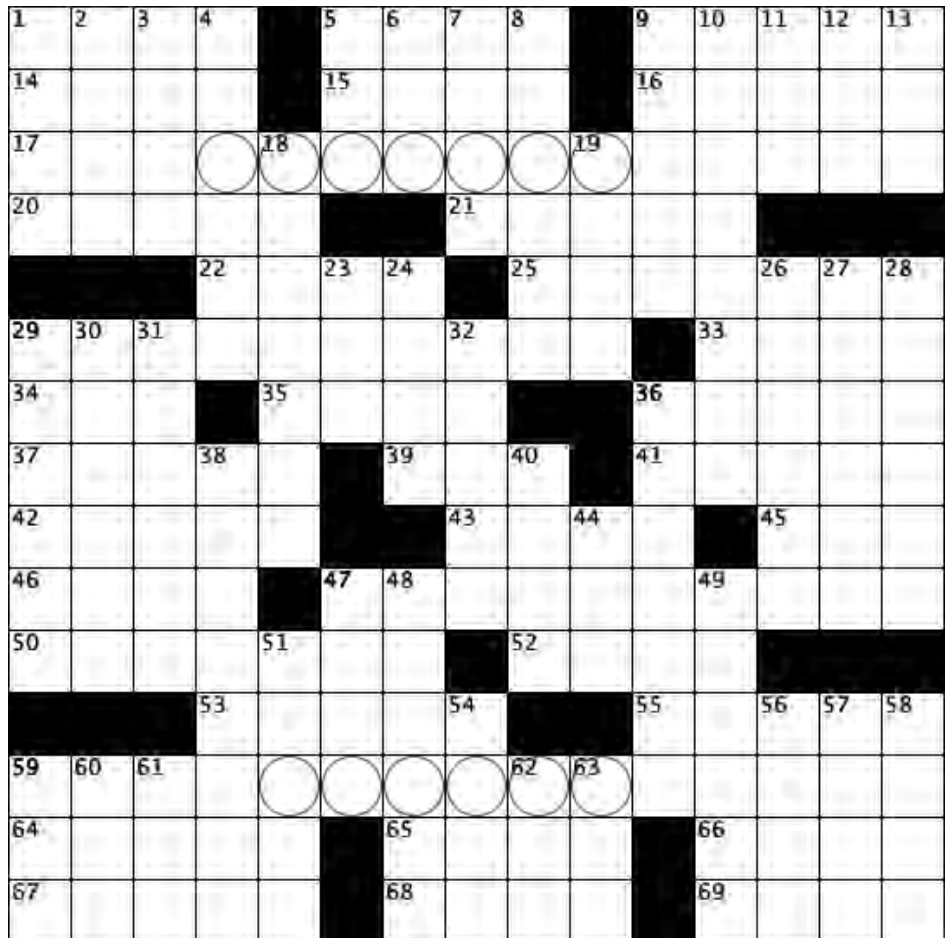
ACROSS

- 1 Showed up
- 5 Kitchen potentate
- 9 Resell tickets at a profit
- 14 Members of a farm team?
- 15 Storyteller?
- 16 Mistake
- 17 Unease over the strength of political extremes?
- 20 Musical number from long ago
- 21 Animal's nose
- 22 Setting for Puccini's *Tosca*
- 25 Machines found in many offices
- 29 With 47-Across, pertinent 1959 single by The Clovers
- 33 Stick in one's ___
- 34 Organization for lawyers
- 35 Vast expanses of time
- 36 Bamboo eater
- 37 Put on the air again
- 39 Mont Blanc, for one
- 41 Late French film star Delon
- 42 Cracks a smile
- 43 German car company
- 45 Dundee denial
- 46 Summers on the Riviera
- 47 See 29-Across

- 50 Flower part used to make tea
- 52 Oxford or brogue
- 53 Colorful aquarium resident
- 55 Deceptive practice
- 59 Protection against a stress hormone?
- 64 Eurasian mountain range
- 65 Helpful phrase for a speller
- 66 Something that counts toward a checkout lane limit
- 67 Give birth to, biblically speaking
- 68 Hitchcock film of 1948
- 69 Title character in a Purcell opera

DOWN

- 1 Pixar feature set during Día de los Muertos
- 2 Figure skater's jump
- 3 Get better
- 4 Total
- 5 151, to Cicero



- 6 Belonging to that guy
- 7 Grub
- 8 Tenor Corelli
- 9 Make spicier?
- 10 Of key importance
- 11 "We ___ the World"
- 12 Piece of real estate
- 13 Ask too many questions
- 18 Gets back into business
- 19 Midday
- 23 Express a desire to be milked, perhaps
- 24 Sicilian volcano
- 26 Verdi opera of 1844
- 27 Unit of angular measure
- 28 River of song
- 29 More sizable
- 30 Verdi opera of 1839
- 31 Differs
- 32 Faith centered on the Quran

- 36 Divide into couples
- 38 Disturb
- 40 Drinking establishments
- 44 "___ vieni, non tardar" (aria from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*)
- 47 Minor complaints
- 48 Outcry
- 49 Sea nymph of Greek mythology
- 51 Bank job
- 54 To boot
- 56 Opposed
- 57 Previously owned
- 58 Trial version, as for software
- 59 Young reporter
- 60 Mined material
- 61 Scott Joplin composition
- 62 A quick swim
- 63 Compass point opposite WSW

See the solution on page 45



JOIN EUN SUN KIM FOR
*A Journey
Into
Lohengrin*

BY ELENA PARK

Starting October 9, the new San Francisco Opera/Lumahai Productions film, directed by Elena Park, is available at sfopera.com and on YouTube. Broadcast on KOED 9 on November 1 at 8 pm.

“A conductor never produces any sound,” observes San Francisco Opera Music Director Eun Sun Kim. “We just wave our arms, but the sound is coming from the orchestra or from the singers. It’s all about letting them play, inviting them to play.”



FILM STILL BY STEVEN E. MALLORCA

So opens *Eun Sun Kim: A Journey Into Lohengrin*, a film that takes viewers behind the scenes as San Francisco Opera prepared for David Alden’s riveting production of *Lohengrin* last October. As the puzzle pieces of this epic work start to come together, the film provides unusual access to the rigorous and pressure-filled process, from intimate coaching sessions, challenging rehearsals, and frank dressing room conversations—and even literal nooks and crannies around the Opera House where musicians are stationed during the performance (see *Banda* section).

At the center of the complexity is Maestro Eun Sun Kim. She recounts past experiences that have readied her for this new undertaking, and we follow her collaborations with opera stars, musicians, and production teams, who share their insights as well. We hope that this San Francisco Opera/Lumahai Productions film illuminates what it takes for a company to pull off a remarkable feat like *Lohengrin*, and that it captures the dedication and passion of hundreds of people in the pursuit of something transcendent.

ELSA ON HER LOHENGRIN

The new production of *Lohengrin* featured a constellation of formidable singers—some very familiar with their roles (tenor Simon O’Neill and bass Kristinn Sigmundsson) and others taking on their parts for the first time (soprano Julie Adams, mezzo-soprano Judit Kutasi, and baritone Brian Mulligan). Sharing that she had sung for Simon in a master class during her Adler Fellow years, Adams said, “I have to admit, when I saw that he was the Lohengrin, I was very starstruck. I was like, wow!... There are so many scenes that are so difficult musically and singing wise. And every time I look at him, he’s just grounded, and he’s calm, and he’s always whispering in my ear, ‘Great job. You’re singing great.’”

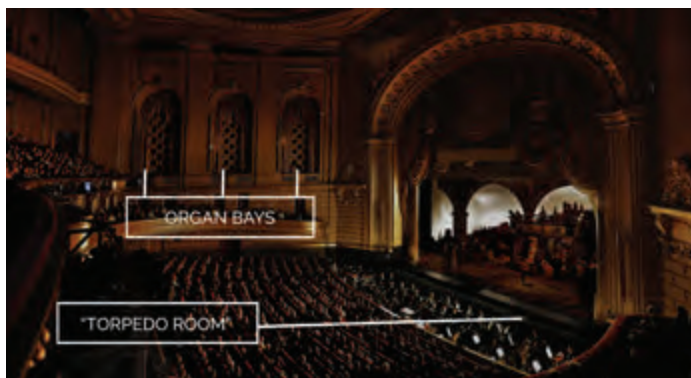


ON THE VULCAN MIND MELD

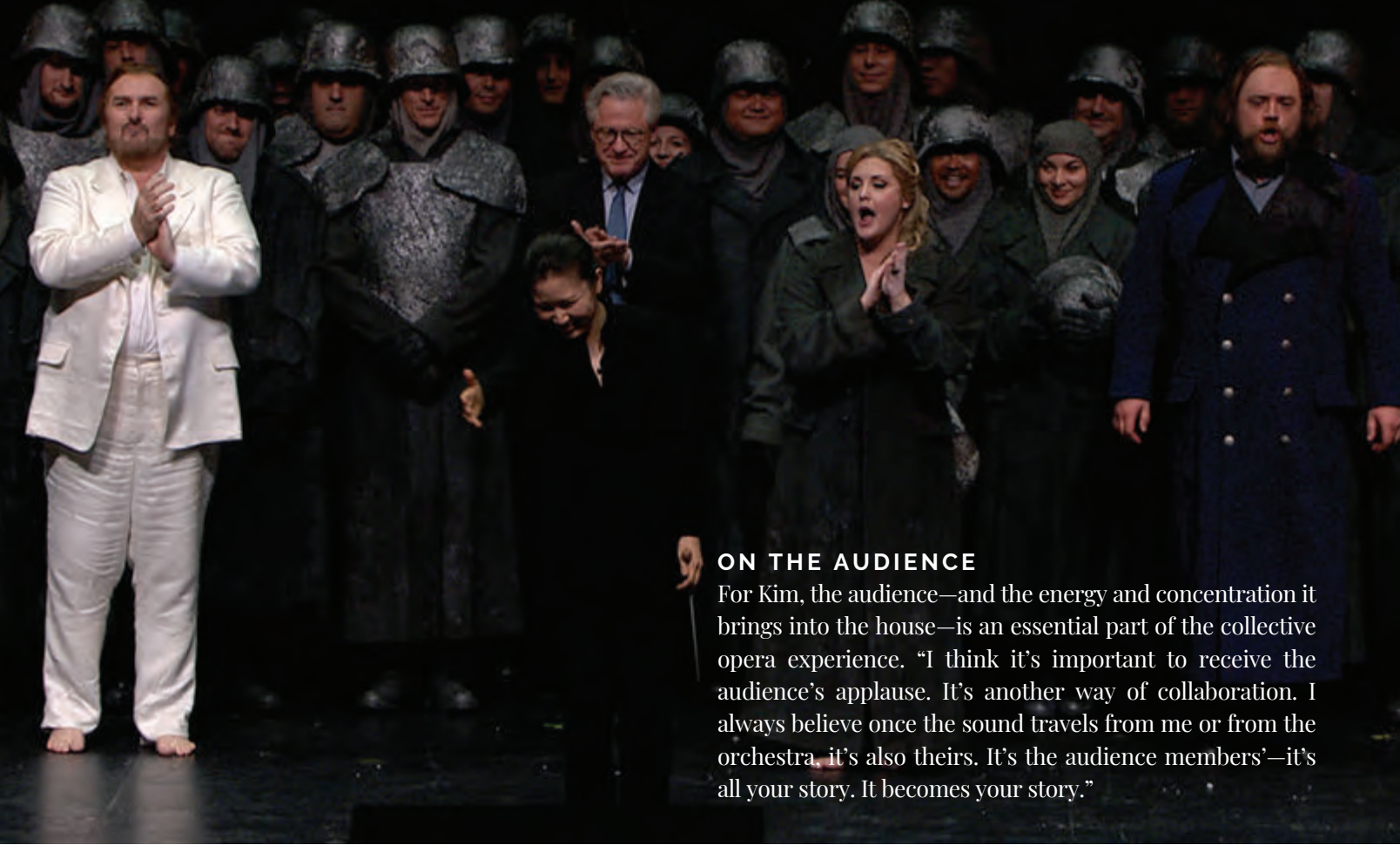
“A total unspoken conversation is happening constantly,” says Olivier, “The Vulcan mind meld is going on all over the orchestra, you know, Star Trek and Spock. It’s like we have each other’s hands on each other’s brains.” Principal French Horn Kevin Rivard agrees: “Like the schools of fish in the ocean that just move perfectly together, the more time that we spend together, I feel like the Orchestra and Eun Sun and the Chorus get that kind of connection.” Added Associate Principal Oboe Gabriel Young, “On any given night, any little thing could change—a different breathing spot, a different tempo, taken by a new singer, or anything could happen that would cause us to be on high alert. And generally, when that happens, the eyes go up to the conductor.”

ON THE BRAVURA BANDA

The film takes you into unseen corners of the Opera House where the trumpets are placed in order to achieve the composer’s artistic demands. “Wagner created a surround sound type of soundscape so that you really feel in the middle of that music,” explains Head of Music Staff John Churchwell. “We have musicians essentially playing in four different locations. They’re spaced far apart from each other; they’re all trying to kind of lock into the same pulse. So I would say, in the history of *Lohengrin*, probably the number of times this music really sails off without a hitch are few and far between because it is so fiendishly difficult.” Principal Bassoon Rufus Olivier relishes those moments each and every time: “I’m sitting there thinking, you know, is that train going to come off the rails? Are the trumpets on the left getting a little ahead of the trumpets on the right? She’s controlling all of that, and I’m just sitting there thinking, what’s going to happen tonight?”



CORY WEAVER



ON THE AUDIENCE

For Kim, the audience—and the energy and concentration it brings into the house—is an essential part of the collective opera experience. “I think it’s important to receive the audience’s applause. It’s another way of collaboration. I always believe once the sound travels from me or from the orchestra, it’s also theirs. It’s the audience members’—it’s all your story. It becomes your story.”

ON RUSALKA (2019)

When Eun Sun made her debut with the orchestra leading *Rusalka* in June 2019, she was unaware that the Company was searching for a new music director. But that vacancy was top of mind for some of the musicians. Rufus Olivier recalls, “When she showed up for *Rusalka*, I said we should hire her, that’s the one! That’s what I was thinking while we were playing. I wrote an anonymous letter to management—and then signed it!”

“She came, and the most glorious sounds came out. She offers this particular, I think, translucency to the score, a kind of inner light that comes from within and from above that’s just so beautiful. And she, more than anybody, has this ability to get that quality of sound.”—SHINJI ESHIMA, DOUBLE BASS

The Future Is Now: Adler Fellows in Concert



Join us for an exciting night of unforgettable music featuring conductor Benjamin Manis and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra with San Francisco Opera's resident artists in their final concert of the year. Discover the next great opera singers—in a unique concert event you can't see anywhere else.

Friday, November 15, 2024
7:30 PM

Herbst Theatre

401 Van Ness Avenue

Tickets: (415) 864-3330

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of Northern California

Join us to learn about the life and work of Richard Wagner (and his contemporaries) with insights from historians and scholars, and enjoy performances with world-renowned musicians, singers, conductors, and directors.

The Society sponsors monthly educational programs and social events, publishes the *Leitmotive* journal, funds scholarships for aspiring Wagnerian singers, and provides members with priority ticket access to the annual Bayreuth Festival in Germany.

Francesca Zambello on Directing Wagner

Monday, Oct 28 @ 7:00pm • War Memorial Veterans Building

Director of both the 2011 and 2018 San Francisco *Ring* cycles, Zambello will explore the intricacies of rehearsing Wagner operas, and preview her new staging of *Tannhäuser* at the Houston Grand Opera next year.

Free to the public.

Visit www.wagnersf.org to learn more and register.

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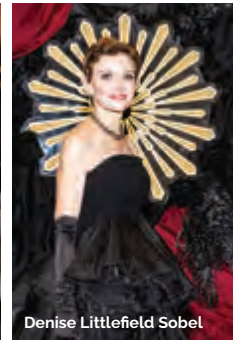
John Keene and the San Francisco Opera Chorus



Richard Elmore, Nancy Mueller, Matthew Shilvock



Eun Sun Kim, Priscilla Geeslin



Denise Littlefield Sobel



Maria Manetti Shrem, Michael Fabiano



Opera Ball co-chair Romana D. Bracco, Barbara A. Wolfe, Opera Ball co-chair Valerie Crane Dorfman

OPERA BALL 2024

A MASKED BALL

San Francisco Opera celebrated the opening of its 102nd season with *A Masked Ball*, co-presented by San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild. This philanthropic event, co-chaired by Romana D. Bracco and Valerie Crane Dorfman, was dedicated to John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn for their extraordinary devotion to San Francisco Opera through their unparalleled generosity and board leadership. After a reception and dinner at City Hall, guests proceeded to the War Memorial Opera House for Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* under the baton of Music Director Eun Sun Kim. After the performance, the Ball continued at City Hall with an after-party of drinks and dancing.



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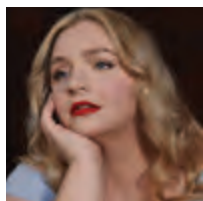
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Doug Mitchell,

Head of Audio/Video

Ziggy Tomcich,

Assistant Head of Audio/Video

CARPENTRY

David Hatch, *Head of Carpentry*

Greg Harsha, *Assistant Head of Carpentry*

Christopher Davis, *Wilsey Center Head*

COSTUME DEPARTMENT

Daniele McCartan, *Costume Director**

Jai Alltizer, *Costume Shop Manager*

Charlotte Brockman, *Production Accountant*

Galen Till, *Senior Production Supervisor*

ELECTRICS

Leon Parsons, *Head of Electrics*

Michael Anderson,

Assistant Head of Electrics

Russell E. Adamson III,

Lighting and Projection Systems Administrator

FIGHT DIRECTION

Dave Maier, *Fight Director*

LIGHTING

Justin Partier, *Lighting Director**

Daniel Friedman, **David Tkach**,

Assistant Lighting Designers

Erin Riley, *Lighting Intern*

Madeleine Hebert, *Hemsley Lighting Intern*

MEDIA

Jodi Gage, *Media Producer*

PROPERTIES

Lori Harrison, *Head of Properties*

Frederick Wielandt, *Assistant Head of Properties*

REHEARSAL

Marin Venturi, *Rehearsal Department Director**

Savannah Criswell,

Rehearsal Department Manager & Scheduling

Liz R. Ray,

Rehearsal Department Administrative Coordinator

Jacob D. Zdunich,

Rehearsal Department Personnel Associate

Liv Field, **Rosie Burns Pavlik**,

Rehearsal Department Assistants

SCENE SHOP

John Del Bono, *Scene Shop Foreperson*

Steve McNally, *Scenic Artist in Charge*

STAGING STAFF

Darin Burnett,

*Production Stage Manager**

Darin Burnett, **Jennifer Harber**,

Jayme O'Hara, **Thea Railey**,

Stage Managers

Jose Maria Condemini, **E. Reed Fisher**,

Roy Rallo, **Morgan Robinson**,

Assistant Stage Directors

Collette Berg, **Jonathan S. Campbell**,

Megan Coutts, **Jennifer Harber**, **Jayme O'Hara**,

Thea Railey, **Anna Reetz**,

Assistant Stage Managers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

TECHNICAL DIRECTION

Erik Walstad, *Technical and Safety Director**

Ryan O'Steen, *Production Manager**

Scott Cavallo, *Assistant Technical Director*

Lawren Gregory, *Assistant Technical Director*

WARDROBE

Tony Gorzycki, *Head of Wardrobe*

Cynthia Fusco, **Carol Horaitis**,

Robert Horek, **David McKain**,

Wardrobe Assistants

WIG, HAIR, & MAKEUP

Jeanna Parham,

Department Head of Wigs, Hair, and Makeup

Christina Martin,

Assistant Department Head of

Wigs, Hair, and Makeup

Dr. Myron Marx, *Company Medical Adviser*

Seyfarth Shaw LLP, *Counsel*

Armano LLP, *Independent Public Accountants*

UCSF doctors:

Dr. George Rutherford

Dr. Robert Harrison

Dr. Sanziana Roman

Asero Insurance Services, *Insurance Brokers*

Cory Weaver, *Official Photographer*

Yamaha is the Official Piano of San Francisco Opera

Pianos supplied by Piedmont Piano

2024-25 Artists

PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Georgiana Adams†+
 Louise Alder#
 Lindsay Ammann*
 Jamie Barton
 Gabrielle Beteag∅
 Aleksey Bogdanov+
 Alex Boyer+
 Sarah Cambidge∅
 Nicole Car
 Andrea Carroll*
 Neal Cooper
 Caroline Corrales*†+
 Sara Couden*
 Matthew DiBattista*
 Amartuvshin Enkhbat*
 Michael Fabiano
 Ying Fang*
 Katrina Galka*
 Blanche Hampton■
 Jongwon Han†
 Lianna Haroutounian
 Karen Chia-ling Ho+
 Jennifer Holloway
 Eve-Maud Hubeaux#
 Evan LeRoy Johnson
 Rhoslyn Jones∅
 Alisa Jordheim+
 Anja Kampe
 Samuel Kidd*†+
 Thomas Kinch†+
 Wolfgang Koch*
 Laura Krumm∅
 Judit Kutasi
 Adam Lau+
 Will Liverman*
 Daniela Mack∅
 James McCarthy†+
 Simone McIntosh∅
 Lucas Meachem∅
 Rebecca Nash
 Christopher Oglesby∅
 Simon O'Neill+
 Toni Marie Palmertree∅
 Pene Pati∅
 Matthew Polenzani
 Nikola Printz†+
 John Relyea∅
 Brittany Renee

Irene Roberts
 Arianna Rodriguez†+
 Brenton Ryan
 Alexandra Sanchez
 Annika Schlicht#
 Alek Shrader∅
 Chiharu Shibata■
 Philip Skinner∅
 Olivia Smith†+
 Bogdan Talos#
 Jonathan Tetelman
 Russell Thomas
 Elza van den Heever∅
 Christian Van Horn
 Kwangchul Youn
 Mei Gui Zhang+

CONDUCTORS

Karen Kamensek
 Eun Sun Kim
 Benjamin Manis*
 Ramón Tebar

PRODUCTION

John Caird
 John Fulljames*
 Francesca Zambello

STAGE DIRECTORS

Lucy Bradley#
 Anna Maria Bruzzone*
 Katherine M. Carter*
 Paul Curran
 Lindy Hume*
 Leo Muscato*

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Anna Maria Bruzzone*
 Colm Seery

KEY:

American Debut
 * San Francisco Opera Debut
 † Current Adler Fellow
 ∅ Adler Fellow Graduate
 ◇ Merola and Adler Fellowship Graduate
 + Merola Opera Program Graduate
 ■ Solo Dancer
 Cover Artist

Chorus

John Keene, Chorus Director
 Fabrizio Corona, Associate Chorus Master

REGULAR CHORUS

Nadima Avakian	Crystal Kim∅
Buffy Baggott†	Bojan Knežević
Kathleen Bayler	Elisabeth Rom Lucio
C. Michael Belle	Liesl McPherrin
William Lee Bryan	Angela Eden Moser
Cheryl Cain	Sally Mouzon
Janet Campbell	Sarah Nadreau∅
Danielle Cheiken	Antonio Nagore
Alan Cochran	Erin Neff
Sara Colburn	William O'Neill∅
Clare Demer	Andrew Thomas Pardini
Edith Dowd∅	Rachelle Perry
Anders Fröhlich	Phillip Pickens
John Fulton	William Pickersgill†
Kevin Gino∅	Chester Pidduck∅
Patrick J. Hagen	Laurel Cameron Porter
Stella Hannock	Samuel Rabinowitz
Harlan Hays	Jonathan Smucker
Daniel Harper†	Whitney Steele∅
Christopher Jackson	Jesslyn Thomas∅
Michael Jankosky∅	Jere Torkelsen
Silvie Jensen∅	Andrew Truett
Wilford Kelly∅	Jacque Wilson∅
Claire Kelm†	

EXTRA CHORUS

Morgan Balfour	Eileen Meredith
Jenn Brody	Courtney Miller∅
Katie Carlson Cartwright	Thalia Moore
Spencer Dodd	Julia Mutholland
Mélissa Dufort	Alexander Perkins
Jessica Elisabeth	Valery Portnov
Stephanie Feigenbaum	Leandra Ramm
Margaret Genovese	Mary Rauh∅
Glenn Healy	Clifton Romig
Matt Hidalgo	Chung-Wai Soong
Nina Jones	Alexander Taite
Celestí'anna Jordan	Nicole Takesono
David Kekuewa	Paul Thompson
Megan Kellogg	Sydnee Turrentine-Johnson
Eric Levintow	Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst
Benjamin Liupaogo	Nicholas Volkert
Matthew Lovell	Jack Wilkins
Joachim Luis	Daniel Yoder
Zachary Martin	

∇ Chorus member on leave of absence
 ∅ Solo Role

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 American Guild of Musical Artists, Inc.
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The Art Directors Guild & Scenic, Title and Graphic Artists Local 800

United Scenic Artists Local Usa – 829, I.A.T.S.E.
 Box Office and Front of House Employees Union,
 Local B-18



Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

FIRST VIOLIN

Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*
Maya Cohon, *Associate Concertmaster*Σ
Heidi Wilcox,
Assistant Concertmaster
Jennifer Cho
Dawn Harms
Mariya Borozina
Naoko Nakajima
Barbara Riccardi
Dian Zhang
Leonid Igudesman
Jennifer Hsieh
Asuka Annie Yano

SECOND VIOLIN

Jeremy Preston, *Principal*
Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*
Beni Shinohara, *Assistant Principal*
Leslie Ludena
Ka-Yeon Lee
Aya Kiyonaga
Craig Reiss
Heeguen Song↑

VIOLA

Carla Maria Rodrigues, *Principal*
Joy Fellows, *Associate Principal*Σ
Patricia Heller, *Acting Assistant Principal*
Stephen Goist, *Acting Assistant Principal*
Natalia Vershilova
Lindan Burns
Emily Liu↑
Elizabeth Prior↑

CELLO

Evan Kahn, *Principal*
Thalia Moore, *Associate Principal*
Peter Myers, *Assistant Principal*
Nora Pirquet
Emil Miland
Jung-Hsuan Ko
Ruth Lane

BASS

Joseph Lescher, *Principal*
Jonathan Lancelle,
Associate Principal
William Wasson,
Acting Assistant Principal
Shinji Eshima
Evan Hillis↑

FLUTE

Julie McKenzie, *Principal*
Susan KangΣ↑
Stephanie McNabΣ
Michelle Caimotto↑

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab
Katrina WalterΦ

OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*
Gabriel Young, *Associate Principal*Σ
Benjamin Brogadir
Wentao Jiang↑

ENGLISH HORN

Benjamin Brogadir

CLARINET

José González Granero, *Principal*
Sergio CoehloΣ↑
Junghwan Lee↑

BASS CLARINET

Junghwan Lee↑

BASSOON

Rufus Olivier, *Principal*
Daniel MacNeillΣ
Shawn Jones↑

CONTRABASSOON

Shawn Jones↑

FRENCH HORN

Kevin Rivard, *Principal*
Keith Green
Brian McCarty, *Associate Principal*
Logan Bryck↑
Meredith Brown↑
Phillip Palmore↑

TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*
Scott Macomber↑
John PearsonΣ

TROMBONE

Michael Cox, *Acting Principal*
Jeffrey Budin↑
David Ridge

BASS TROMBONE

David Ridge, *Principal*

TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman, *Principal*

TIMPANI

John Burgardt, *Principal*

PERCUSSION

Patricia Niemi, *Acting Principal*
Victor Avdienko↑
McKenzie LangefeldΦ

HARP

Annabelle Taubl↑, *Acting Principal*

LIBRARIAN

Carrie Weick

√ Leave of absence

Σ Principal for one or more

Summer season operas

↑ Season Substitute

Φ Substitute for Beethoven's Ninth

Corps Dancers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

Vincent Chavez□
Brett Conway↔
Jamielyn Duggan↔
Blanche Hampton↔■
Zaria Jackson□
Bryan Ketron/
Felipe León□
Rachel Speidel Little/
Coral Martin□
Micah Moch□
Christopher Nachtrab↔

Jekyns Pelaez/
Chiharu Shibata↔
Marcos Vedovetto↔

↔ Tenured
√ Tenured Dancer
on Leave of Absence
□ Resident Corps
■ Solo Role

Supernumeraries

Tristan and Isolde

Eric Corcoran
Alan LoFaso
Michael Pinell
Pedram Razavi
Ross Uchimura

Backstage Personnel

COSTUME SHOP

Jai Alltizer (24), *Costume Shop Manager*
Galen Till (20),

Senior Production Supervisor
Manuel Gutierrez (25),

Production Coordinator
Sally Thomas (24), *Master Tailor*
Amy Ashton-Keller (30), *Master Draper*
Barbara Ebel (16), *Senior Draper*
Santiago Suanes (14), *Men's Draper*
Nika Cassaro, *Draper*
Paula Wheeler (32), *Senior Milliner*
Amy Van Every (40), *Senior Dyer*
Jersey McDermott (25),

Senior Craftsperson/Shoe Specialist
Emma Lehman, Kristen Tracy (16),
Kaitlyn Patrick, *Assistant Cutters*
Yui Takenouchi, Taylor Newell,
First Hand
Robyn Marsh, Victoria Mortimer,
Costume Assistants
Teddy Rose Baker,
Junior Workroom Assistant

COSTUME TECHNICIANS

Karla Fix, Hoa Fong (25),
Gillian Haratani (12),
Aki Hasegawa, Jaya Grace Goheen,
Ashley Grambow, Kathy Griffith,
Meg Horan, Amanda Mitchell,
Sara Morimoto (11), Mikael Nohai,
Hannah Velichko, Sarah Ellen Wilson,
Robert Whitehurst

WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

CORE CREW

Linda Edwards (26)
Edward Fonseca (13)
Lorraine Lewis (12)
Emma Mueller
Phil Perry (27)
Patrick Sanchez (15)
Leona Schrader-Dee
Don Smith (28)
Scott Stewart (24)
Kirsten Tucker (21)

DRESSERS

Tiffany Amundson, Paula Barish,
Kathleen Blake (12), Ash Cable,
Nicolas Chacon, George Elvin,
Aki Hasegawa, Claudia Holaday (45),
Ralph Hoy, Michael Kruzich,
Jeffery Larsen, Jennifer Long,
Demetrius Martin, Rachell Nichols,
Nadia Salameh, Christina Sogliuzzo,
Aureoles Stetzel, Grisel Torres,
Amber Vo

WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP DEPARTMENT

SENIOR WIG ARTISTS

Erin Hennessy (11)
Maur Sela

WIG ARTISTS

Calli Carvajal
Lindsay Saier

SHOW CALL FOREPERSONS

Calli Carvajal, Sarah Coy,
Christina Martin (12), Y. Sharon Peng,
Tim Santry (33)

PRINCIPAL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Melanie Birch (37), Calli Carvajal,
Sarah Coy, Marisela Garcia,
Denise Gutierrez (41),
Amber Lauder milk,
Consuelo Lopez-Robbins,
Toby Mayer (33), Gloria Mueller,
Naki Mugambi, Lisa Patnoe (33),
Jordan Plath, Tim Santry (33)

SHOW CALL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Shana Astrachan,
Vanessa Blanchard Lee,
Kristen Campbell, Calli Carvajal,
Sarah Coy, Marisela Garcia,
Denise Gutierrez (41),
Erin Hennessy (11),
Chri Holmgren-Greene,
Raegina Joyner, Amber Lauder milk,
Consuelo Lopez-Robbins,
Christina Martin (12),
Toby Mayer (33), Gloria Mueller,
Naki Mugambi, Robert Mrazik (18),
Leilani Norman, Lisa Patnoe (33),
Y. Sharon Peng, Jordan Plath,
Maurisa Rondeau,
Vanessa Root-Fitzgerald,
Lindsay Saier, Maur Sela,
Kimberly Virgen

SCENE SHOP

Dennis Forry
Christian Martinez
Dylan Maxson
Michael Ramirez
Victor Sanchez (27)

SCENIC ART DEPARTMENT

Jennifer Bennes

CARPENTRY DEPARTMENT

Robert Avery
Dominic Casazza (21),
Assistant Key Flyperson
Gabriel Castellani (14),
Automation Key
Michael Chapman (12), *Key*
Paul Delatorre (25), *Key*
Tony Garcia
Karla Hargrave
Geoffrey R. Heron (18)
Geoffrey W. Heron (30), *Key*
Philip Heron, (22),
Automation and Rigging Foreperson
Ed Joe, *Warehouse Foreperson*
Nick Kukielka
Michael Martino
Alex Meyer
Harry Niedzwetzki (32)
John O'Donnell (36), *Key Flyperson*
Enrique Pronio
Michael Ramirez
James Ryan
Kenneth Ryan (42)
Michael Ryan
Eila Saarni, *Key*
Gregory Shaff (36), *Key*
Harper Shipley, *Assistant Key*
Cyrus Sindicich
Sean Walden (13), *Assistant Key*
Randy Walsh (22), *Key*
Collin Whitfield
Sammy Wong

PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Scott J. Barringer (24), *Key*
Greta Calvo
Christy Carter
Jay Cazel
Gabriel Colaluca
James Eldredge (20), *Shop Mechanic*
Oris Fry
Tim Heaney
Patricia Hewett (17), *Assistant Key*
Myron Seth Isaacs (24), *Key*
Mark Kotschnig (22), *Key*
Dara Ly
John Matlock, *Assistant Key*
Beth Ozarow (28), *Out of House Key*
Tara Pellack
Sarah Shores (17), *Shop Mechanic*
Mae Toone

ELECTRICS DEPARTMENT

Eugene Ahn (11), *Gel Room*
John Boatwright (37),
House Head Electrician
Ariel Bott, *Assistant Key Stage Left*
Danielle Colburn
Erik Docktor (17), *Projection Programmer*
Amy Domjan, *Layout Electrician*
Mark Gilmore, *Projection Programmer*

Will Grunig (22)
Robert Haycock, *Key Stage Right*
Ana Gabriela Hernandez-McKig,
Gel Room
Geoffrey W. Heron (15),
Pyro Technician
Bernard Honigman (25),
Key Light Board Operator
Karen Jine
Brendan Kierans (11),
Electric Shop Foreperson
Sophie Landau
Maria Mendoza (36),
Projection Coordinator
Jonathan Philpott-Kenny
Lloyd Murphy, *Key Projectionist*
Baylie Olsen
Glenn Quilici,
Assistant Key Stage Right
Kevin Quintero
Matthew Reynolds
William Rodriguez
Kirt Siders, *Data Administrator*
Andrew Sproule (25), *Key Stage Left*
Jax Steager,
Assistant Key Light Board Operator

AUDIO DEPARTMENT

Eric Bumgarner
Emad Dajani
Christine Dumke
Kimberly Griess, *Key*
Bryan Olson

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

Claude Bauschinger, *Video Editor*
Steve Gianfermo
Bob Hines
Doug Hunt
Elliott Rice
Brian Shimetz
Uwe Willenbacher (16), *Audio Editor*

STUDIO TEACHERS

Donnell Barnes, Carolyn Crimley,
Rhona Gordon, Lua Hadar,
Martha Harris, Karen Kindig

WRANGLERS

Azami Abe, Isa S. Chu,
Gwyneth Hadfield, Kate Juliana,
Liz Pasha

Employees who have served the Company for more than 10 years are listed with their years of service.

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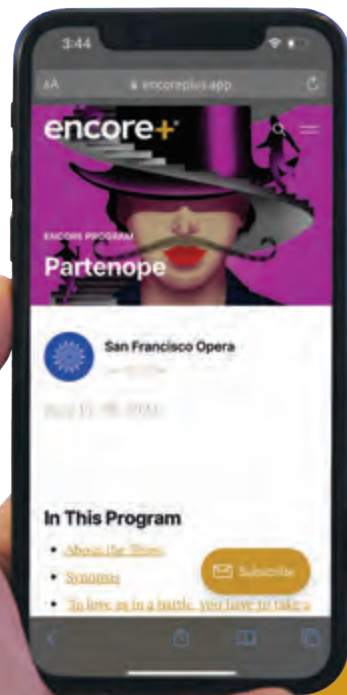
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C	O	R	T	I	S	O	L	D	E	F	E	N	S	E		
U	R	A	L	S		A	S	I	N		I	T	E	M		
B	E	G	E	T		R	O	P	E		D	I	D	O		

San Francisco Opera Orchestra



Kay Stern
Concertmaster



Maya Cohon
Associate
Concertmaster



Heidi Wilcox
Assistant
Concertmaster



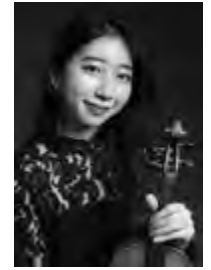
Jennifer Cho
First Violin



Dawn Harms
First Violin



Mariya Borozina
First Violin



Naoko Nakajima
First Violin



Barbara Riccardi
First Violin



Dian Zhang
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman
First Violin



Jennifer Hsieh
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano
First Violin



Jeremy Preston
Principal
Second Violin



Martha Simonds
Associate Principal
Second Violin



Beni Shinohara
Assistant Principal
Second Violin



Leslie Ludena
Second Violin



Ka-Yeon Lee
Second Violin



Aya Kiyonaga
Second Violin



Craig Reiss
Second Violin



Carla Maria Rodrigues
Principal
Viola



Joy Fellows
Associate Principal
Viola



Patricia Heller
Acting Principal
Viola



Emily Liu
Viola†



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



Elizabeth Prior
Viola†



Evan Kahn
Principal Cello



Thalia Moore
Associate Principal
Cello



Peter Myers
Assistant Principal
Cello



Nora Pirquet
Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Jung-Hsuan Ko
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello



Joseph Lescher
Principal
Bass



Jonathan Lancelli
Associate Principal
Bass



Shinji Eshima
Bass

† Season Substitute

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



Evan Hillis
Bass↑



Julie McKenzie
Principal
Flute



Susan Kang
Flute↑



Stephanie McNab
Flute & Piccolo



Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



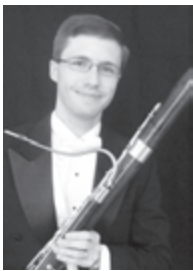
Gabriel Young
Associate Principal
Oboe



**José González
Granero**
Principal Clarinet



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



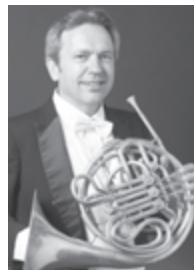
Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



Shawn Jones
Bassoon/
Contrabassoon↑



Kevin Rivard
Principal
Horn



Keith Green
Horn



Brian McCarty
Associate Principal
Horn



Phillip Palmore
Horn↑



Adam Luftman
Principal
Trumpet



Scott Macomber
Trumpet↑



John Pearson
Trumpet



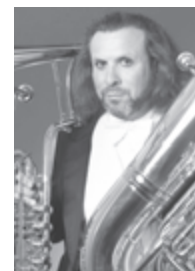
Michael Cox
Acting Principal
Trombone



Jeffrey Budin
Trombone↑



David Ridge
Principal
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman
Tuba



John Burgardt
Timpani



Patricia Niemi
Acting Principal
Percussion



Victor Avdienko
Percussion↑



Annabelle Taubl
Acting Principal
Harp↑



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian

Most photos by John Martin.
 Not pictured: Heeguen Song (Second Violin)↑,
 Stephen Goist (Viola), Lindan Burns (Viola),
 William Wasson (Acting Assistant Principal Bass),
 Michelle Caimotto (Flute)↑,
 Benjamin Brogadir (Oboe/English Horn),
 Sergio Coehlo (Clarinet)↑, Junghwan Lee (Clarinet, Bass Clarinet)↑,
 Meredith Brown (Horn)↑, Logan Bryck (Horn)↑,
 Kevin Myers (Orchestra Operations Manager), Krisha Montmorency (Librarian)

↑ Season Substitute

San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



Nadima Avakian
Soprano



Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Cheryl Cain
Soprano



Danielle Cheiken
Soprano



Sara Colburn
Soprano



Clare Demer
Soprano



Claire Kelm
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Crystal Kim
Soprano



Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Soprano



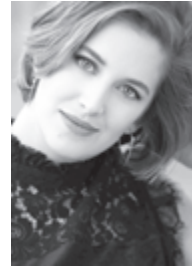
Liesl McPherrin
Soprano



Angela Eden Moser
Soprano



Rachelle Perry
Soprano



Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano
Leave of Absence



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



Edith Dowd
Mezzo-Soprano



Stella Hannock
Mezzo-Soprano



Silvie Jensen
Mezzo-Soprano



Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



Sarah Nadreau
Mezzo-Soprano



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



**Laurel Cameron
Porter**
Mezzo-Soprano



Whitney Steele
Mezzo-Soprano



Jacque Wilson
Mezzo-Soprano



C. Michael Belle
Tenor



Alan Cochran
Tenor



Kevin Gino
Tenor



Patrick J. Hagen
Tenor



Daniel Harper
Tenor
Leave of Absence



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Michael Jankosky
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Antonio Nagore
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Jonathan Smucker
Tenor

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



Andrew Truett
Tenor



William Lee Bryan
Baritone



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



Andrew Thomas Pardini
Baritone



John Fulton
Baritone



Harlan Hays
Baritone



Jere Torkelsen
Baritone



Wilford Kelly
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass
Leave of Absence



Samuel Rabinowitz
Bass

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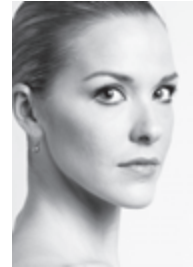
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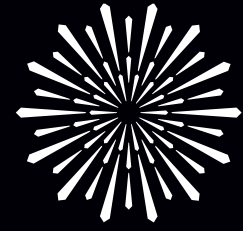
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[§] deceased

The Beautiful Nothingness of *Tristan*

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

If there is a fundamental contrast to the infinite scroll of social media, in which we consume the world in microsecond flashes, it might be Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. It elongates over four and a half hours a story that can be expressed as simply as: two people fall in love; their love is interrupted; both lovers die. In *Tristan*, almost nothing happens, and in that is the genius of the work. It is nothing more, and nothing less, than a time-stopping meditation on that most irreducible of human emotions: love.

Composer Edward Elgar captured *Tristan's* essence when he received a copy of the vocal score for his 36th birthday in 1893 and inscribed inside it: "This book contains the height, the depth, the breadth, the sweetness, the sorrow, the best and the whole for the best of this world and the next."

I have seen so many productions of *Tristan* that don't trust in the essence of the work and that try to overlay narratives in the belief that something simply must happen. The effect is to break the meditation of *Tristan*, bringing us back into the temporal and making us all too aware of its length. However, if we trust in the work, if we give ourselves over to the beauty of its nothingness, we are removed to another plane where time ceases to be. *Tristan* makes sense when we allow ourselves to be fully immersed in its singularity.

Oakland-based artist/author and former Stanford Professor Jenny Odell's book *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy* makes a powerful case for reevaluating where and how we choose to put our attention. Rather than espousing a digital detox or an off-the-grid escape, she encourages us to reframe our own attention by slowing down our focus and replacing scatter-shot attention with a much more curated focus (in her case on birds). She writes "I stopped looking at my phone because I was looking at something else, something so absorbing I couldn't turn away. ... Regaining control of [attention] can also mean the discovery of new worlds and new ways of moving through them."

UC Berkeley Professor Dacher Keltner finds something similar in his exploration of "awe"—the physical, emotional,



KRISTEN LOKEN

spiritual sense of wonderment that can result from experiencing the vastness of nature or a small act of kindness. In his book *Awe: The New Science of Everyday Wonder and How it Can Transform Your Life*, Keltner runs an experiment where one group is asked to look up into a beautiful redwood grove for several minutes; the other group looks at a concrete building. When someone walks behind each group and drops a box of pencils, the redwood-gazing group is much more likely to help pick up the pencils. By embracing awe, we quite literally become more empathetic members of society.

Our embrace of awe comes from paying attention to the interconnected context in which we move through the world. Odell gives a beautiful example of this: she realized that atmospheric river storms in California were bringing rainfall from the Philippines where she has relatives. She collected the California rainwater and used it to create a watercolor honoring her Filipino family.

Back in July, *The New York Times* posed an interactive challenge on its website: could you look at Whistler's painting *Nocturne in Blue and Silver* for just ten minutes, uninterrupted? I encourage you to try it. The first few minutes can be uncomfortable—most of us aren't used to gazing at anything for that long. But eventually your mind slows, your attention deepens, and you start a dialogue with yourself about technique, intent, meaning. To quote the Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh: "We are at peace in the present moment, just seeing the sunlight streaming through our window or hearing the sound of the rain. We don't have to run anywhere. We can enjoy every moment."

Wagner's *Tristan* is a work of art designed to function in just this way. Wagner slows down our internal rhythm, elongating the resolution of dissonance over vast tracts of time, and in doing so invites us into a metaphysical immersion into human emotion. We don't observe *Tristan*, we are a part of it. In its extraordinary distillation of the human experience of love, it allows us to experience the infinite. 🌿

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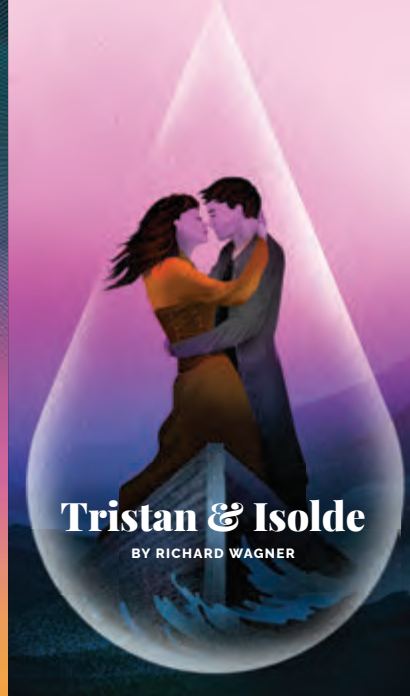
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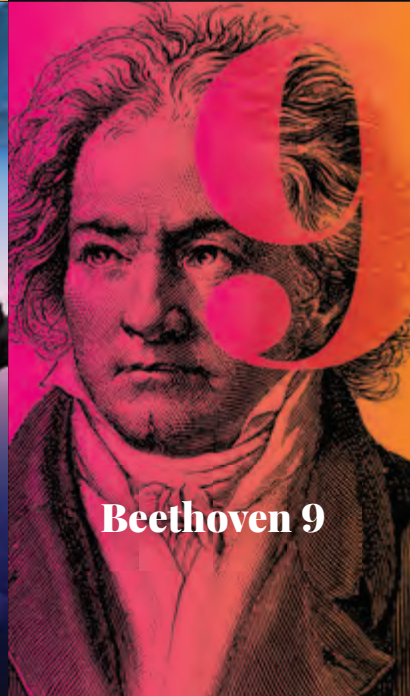
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