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**On the cover:**  
Władysław Czachórski  
(1850–1911)  
*Lady with Flowers*  
(oil painting)  
Private Collection /  
Agra Art; Warsaw, Poland /  
Bridgeman Images

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## A MESSAGE FROM

## THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

On behalf of the Board of Directors of San Francisco Opera, welcome to our 95th season!

From ancient mythology to California history, we embark in September on nine powerful journeys that celebrate the stories of humanity. We believe you will find this to be a season of tremendously diverse, ambitious, and emotionally thrilling offerings on the War Memorial Opera House stage. From sumptuous revivals of *Turandot* and *La Traviata*,

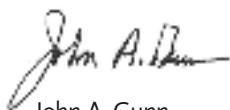
to connoisseur dreams like *Elektra* and *Manon*, to one of the most highly anticipated cultural events of the year in the world premiere of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West*, this will be a fall to remember.

The extraordinary artistic capability of this great Company is made possible by you, our audience. We are deeply grateful to all our patrons, subscribers, and donors. You are one of the most passionate and engaged audiences in the world, and your commitment and enthusiasm sustain San Francisco Opera. Thank you for your incredible support.


We wish to extend special recognition to our Company sponsors, who provide the major underwriting that makes everything we do possible: the Dolby family, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Ann and Gordon Getty, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Mr. and Mrs. Franklin P. Johnson, Jr., the Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, the Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey, and Barbara A. Wolfe. We also give special thanks to our Season Sponsor, Wells Fargo; our Corporate Partners, Chevron and United Airlines; and our Official Wine Sponsor, HALL Wines.

We also salute the artistry of Music Director Nicola Luisotti, who concludes nearly a decade of leadership at the end of the season. Nicola's contributions to the quality of our orchestra and the Company's overall musical values are exceptional, and San Francisco Opera audiences will enjoy the legacy of his work for years to come. We will never forget the countless electrifying performances he has led in our theater, and we look forward to welcoming him back to the podium in future seasons.

Enjoy the opera and revel in the music that moves the city!



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Eyvind Earle, concept painting, c. 1950s; Sleeping Beauty (1959); collection of the Walt Disney Family Foundation, © Disney | The Walt Disney Family Museum, Disney Enterprises, Inc. © 2017 The Walt Disney Family Museum. The Walt Disney Family Museum is not affiliated with Disney Enterprises, Inc.

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## Delving Deeper into *Girls of the Golden West*

October Symposium to Prepare  
Audiences for John Adams World Premiere



STEFAN COHEN

Members of the cast and creative team of *Girls of the Golden West* (left to right): choreographer John Heginbotham, composer John Adams, bass-baritone Davóne Tines, sopranos Hye Jung Lee and Julia Bullock, baritone Elliot Madore, mezzo-soprano J'Nai Bridges, conductor Grant Gershon, and librettist/director Peter Sellars.

Grab your shovels and stake your claims! With the eyes and ears of the music world trained on San Francisco Opera for the highly anticipated world premiere of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West* on November 21, local history buffs and opera fans will get a leg up on the excitement.

On Saturday, October 28, the *Girls of the Golden West* Symposium will be held in the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater at the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera. The all-day event will dig into the opera's themes, source materials, and its place within the broader context of the Gold Rush. Designed to prepare audiences for the opera and provide insightful perspectives into this critical period of California history, the symposium will be a multidisciplinary presentation of lectures, conversations, and music, including a discussion with composer John Adams (*Nixon in China* and *Doctor Atomic*) and librettist/director Peter Sellars. Authors, historians, and other Gold Rush authorities will explore topics such as "Women in the Gold Rush" and "Cultural Conflict." Rounding out the event, a set of miner and pioneer songs will be performed in period style by Theatre Comique. Tickets for the event are \$45.

Many *Girls of the Golden West* ancillary activities will be offered in collaboration with cultural and educational institutions around the Bay Area. Public exhibitions at Wells Fargo, Levi Strauss & Co., and the Society of California Pioneers provide an excellent opportunity to learn more about the history of California. Gold Rush-era artifacts from the collections of the California Historical Society, Society of California Pioneers, Levi Strauss & Co., and Museum of Performance + Design will also be on view within the Opera House lobby from November through December. In a special collaboration with the San Francisco Public Library, *The Shirley Letters*—one of the key historical sources Adams and Sellars drew upon for the opera—will be the Library's fall book club selection.

For tickets to the *Girls of the Golden West* Symposium and more information, please visit: [sfooperacom.com](http://sfooperacom.com).



BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

## Did You Know?

The War Memorial Opera House chandelier consists of 588 100-watt light bulbs. Created by Arthur Brown Jr., who also designed the Opera House, Veterans Building, and City Hall, the chandelier was the first use of aluminum in an architectural feature anywhere in the world.

Vodka is the deodorizer of choice for the Company's Wardrobe Department. After every performance, dressers spray the undiluted spirit on areas of costumes where perspiration collects to kill odor-causing bacteria.

With 95 players, *Elektra* has the largest orchestra in any production in Company history. Among the more unusual instruments is the heckelphone. The lowest instrument in the oboe family (it reaches as far down as an A below middle C), it is mostly heard in *Elektra* in combination with other winds and brass.

An inspiration for Puccini in writing *Turandot* was a music box belonging to an acquaintance, Baron Fassini, who had been in China. In Act I, a children's chorus is heard singing the Jasmine Flower song "Mou-Li Hua," which was one of Puccini's discoveries from the music box.

The first San Francisco performance of *La Traviata* was at the American Theater on August 13, 1859. Presented by the Bianchi Opera Troupe and featuring Giovanna Bianchi in the title role, Verdi's opera was described by the *Alta California* as a work "founded on a plot similar to *Camille*. The music is exceedingly brilliant, being of a lighter character than most of this composer's works, and it abounds in a host of gems, which will soon become popular."







## Lianna Haroutounian In Recital

Armenian soprano **Lianna Haroutounian** will give her San Francisco recital debut on **Saturday, November 25 at 3 p.m.** in the Veterans Building's Herbst Theatre. The acclaimed opera star, who made a sensational San Francisco Opera debut in *Tosca* in 2014 and returned triumphantly last season in the title role of *Madama Butterfly*, will return for her only Bay Area appearance in a program of works by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Komitas, Rossini, Bellini, and Puccini, as well as Armenian folk songs. Georgian pianist Tamara Sanikidze will provide musical accompaniment. For tickets, call City Box Office at (415) 392-4400.



CORY WEAVER



Kip Cranna



Sheri Greenawald



Lori Harrison



Jose Maria Condemi

## Interactive Adult Opera Workshops Return

Education Department adds to its fall offerings with *Drinks & Drama*

Back by popular demand, the **Overture Workshops for Adults**, a first-hand look at how opera is created and produced for the stage, will take place from **Monday, September 25 through Monday, October 23**. This fall's series will focus on the four main pillars of opera creation—story, music, production, and direction—with featured guests including Dramaturg Kip Cranna, Opera Center Director Sheri Greenawald, Properties Master Lori Harrison, stage director Jose Maria Condemi, and artists and musicians from across the Company. Learn more at [sfopera.com/overtureseries](http://sfopera.com/overtureseries).

Also for the opera-curious: join the Education Department on **Friday, October 20 from 7 to 8:30 p.m.** for **Drinks & Drama: A Taste of the Season**, a social-educational event featuring special live performances and mini-cocktails tailored to pair with each opera. Photographs, musical excerpts, and video clips from the San Francisco Opera Archives will immerse you in the fall 2017 season. Learn more at [sfopera.com/drinksanddrama](http://sfopera.com/drinksanddrama).

# Special Concerts This Fall

MATTHEW WASHBURN



*The San Francisco Opera Chorus, led by Ian Robertson*

The **San Francisco Opera Chorus** will offer a public concert of sacred, secular, and operatic music on **Thursday, November 30 at 8 p.m.**, in the intimate Taube Atrium Theater of the Wilsey Center for Opera. Under the baton of Chorus Director Ian Robertson and Associate Chorus Master and pianist Fabrizio Corona, the 47-member chorus will take center stage in musical offerings by Bach, di Lasso, Elgar, Ešenvalds, Massenet, O'Regan, Poulenc, Praetorius, Puccini, Purcell, Verdi, and Wagner. Tickets are \$35 and available now at the San Francisco Opera Box Office or by visiting [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com).

Making their West Coast concert debut, the popular New Zealand trio **Sol3 Mio** will take to the War Memorial Opera House stage on **Friday, December 1 at 7:30 p.m.** for a special holiday concert, Kiwi-style. This exclusive San Francisco Opera presentation of Samoan brothers and Adler Fellow tenors Pene Pati and Amitai Pati and their baritone Samoan cousin Moses Mackay will feature the singers in a concert of holiday favorites, operatic works, crossover hits, and cherished songs from the South Pacific. Robert Mollicone will conduct the San Francisco Opera Orchestra.

To learn more about Sol3 Mio and to hear excerpts, visit [Sol3Mio.com](http://Sol3Mio.com). Tickets range from \$20 to \$100 and are available at the San Francisco Opera Box Office or by visiting [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com).

SAIKO MANAGEMENT



*Tenor Amitai Pati, baritone Moses Mackay, and tenor Pene Pati perform at the War Memorial Opera House on December 1.*



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# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA *Profile*

## Shinji Eshima

### *San Francisco Opera Orchestra, Bass*

One of the most serene yet foreboding moments in all of opera happens during the prelude to Richard Wagner's *Das Rheingold*. Eight basses quietly sustain a single low E-flat for four measures. One of the basses you will hear in the orchestra pit during next summer's *Ring* cycle will be the 1843 Plumerel played by Shinji Eshima, who joined the Company in 1980. "The basses start on that note," he explains, "and the rest of the orchestra gradually gets layered in with E-flat arpeggios." The bassists play E-flat for 136 measures before a Rhinemaiden suddenly begins to sing. Wagner's swirling setting expresses the depth and building flow of the Rhine River, creeping into your consciousness and opening Wagner's epic musical journey. About this prelude, Shinji says, "I associate E-flat with nature. ... Maestro Runnicles [who leads the Company's *Ring* in 2018] has said that he loves E-flat in particular because it makes the orchestra 'feel good.' I'll never forget him saying that."

Shinji's Plumerel double bass has appeared at the Paris Opéra, Metropolitan Opera, New York Philharmonic, and New York City Ballet. A visitor to Paris' Musée d'Orsay today can see the scroll of Shinji's Plumerel in Edgar Degas' 1870 painting *L'Orchestre de l'Opéra*; its original owner, Achille Gouffé, a soloist of the Paris Opéra, also appears in the painting. An oil sketch of the work is at the Legion of Honor Museum. Shinji's Juilliard teacher David Walter was the principal bass of the New York City Ballet orchestra and played the Plumerel for more than 30 years. Six years after his death, it was passed on to Shinji. The bass made its War Memorial Opera House debut in 2008 during the 75th anniversary of San Francisco Ballet. (Shinji joined that company in 1982.)



CORY WEAVER

Shinji's wife, Sandy, is a former dancer for NYCB, and because she currently stages Balanchine's ballets, she has access to NYCB's original videos. Shinji says that "virtually anything I hear with a bass on these recordings [from *Agon* to *Jewels*] is *this* bass."

A Japanese-American born in Berkeley, Shinji received his education at Stanford and Juilliard. Today, he is a faculty member at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and San Francisco State University.

When Shinji is not performing or teaching, he is composing. Last year, he collaborated with poet Scott Bourne on a chamber piece called *Bourne to Shelley*, which had its world premiere at SF Opera Lab's *ChamberWORKS*. San

Francisco Ballet commissioned him to create music for two ballets, *RAKU* (2011) and *Swimmer* (2015). The puppetry play *E.O. 9066*, featuring original music by Shinji, was recently performed at the opening of the Topaz Museum, dedicated to preserving the history of the World War II internment camp experience in Delta, Utah. The play's title derives from the Executive Order 9066, which forced 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry to leave their homes and transfer to internment camps. 11,000 of them were sent to Topaz, including Shinji's father. The theme from *E.O. 9066* is a variation of a work Shinji composed originally for violin and double bass called *August 6*, which premiered at Grace Cathedral on the 50th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing. Shinji later decided to orchestrate *August 6* for SF Ballet's *RAKU*.

A documentary of *RAKU* will have its world premiere screening as part of the San Francisco Dance Film Festival on October 20 at the Brava Theater Center. As a musician in the orchestra pit, composer, and teacher, Shinji Eshima demonstrates that music is deep with history and rich with storytelling.

— TERESA CONCEPCION



# SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

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Nov 18–Dec 9

## ELEKTRA

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Sep 9–27

## LA TRAVIATA

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SUMMER 2018

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**Erda**  
*Goddess of wisdom,  
fate, and Earth*  
RONNITA MILLER



**Wotan/The Wanderer**  
*King of the Gods*  
GREER GRIMSLEY



**Fricka**  
*Goddess of marriage*  
JAMIE BARTON

## THE NORNS



**First Norn**  
RONNITA MILLER



**Second Norn**  
JAMIE BARTON

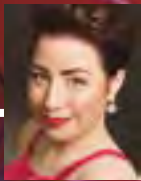


**Third Norn**  
SARAH CAMBIDGE

## THE VALKYRIES



**Siegrune**  
LAURA KRUMM



**Grimgerde**  
RENEE RAPIERE



**Ortlinde**  
SARAH CAMBIDGE



**Gerhilde**  
JULIE ADAMS



**Brünnhilde**  
EVELYN HERLTZIUS



**Forest Bird**  
STACEY TAPPAN



**Rossweisse**  
LAUREN  
MCNEESE



**Schwertleite**  
NICOLE  
BIRKLAND



**Helmwige**  
MELISSA CITRO



**Waltraute**  
RENEE TATUM  
*(Die Walküre)*

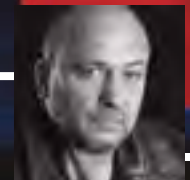


**Waltraute**  
JAMIE BARTON  
*(Götterdämmerung)*

## THE NIBELUNGS



**Mime**  
DAVID  
CANGELOSI



**Alberich**  
FALK STRUCKMANN

## THE RHINEMAIDENS



**Flosshilde**  
RENEE TATUM



**Woglinde**  
STACEY TAPPAN



**Wellgunde**  
LAUREN MCNEESE



# Introducing Evelyn Herlitzius

For next summer's revival of Richard Wagner's epic *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), San Francisco Opera has assembled an exceptional cast of singers, several of whom will be performing with the Company for the first time. They include American tenor Daniel Brenna as Siegfried, German bass-baritone Falk Struckmann as Alberich, and German dramatic soprano Evelyn Herlitzius as Brünnhilde.



Applauded in European opera houses for her gripping portrayals (the U.K.'s *Telegraph* hailed her Elektra as "a creature of mesmerizing intensity"), Herlitzius looks forward to her first performances in this country. Trained in dance, she says that she never dreamt in her youth that someday she would be a professional singer, much less an opera star. "I took singing lessons only because I thought that it might somehow become helpful to get a [dancing] job somewhere," says Herlitzius. "But as life is, things changed, and singing and opera became more and more fascinating to me."

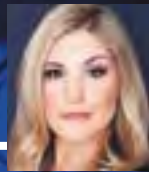
She says that Brünnhilde involved the same kind of serendipity. Five years after starting her opera career, Herlitzius received a call from an old university friend who was a conductor at a smaller German opera house. Could she imagine herself singing one of the most challenging roles in the repertoire? "I told him yes, immediately. It was just a matter of instinct, not of knowledge," she says. "Now, after all those wonderful years with this role accompanying my life, I would say that the greatest challenge contains also the greatest reward: to be able to portray such a complex character on stage and her development from a teenage girl who knows nothing to a mature woman, able to forgive."

For the *Ring* is a microcosm of humanity, says Herlitzius, and for that reason it can be adapted into vastly different settings and time periods—including the Company's production, directed by Francesca Zambello, which incorporates imagery from various eras of American history.

Beyond Brünnhilde, does Herlitzius have any other plans in San Francisco? "The Pacific Ocean and, after the run, exploring Route 66 on a Harley-Davidson with my partner," she says.



**Donner**  
God of thunder  
**BRIAN MULLIGAN**



**Freia**  
Goddess of love, youth, and beauty  
**JULIE ADAMS**



**Froh, God of spring and happiness**  
**BRANDON JOVANOVIČ**

## THE MORTALS



**Loge**  
Demigod of fire  
**ŠTEFAN MARGITA**



**Siegmund**  
**BRANDON JOVANOVIČ**



**Sieglinde**  
**KARITA MATTILA**



**Hunding**  
**RAYMOND ACETO**

## THE GIANTS



**Siegfried**  
**DANIEL BRENNA**



**Fasolt**  
**ANDREA SILVESTRELLI**



**Fafner**  
**RAYMOND ACETO**



**Hagen**  
**ANDREA SILVESTRELLI**



**Gutrune**  
**MELISSA CITRO**



**Gunther**  
**BRIAN MULLIGAN**

## THE GIBICHUNGS



# Opera Ball 2017

## at The Imperial Palace



Jane Mudge, Courtney Labe, Maryam Muduroglu, Matthew & Kate Shilvock,  
Rita Simonini, Nicola Luisotti, Priscilla & Keith Geeslin, Anne Popkin.  
Back row: Cynthia & John Gunn

San Francisco Opera's 95th season opened on September 8, 2017 with a sold-out performance of David Hockney's production of Puccini's *Turandot*. To reflect the occasion, this year's Opera Ball, co-chaired by Courtney Labe and Maryam Muduroglu, was a lavish evening of Chinese-inspired décor and majesty, designed by J. Riccardo Benavides. Proceeds from this signature fundraiser benefit the San Francisco Opera Association and Opera Guild's education and community programs reaching more than 60,000 young people and families. Also on opening night, San Francisco Opera Music Director Nicola Luisotti was the recipient of the Opera Medal for his distinguished service with the Company.



Diane B. Wilsey

PHOTO IDENTIFICATIONS ARE LEFT TO RIGHT. PHOTOS BY DREW ALTIZER



Back row: Trent Norris, Jack Calhoun; Kate & Matthew Shilvock, Paul & Nancy Pelosi;  
Sebastian Malin, Tore Diskrud, Turid Diskrud, Benjamin Malin, Gregory Malin  
Front row: Carol & Dixon Doll; Barbro & Bernard Osher; Mary Beth Shimmon, Riccardo Benavides; George & Charlotte Shultz





Virginia Girard,  
Daniel Girard, Ann Girard

Gordon Getty,  
Charlotte Shultz

Pitch & Cathie  
Johnson



David Gockley,  
Nicola Luisotti



Italian Consul General Lorenzo Ortona,  
Sheila Ortona, Keith Geeslin



Nazan Orr



Gary Garabedian,  
Karen Kubin



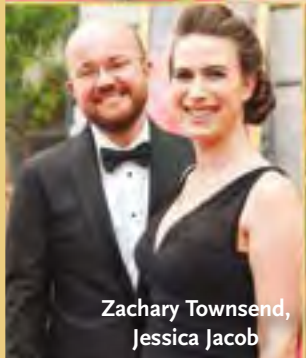
Komal Shah  
Carolyn Chandler



Steve Menzies,  
Kate & Matthew Shilvoek



Dede Wilsey, Willie Brown



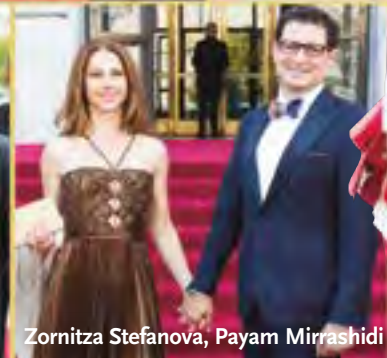
Zachary Townsend,  
Jessica Jacob



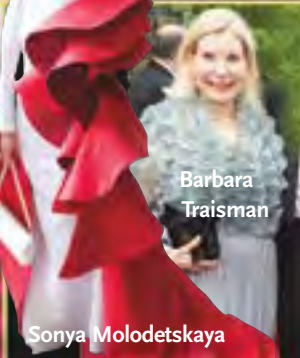
Courtney & Jim Labe



Maryam & Oran Muduroglu



Zornitza Stefanova, Payam Mirrashidi



Barbara  
Traisman

Sonya Molodetskaya



Karen Caldwell,  
Sandra Farris



Karen Richardson,  
Navid Armstrong



Lily Samii

Elizabeth Fullerton



Paul van Dyk, Saduman Guzel

Chrisa Pappas Sioukas,  
Dean Sioukas



Justice Franklin Elia,  
Heide Betz

Mike Genoshe,  
Alan Morrell,  
Jonathan Nicols,  
Carl Spirz



Mary & Bill Poland



Patrick King,  
Carolyn Chang



Heather Preston,  
Ron Barajas



Front: Jack Sholl, Mai Shiver; Shariq Yosufzai, Brian James;  
Back row: Dennis Calas & Lorna Meyer-Calas; John & Helen Meyer

Kathy Huber,  
Shannon Cronan





Anjali Menon, Laurie Diab, Kari Coomans, Alex Jakle, Shannon Eliot, Xanadu Bruggers, Victoria Weatherford, Laura Della Guardia, Alex Petalas, Katie Bryant, Susan Walker, Leah Fine, Rachel Lem, Arif Damji, Nicole Jiam



Nneka Uzoh, Jeannie Cuan, Catherine Ledesma



Abigail McDonald, Greg McDonald

# BRAVO! CLUB Opening Night Gala

San Francisco Opera's BRAVO! Club Opening Night Gala, led by co-chairs Alex Petalas and Victoria Weatherford, began with a champagne reception on the War Memorial Opera House Loggia. Following the performance of *Turandot*, guests enjoyed an opulent after-party in the Veterans Building Green Room.

PHOTOS BY DREW ALTIZER

## Opera in the Park 2017

San Francisco Opera's season-opening festivities included the 44th annual *San Francisco Chronicle Presents San Francisco Opera in the Park*, featuring Music Director Nicola Luisotti conducting the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Among the singers of the fall season performing at *Opera in the Park* were sopranos Aurelia Florian and Toni Marie Palmertree; tenors Atalla Ayan, Brian Jagde and Pene Pati; and bass-baritone Alfred Walker.

PHOTOS BY STEFAN COHEN



Pene Pati and Brian Jagde



Artur Ruciński





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RICHARD WAGNER

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Cycle 3—June 26–July 1, 2018

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San Francisco Opera and its affiliates are pleased to offer a wealth of educational resources to help you get “in the know” for each opera performance. For information on these and other resources, visit [sfopera.com/learn](http://sfopera.com/learn).

### E-OPERA NEWSLETTER

San Francisco E-Opera subscribers are the first to know about the latest performances, special events, and educational opportunities. Keep up-to-date on featured artists, special ticket offers, advance program notes, and other insider information by signing up at [sfopera.com/eopera](http://sfopera.com/eopera).

### INSIGHT PANELS

Renowned artists and personalities from the world of opera, including cast members and directors from the productions, share behind-the-scenes insights and experiences during informal panel discussions presented by San Francisco Opera Guild. Visit [sfopera.com/insights](http://sfopera.com/insights).

### OPERA PREVIEW LECTURES

San Francisco Opera Guild chapters present lectures that bring renowned musicologists to communities throughout the greater Bay Area, offering an in-depth look into the season's upcoming operas. Visit [sfopera.com/previews](http://sfopera.com/previews).

### OVERTURE: OPERA WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

San Francisco Opera hosts interactive workshops for adults about the journey of creating opera. Newcomers and seasoned opera-goers learn the process from the ground up and experience San Francisco Opera behind-the-scenes. Visit [sfopera.com/discover-opera](http://sfopera.com/discover-opera).

### FAMILY PROGRAMS

San Francisco Opera offers family programs, including movie screenings and interactive workshops, throughout the year and all over the Bay Area. Visit [sfopera.com/discover-opera](http://sfopera.com/discover-opera).

### CHECK OUT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S BLOG

Our blog, *Backstage at San Francisco Opera*, offers unique insight into the Company, with entries from the principal singers, chorus, and orchestra musicians to the creative teams for each opera and the many talented people who don't take a bow on stage. Visit [sfopera.com/blog](http://sfopera.com/blog).

### OPERA HOUSE TOURS

Discover the magic that goes into creating an opera production with a backstage tour of the War Memorial Opera House led by a Guild volunteer docent. Tours occur only on selected dates in small groups; reservations required. E-mail [tour.reserve@gmail.com](mailto:tour.reserve@gmail.com) or call the San Francisco Opera Guild at (415) 551-6353 to leave a message. For group tours contact Lynn Watson at [sf.opera.tours@gmail.com](mailto:sf.opera.tours@gmail.com). \$20 for general admission.

### OPERA TALKS

Before every performance, charismatic scholars present a 25-minute overview of the opera with insights on the music, composer, and historical background. Talks begin 55 minutes prior to curtain. Visit [sfopera.com/operatalks](http://sfopera.com/operatalks).

*Turandot*: Robert Hartwell

*Elektra*: Bruce Lamott

*La Traviata*: Peter Susskind

*Manon*: Marcia Green

*Girls of the Golden West*: Clifford Cranna

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ERIC FRAZIER



A photograph of an ornate theater interior with a large audience clapping. A screen on the stage displays the text "SUPPORTING THE ARTS INSPIRES OUR COMMUNITY." The text is in a bold, sans-serif font, with "INSPIRES OUR" and "COMMUNITY." each underlined with a thick red line. The theater has a grand, arched entrance and a balcony with lights.

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DREW ALTIZER

**BRAVO! CLUB** is a dedicated community of over 1,000 Bay Area young professionals ages 21–40 who enjoy exploring and learning about opera together. Members have access to discounted tickets, as well as educational and social events throughout the year, while helping to build the future audience for San Francisco Opera. Memberships cost \$75/person or \$125/couple and include the following benefits:

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Members can purchase tickets to BRAVO! CLUB's annual celebration of the new season.



SHANNON ELIOT

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STEFAN COHEN

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In addition to a variety of social and networking events for young donors, members enjoy complimentary memberships to both BRAVO! CLUB and the Medallion Society, with benefits including complimentary subscription series parking, ticket exchanges, and invitations to exclusive events and rehearsals.

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DREW ALTIZER

*\*The Orpheus Matching Fund is generously provided by Karen J. Kubin, Lisa P. Lindelef, Emily Hsi, and Michael Barrientos. Additional support for Orpheus provided by Mr. Benjamin Gregorski.*

For more information or to join:  
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# John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



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. This season, the Gunns' inspired generosity is helping make possible five productions—*Turandot*, *Elektra*, *Manon*, *Girls of the Golden West*, and the *Ring* cycle.

John shared his considerable insights at the 2014 conference of OPERA America, the national service organization for opera. As he told attendees, "Opera is a dynamic art form and all of us play a role in keeping it vital. We must expand our repertoire and our audiences, and strive for financial flexibility. And we depend on donors to keep opera alive."

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 ten years. She edited twenty-eight 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 the chair of the advisory board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), serves as a trustee of Stanford University, and is Vice Chairman of the board of Stanford Hospital Care. Cynthia is an overseer of Stanford's Hoover Institution, a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services, and serves on the boards of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health and the San Francisco Fine Arts Museums.

Opera lovers are grateful to Cynthia and John, and applaud their commitment to keeping San Francisco Opera a leading-edge company.



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J HENRY FAIR



## **Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem/Conductors Fund, Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund, and Emerging Stars Fund (Sponsor, Maestro Luisotti, Aurelia Florian, Atalla Ayan)**

After a career devoted to his publishing businesses in Japan and Europe, the creation of Clos Pegase Winery in California's Napa Valley, and his art collection, Jan Shrem, in joyous partnership with his wife Maria Manetti Shrem, is bringing his focus and affection to philanthropic causes that advance education and the performing and visual arts. Though they grew up half-a-world apart, Jan and Maria both developed a love of opera at a young age. While their lives led them each around the globe, their individual passions eventually led them to San Francisco Opera, and to each other. With a substantial multi-year commitment, Company Sponsors Jan and Maria have expanded their support with the establishment of three different funds. The *Conductors Fund* helps ensure the continued appearances of Maestro Nicola Luisotti and other Italian conductors in the orchestra pit. The *Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund* helps bring today's most compelling artists in Italian repertoire to San Francisco Opera, and the *Emerging Stars Fund* supports the Company in showcasing several exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season.

## **Chevron (Production Sponsor, *La Traviata*)**

Throughout its long history with San Francisco Opera, Chevron has generously supported many of the company's artistic productions and community outreach initiatives. Continuing this tradition this season, Chevron is the corporate Production Sponsor of *La Traviata*. Chevron has a proud history of serving its customers and communities in the Bay Area. Chevron's philosophy of investing in community institutions encourages a culture of artistic achievement and growth, which strengthens the communities in which we live and work. San Francisco Opera is grateful to Chevron for its generous support.



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Giacomo Puccini

September 8, 12, 15, 21, 24, 30; November 18, 25, 28;

December 3, 6, 9

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Richard Strauss

September 9, 13, 17, 19, 22, 27

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## LA TRAVIATA

Giuseppe Verdi

September 23, 26, 28; October 1, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17

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**Giuseppe Verdi**

# LA TRAVIATA

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

**Matthew Shilvock,**  
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**Nicola Luisotti,**  
Music Director

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This production is made possible, in part, by Chevron; and Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem through the Emerging Stars Fund for Ms. Florian and Mr. Ayan's appearances.

Maestro Luisotti's appearance is made possible by the Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem Conductors Fund.

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## LA TRAVIATA

## ACT I

A party is taking place at the home of Violetta Valéry, a beautiful Parisian courtesan. Gastone arrives and presents his friend, Alfredo Germont, telling Violetta that Alfredo has long been a silent admirer and had even called daily during her illness to ask about her. Baron Douphol, one of Violetta's "protectors," is angered by the conversation and refuses to propose a toast when invited to by Gastone. Alfredo then accepts the invitation and sings an impassioned tribute to beauty and love. Later, as the others go to another room to dance, Violetta is overcome by a fainting spell. Alfredo stays behind and confesses that he has been in love with her for a year. Violetta offers him friendship instead of love and gives him a flower, bidding him return when it has withered. Alfredo joyously accepts and bids her goodnight. When her guests have gone, Violetta thoughtfully muses on Alfredo's proffered love, but finally returns to her true character and declares that she must remain forever free to pass from pleasure to pleasure.

## ACT II

**SCENE 1:** Months later, having ultimately accepted Alfredo's offer, Violetta is living with Alfredo in the country and has abandoned her life of ease and luxury. Annina, Violetta's maid and confidante, enters and tells Alfredo she has been sent to arrange the sale of Violetta's property, which must be sold to pay their debts. Alfredo suddenly understands the sacrifices that Violetta has made in order to live with him and leaves for Paris, determined not to be shamed by her sacrifice. Violetta receives an unexpected visitor, Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father, who declares that Alfredo is ruining himself to keep her as his mistress. When Germont comments on the luxury of the country retreat, Violetta shows him the papers that have been prepared for the sale of all her possessions. He asks her to give up Alfredo, explaining that by continuing the liaison, Alfredo is endangering the impending marriage of his younger sister. Germont's insistence finally convinces Violetta, who agrees to leave Alfredo forever. She is preparing a letter as Alfredo returns. Germont has gone out into the garden. Alfredo, not realizing his father has already arrived, explains that Germont has written him a severe letter, but that he feels sure he will approve of Violetta as soon as he sees her. Pretending to leave so as not to be present during the meeting of father and son, Violetta goes out. A messenger returns with her letter of farewell. Alfredo is stricken with grief at the loss of Violetta, and when his father tries to persuade him to return to his family, Alfredo refuses. Finding a party invitation that Flora had sent Violetta, he resolves to go to Flora's in the hope of finding Violetta.

**SCENE 2:** Alfredo arrives at Flora's house as the guests are beginning to gamble. Violetta arrives, escorted by Baron Douphol. Alfredo explains that he who is unlucky in love is lucky at cards. The Baron, incensed at Alfredo's insolence, challenges him to play. Alfredo accepts and beats the Baron repeatedly at high stakes. When all the others go to dinner, Violetta remains behind to entreat Alfredo to leave, lest the Baron challenge him to a duel. Alfredo answers that he will leave, but only if she accompanies him. Unwilling to reveal that she has broken off with him because of his father, Violetta declares that she is in love with the Baron. Frenzied with jealousy, Alfredo calls all the guests into the room and, in a rage, he throws money at Violetta's feet and calls upon all to witness that he has paid her in full. Germont enters just in time to see Alfredo's caddish behavior and joins the others in reviling him for his conduct. Alfredo, realizing the lengths to which his jealousy has carried him, is contrite but realizes that he is helpless to make amends. The Baron assures Alfredo that he must answer for the insult on the field of honor.

## ACT III

Violetta's illness has brought her to the point of death. Her physician, Dr. Grenvil, calls at her home, examines her, and tells Annina that she has but a few hours to live. Violetta reads a letter from the elder Germont, in which she learns that Alfredo has gone abroad after wounding the Baron in a duel. He knows now of the great sacrifice that Violetta has made and is returning to beg her forgiveness. Alfredo returns and the two are reunited at last. But it is too late. Violetta, comforted by the presence of the man whom she has so tragically loved, dies in his arms.

**First performance:** Venice, Teatro La Fenice; March 6, 1853

**First performance in the U.S.:** New York, Academy of Music; December 3, 1856

**First San Francisco Opera performance:** October 4, 1924

*La Traviata* has been performed in 36 previous seasons at San Francisco Opera. For complete casting and other information, visit [archive.sfopera.com](http://archive.sfopera.com).

**Personnel:** 12 principals, 48 choristers, 3 dancers, 8 supernumeraries; **71 total.**

**Orchestra:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 cimballo, 1 timpanist, 2 percussion; 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **61 total.**

**Offstage:** 2 piccolos (1 doubling flute), 1 oboe, 1 clarinet, 1 bassoon, 1 horn, 1 trumpet, 2 percussionists, 1 piano, 1 bass, 1 harp; **12 total.**

*Conductor*  
**Nicola Luisotti**

*Production*  
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*Stage Director*  
**Shawna Lucey**

*Set Designer*  
**John Conklin**

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San Francisco Opera production

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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 AT 7:30 PM  
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TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3 AT 7:30 PM  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6 AT 7:30 PM  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8 AT 2 PM  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11 AT 7:30 PM  
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14 AT 7:30 PM  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17 AT 7:30 PM

Opera in three acts by **Giuseppe Verdi**  
Libretto by **Francesco Maria Piave**  
Based on the play *La Dame aux Camélias* by **Alexandre Dumas, fils**

# LA TRAVIATA

(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

## CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Violetta Valéry</i>	<b>Aurelia Florian*</b>
<i>Doctor Grenvil</i>	<b>Anthony Reed†</b>
<i>Baron Douphol</i>	<b>Philip Skinner</b>
<i>Flora Bervoix</i>	<b>Renée Rapier</b>
<i>Marquis d'Obigny</i>	<b>Andrew G. Manea†</b>
<i>Annina</i>	<b>Amina Edris†</b>
<i>Gastone</i>	<b>Amitai Pati†</b>
<i>Alfredo Germont</i>	<b>Atalla Ayan*</b>
<i>Giuseppe</i>	<b>Christopher Jackson</b>
<i>Giorgio Germont</i>	<b>Artur Ruciński*</b>
<i>A messenger</i>	<b>Bojan Knežević</b>
<i>Flora's servant</i>	<b>Torlef Borsting</b>
<i>Solo dancers</i>	<b>Lorena Feijóo*</b>
	<b>Blanche Hampton</b>
	<b>Bryan Ketron</b>

*Demimondaines, gentlemen, servants*

\*San Francisco Opera debut    †Current Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Mid-19th-century Paris and environs

**ACT I:** Violetta's house

—INTERMISSION—

**ACT II, SCENE 1:** A country house near Paris

**ACT II, SCENE 2:** Flora's house

—INTERMISSION—

**ACT III:** Violetta's house

*The performance will last approximately three hours.*

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

*Patrons who leave during the performance may not be re-seated.*

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

*Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.*



# SAVING VIOLETTA

*Redemption turns up frequently in Verdi's operas, but he never explored the theme as deeply or as personally as he did in La Traviata.*

Many years ago, a friend of mine was divorced from her first husband. Eventually, he asked her if she would agree to have their marriage annulled by the Catholic Church, as he was planning to remarry. My friend was deeply hurt; even if their marriage had been ill-conceived, she hated the thought of having to go forward saying that it had never existed. To her surprise, her own mother angrily told her that she had no choice but to have the marriage annulled. "Otherwise," her mother explained, "you are standing in the way of the future happiness of someone you don't even know. And that is wrong."

That decision to make a sacrifice for the greater good came back to me recently as I was thinking about *La Traviata*, whose stature as one of the world's most treasured operas seems undiminished, 164 years after its world premiere at Venice's La Fenice. *La Traviata* remains one of the works I never tire of. Despite its brilliance as a

music drama, its ongoing popularity surprises me in a way, because I can't help but feel that the idea that the entire opera turns on—personal redemption through self-sacrifice—is one that may not have much currency in our present social, cultural, and political climate—at least in the United States. We are living in a time where instant gratification is the force that compels most of us; driven on by the speedy advances of the technological revolution, our collective attention span is shrinking by the day, and we seem to be losing the patience to work our way through much of anything that's too complicated. I would think that modern audiences—the ones I see texting throughout the performances—would not necessarily respond to the staggering choice that is foisted upon Violetta by her lover Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont.

I first saw *La Traviata* in the theater in 1983 at the Metropolitan Opera. Partly thanks to my own neophyte status as an opera-goer, I responded to it principally as a story of a woman dying of tuber-

*John Copley's much loved production of La Traviata premiered with San Francisco Opera in 1987 and returned in 1991, 1995, 2001, 2004, and (seen here) 2014.*

CORY WEAVER





culosis. As I studied it, its central theme of personal redemption became clear to me. Redemption is something that figures prominently in dozens of operas in the standard repertoire, from the Marschallin's surrender of Octavian at the end of Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* to Blanche de la Force's march to the guillotine at the climax of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. It had long been a potent theme in scores of the world's great novels, from Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* to Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, which features Sydney Carton's immortal observation, "It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known."

In these literary works, the idea of redemption is sometimes more implicit than literal. In Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, the reader is invited to think that part of what drives the Governess to purge the evil presence from her young charges—whether or not it really exists—may be the need to redeem her own troubled past. And James' Daisy Miller, who flaunts European social conventions without batting an eye, is offered a chance at redemption. When the fierce society matron Mrs. Walker sees Daisy walking openly in public with her Italian suitor, she offers the girl the refuge of her carriage, making it clear that it is a chance for her to save herself. Daisy refuses, continues her budding romance with the Italian—and dies of Roman fever as a result.

The theme of redemption turns up frequently in Verdi's operas. But he never plumbed the theme as deeply or as personally as he did in *La Traviata*. Verdi was drawn to Alexandre Dumas *filis'* play *La Dame aux Camélias* (in turn adapted from Dumas' 1848 novel) as a source largely because he was aching to tackle a contemporary subject. Marie Duplessis, the stylish courtesan who was the



real-life basis for Dumas' heroine Marguerite Gautier and eventually for Verdi's Violetta, was still much talked about in Parisian circles, having died only in February 1847. Verdi was entering his first great period of innovation as a musical dramatist, having recently dared to put a hunchback center stage in *Rigoletto*, and having made the Gypsy Azucena a centerpiece of *Il Trovatore*. Now he wanted to create a bracingly modern work for La Fenice, by making a woman of dubious reputation his heroine. Most of his biographers agree that probably he was equally driven to make a bold dramatic statement in response to the criticism he had suffered through his relationship with his mistress, the celebrated bel-canto soprano Giuseppina Strepponi, who already had given birth to several illegitimate children. Verdi was stung by the judgmental malice directed at him and Strepponi. This brand of Victorian-era hypocrisy was rampant at the time. For many upper-middle-class men, having a mistress was considered a badge of honor, while women were expected to submit to a kind of societal straitjacket.

The depth of Verdi's *Violetta* marked an impressive step forward for him as a musical dramatist. Unfortunately, the electrifying modern production he dreamed of was not to be. When *Traviata* bowed at La Fenice in 1853, its setting was pushed back to the early 1700s—a distancing effect aimed at pacifying the censors. The cast was inadequate, and as opening night approached, Verdi feared that the production would turn out to be exactly what he later described it as being, a "fiasco." A little over a year later, it was given another production, properly cast, at Venice's Teatro San Benedetto, that was a success, making the composer feel (mostly) redeemed.

Above: The celebrated bel-canto soprano Giuseppina Strepponi with a score of Verdi's *Nabucco*. Before Verdi married her in 1859 (it was to be his second marriage), Strepponi was Verdi's mistress and had given birth to several of his children. / MUSEO TEATRALE ALLA SCALA, MILAN, ITALY / DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES







KRISTEN LOKEN



MUSÉE MARMOTTAN MONET, PARIS, FRANCE / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



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Left to right: From Act II of the Company's 2014 production, baritone Quinn Kelsey as Giorgio Germont confronting soprano Ailyn Pérez as Violetta Valéry; the 1875 oil painting *At the Ball* by Berthe Morisot (1841–95); mostly in the shadow of his famous writer-father whose name he shared, Alexandre Dumas fils received fame for the novel *La Dame aux Camélias* which he later adapted into the play that inspired Verdi.

When we experience *Traviata* in the theater now, it behooves us to try to imagine how shocking it must have been for audiences when it bowed at La Fenice in 1853. For Verdi to have imbued his “fallen woman” (the approximate English translation of the title) with so much dignity, grace, and compassion was something revolutionary in mid-19th-century Italian opera. Some commentators have criticized Francesco Maria Piave’s libretto for making too abrupt a jump from Act One to Act Two; having grappled with whether or not to take a chance on love in her magnificent Act I soliloquy, “È strano ... Ah! fors’è lui ... sempre libera,” Violetta makes the decision to continue to seek pleasure for pleasure’s sake.

In the second act, we see that she has changed her mind and is liv-

at him for longer than I normally would,” she says. “And on the ‘ah’ before ‘Dite all giovine’ I would start positive and then become negative, and bring the sound back to me. I was saying, ‘All right—tell your daughter who is so pure and beautiful that I will do this for her. Because she is the girl I want so badly to be.’”

Violetta puts herself to the ultimate test, and her reward is to die of tuberculosis. Germont grasps her true worth only when she is on her deathbed. Unlike Daisy Miller, who also dies, she doesn’t have the satisfaction of getting her own way—but I think that’s why the end of James’ novel always seems vaguely unsatisfying; the death of a girl who does precisely what she wants simply doesn’t have the emotional resonance that Violetta’s death does.

*Watching Traviata unfold onstage, many of us probably silently yearn to rewrite that scene, to have Violetta tell Germont what he can do with his selfish and manipulative proposition.*

*But then there would be no plumbing of the theme of redemption—and no opera.*

ing happily in the country with Alfredo. I think that it was a brilliant stroke on the part of Verdi and Piave not to have us witness any further indecision about pursuing a life with Alfredo. When Act Two begins, we are lulled into a false sense of security, which makes what comes next all the more powerful. Her subsequent confrontation with Alfredo’s father, Giorgio Germont, in which he insists that she abandon Alfredo for the sake of the family honor, remains a formidable challenge for a good singing actress: she must persuade us, as well as Germont, that she possesses the most enlightened sensibility, the greatest sense of empathy, of any other character onstage. Soprano Diana Soviero, who sang hundreds of performances of *Traviata*, recalls the power of the Violetta-Germont scene. “Often, I would stare

Unfortunately, the ultimate message of *Traviata* still gets obscured on the stage, as some directors seek to make it more about a young woman who is dying, i.e., large ticking clocks onstage or, as in one production, changing Violetta’s illness to AIDS. In such cases, I cannot help but feel that the real dramatic truth of *La Traviata* has been sideswiped. Perhaps the idea of redemption doesn’t resonate with us as it did with Verdi’s audiences. But a great production of *Traviata* can still remind us of its power. 🌸

*Brian Kellow is the author of biographies of Ethel Merman and Pauline Kael, and the most recent book, Can I Go Now?: The Life of Sue Mengers, Hollywood’s First Superagent.*



# A Q&A with the Music Director

## Tell us about the first time you heard *La Traviata*.

My first experience with Verdi's *La Traviata* was when I was around 20 years old. At that time I was very fond of *La Bohème*; every other opera seemed to me nothing in comparison. So, it took time for me to fall in love with this wonderful score, but when that happened, it was forever! The first time I conducted *Traviata* was in 1998 in Udine, Italy with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Teatro Grande di Trieste. There were no rehearsals; we went directly into the performance. It was a very exciting night for everyone, especially for me.

## Why do we love *La Traviata* so much?

There are many reasons why this opera is so beloved. First, I think the music is extremely beautiful, and the story is still very moving. The fact that an "escort" decides to abandon that kind of life to have a normal one is still today something that, seen on stage, can create the catharsis that is so important when we go to attend a performance. Everyone who has made mistakes in his or her own life would like to be forgiven and have the opportunity to start over. Violetta is taken by death in the precise moment that everyone—including those in the audience—realize she deserves a new life.

It's been said that for the soprano singing Violetta, she must be a coloratura for the first act of *Traviata*, a lyric soprano for the second act, and a dramatic soprano for the final act. Is any of this true? How would you personally describe the music?

Unfortunately for the soprano, it is true! Finding the perfect Violetta is almost impossible. She should be a light coloratura soprano in the first act, because her way of thinking in the beginning is light and superficial. In the second act she is a changed woman that tries to find herself in a new, calm, and peaceful life with Alfredo. In the third act she loses all hope for life and humanity. Verdi changes the music again for her, and this is why we need a more dramatic soprano instead. As everyone can see, singing this role is really demanding!

## What are your favorite musical moments in *Traviata*?

The music of this immense masterpiece is unbelievably gorgeous and appropriate in every moment. It is written in a way that, after a while, you forget that the people are playing and singing, and everything becomes more than real. In fact it becomes absolutely true, more than life itself.

As to a favorite moment, I can't make any particular choice. I am completely involved emotionally and musically with every single note of this eternal and glorious Music. 🍷

*From the Company's 2014 production, tenor Saimir Pirgu as Alfredo Germont and soprano Nicole Cabell as Violetta Valéry.*



# FLOWER GIRLS

*Violetta,  
Marguerite,  
Camille, and  
Julia Roberts'  
Pretty Woman  
all stem from the  
same source: the  
19th-century  
Parisian courtesan  
Marie Duplessis*

*Greta Garbo in the title role of the 1936 George Cukor film Camille.*



“Paris is corrupt to the core,” Charles Dickens huffed when he visited the French capital in February 1847. “For a number of days every question—political, artistic, and commercial—had been neglected by the newspapers. Everything is wiped out by an event of the highest importance, the romantic death of one of those glories of the *demi-monde*, the celebrated Marie Duplessis. You would have thought it was a question of the death of a hero or a Joan of Arc.” Dickens’ familiar brand of English puritan morality momentarily blinded the writer in him to what might be worthy of serious literature in the preposterously premature death of an unusually magnetic society-woman, no doubt because he could dismiss Duplessis as a mere prostitute. That she had been among the elite of her world cut no moral ice for him.

One of her recent French lovers, however, had no such scruples. Alexandre Dumas *fils* was an aspiring young writer laboring in the shadow of the vastly famous writer-father whose name he shared, author of *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Dumas *père*, moreover, may himself have been one of Marie Duplessis’ passing lovers. For some 11 months in 1844-45, Duplessis had favored the younger Dumas, who was neither rich nor famous, over (sometimes as well as) the crowd of wealthy men-about-town for whom she was by common consent one of the most desirable prizes a top Parisian society-male could aim at. Four months after she died, the 23-year-old Dumas—the same age as Marie—began his romanticized account of their affair. The book took him four weeks to write and was

his first literary success. It was published in 1848 as *La Dame aux Camélias*, the sobriquet by which staff at the Paris Opéra had supposedly referred to Marie, who had her own box at the opera house and habitually arrived carrying a great bunch of the flowers that eventually gave her her best-known literary name.

The book’s success was such that Dumas was quickly persuaded to produce a stage version, but three years had to pass before it could be shown publicly. Parisian, and indeed all European society was changing. Dickens had used (and perhaps coined) the right phrase for the curious phenomenon of the mid-19th-century Parisian courtesans: theirs was indeed a *demi-monde*, a half-world filled with life and glamor, but private, a world not to be mentioned in public, least of all in the popular theaters to which respectable families took their well-brought up daughters. The luxury of the high-level courtesans’ world, where young women like Marie Duplessis held court in grand town mansions, began to crumble as the revolutions of 1848 convulsed Europe. The hidden half-world had been short-lived, no more than a quarter of a century at its height. The women who, like Marie, rose to its level had invariably begun life in poverty, and were often barely if at all educated. Those whose beauty was allied with wit, however, could with a strong mixture of luck and talent lift themselves from the crowd of *grisettes* and *lorettes* that were the virtually inevitable destiny of young women who were unable to follow the acceptable route of marriage, the route which Dumas, for one, was already describing as no more than “legitimized prostitution.”



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MUSÉE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, MUSÉE CARNAVALET, PARIS, FRANCE



Top: Alphonse Mucha’s poster for Sarah Bernhardt’s performances of *La Dame aux Camélias*.  
Bottom left: From 1990’s *Pretty Woman*, Julia Roberts and Richard Gere at *La Traviata*.  
Bottom right: Marie Duplessis at the Theatre by Camille-Joseph-Étienne Roqueplan (1800–55), watercolor on paper.



Marie's case was typical: the illiterate daughter of a Normandy peasant, whose family could not afford her, she may have been sold as a 12-year-old to her father's clients and friends. At 15, she had a child, quickly given away for adoption. But her rare grace, darker, taller, and slighter than convention expected, was linked to an unusually sharp intelligence. By the time she was 18 she had been the mistress of first



BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

*The Act I aria "È strano" makes a brief appearance in the 1994 film The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert.*

one, then another Parisian aristocrat. Unlike the thousands of women whose lives were hidden and destroyed in the murky depths of the Paris sex-markets, Marie was already a celebrity. Born Alphon-sine Rose Plessis, she had renamed herself Marie and prefixed the pseudo-noble "du" to her surname. She must have been a truly unusual person: her lovers included the composer Franz Liszt. "She was the first woman I ever loved," Liszt wrote to Marie d'Agoult when Duplessis died. "Hers was truly an exquisite nature, and what is generally (perhaps accurately) described as corruption, never touched her heart."

The radical changes in Parisian society-life after 1848 fast eroded most of Marie's *demi-monde*. Ironically, the changes allowed her world to take on its later public role. Within three years, the sensational Dumas *roman* was on the Paris stage as his no less sensation-ally successful play. This was the form in which Verdi encountered it. He may even have been at the premiere on February 2, 1852 at the Paris Théâtre du Vaudeville. The first performance of the opera which he derived from the play—called *Love and Death (Amore e Morte)* at first and only as it neared completion *La Traviata*, "the one who went astray"—took place barely a year later on March 6, 1853 at Venice's La Fenice. It was one of the first operas to break with the iron tradition that only humorous works could deal with contemporary subjects.

The power of Verdi's music is the most obvious cause of the Lady of the Camellias' endurance. But longevity of this kind is determined by more than its incarnation as a supreme operatic drama. The Dumas play and the book before it were already landmarks in a slow transformation of social attitudes and sympathies. The play, it is true, is rarely staged now, but for generations it was a vehicle for the most celebrated actresses of the time—Sarah Bernhardt, Eleonora Duse, and Edwige Feuillère are but three of the names made familiar across the world through their identification with the sad Dumas heroine. The original book is still read and well worth reading. Frederick Ashton created a ballet, *Marguerite and Armand*, in 1963 for Margot Fonteyn and Rudolf Nureyev, and the American choreographer John Neumeier made his own version in Stuttgart for Marcia Haydée 15 years later.

It is in film that the Dumas tragedy has had its most varied existence. Cinematically, Marie is best known as Camille, from the title of the 1936 George Cukor film with Greta Garbo, though *Camille* was already the name of an American film by Albert Capellani in

1915 with Clara Kimball playing the title role. (The floral sub-text is not incidental. Dumas called his title heroine Marguerite, the French word for daisy; Verdi and his libret-tist Francesco Maria Piave italianized her to Violetta, echoing not only the name of another flower but also the image of violation.) Violetta-Marie-Marguerite-Camille's fate has not lost its power: it is still used to evoke sympathy in surroundings pretty far

from Dumas and Verdi: remember Richard Gere testing Julia Roberts' sensitivity in Garry Marshall's 1990 film *Pretty Woman* by taking her to San Francisco to *Traviata*; or the delicious Australian movie *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* four years later, with a drag-queen miming "È strano" to Joan Carden's voice?

Emotionally evocative as these strains may be, the story nonetheless poses for many people a fundamental question of cred-ibility, especially in Verdi's operatic version: the central motivating event is a sequence of actions so far distanced from present-day social conventions. But as long as there has been writing from male-dominated, pre-contraceptive history, there have been stories revolving for better or usually worse around "immoral" women, women who fail to conform to the sexual behavior that would pre-serve male possession and/or the certainty of paternity. Is then the force of Verdi's opera now no more than a sentimental historical curiosity? Certainly Giorgio Germont's atrocious moralizing might be thought an insuperable obstacle to *La Traviata's* emotional impact. But it is not so, though we may wish it were: rejection of the partners chosen by one's children is certainly not out-of-date.

Art has a way of making us accept its invented world even when that world is entirely fantastic; as long as it continues we believe in it, warts and all. So any particular incredibility at the turning-point in Dumas-Verdi is in this sense irrelevant: Violetta, like any good artistic creation, lives in her own world, opera's own fantasy *demi-monde*, but she is more than a character in that make-believe republic of localized truths. Art on this level stands for greater issues than its immediate subject, and *La Traviata* appalls and delights because there remain in society groups and individuals who we can feel are unjustly alienated, scorned, or rejected: every one of us may belong at some point in our lives to one or more of these categories. Violetta stands for them all. No matter the Camellia-Lady has recurred in so many guises. Small wonder, too, that so many of those transformations have been in another half-world: film, the most forceful artistic instrument for social change of the past 100 years, just as literature and opera were for the preceding century. 🌸

*Christopher Hunt was a former artistic administrator with San Francisco Opera. This essay was published in a previous edition of San Francisco Opera Magazine.*

# ARTIST PROFILES



**NICOLA LUISOTTI**  
(Viareggio, Italy)

**Conductor**

Maestro Luisotti has been music director of San Francisco Opera since 2009 and has conducted over 40 operas and concerts since his Company debut in 2005. Luisotti, who holds the Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair, recently conducted the Company's *Turandot*, *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Andrea Chénier*, and *Don Carlo*. Last season, he led *Pagliacci* at Teatro Regio di Torino, and *La Traviata* at the Metropolitan Opera, as well as conducting the Metropolitan Opera National Council Grand Finals Concert. Other recent engagements include a symphonic concert at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, *Rigoletto* at Madrid's Teatro Real and Milan's Teatro alla Scala, *Il Trittico* and *La Traviata* at London's Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and *Rigoletto* at Paris' Opéra Bastille. In addition, Luisotti has received international acclaim from press and public alike with performances at Vienna State Opera, Genoa's Teatro Carlo Felice, Venice's La Fenice, Bologna's Teatro Comunale, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, Dresden, Hamburg, Valencia, Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera, and Tokyo's Suntory Hall. He was recently appointed associate director at Madrid's Teatro Real. Later this season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera to lead performances of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, as well as a new production of *Aida* at Madrid's Teatro Real, a concert with Teatro Regio di Torino, and *La Bohème* and *Falstaff* at London's Royal Opera, Covent Garden. In December, Luisotti will conduct the Richard Tucker Music Foundation Gala Concert at Carnegie Hall.



**AURELIA FLORIAN**  
(Braşov, Romania)

**Violetta Valéry**

Making her U.S. debut as Violetta Valéry in *La Traviata*, soprano Aurelia Florian premiered the role in 2013 at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and has since performed it to wide acclaim at the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, Den Norske Opera in Oslo, Zurich Opera, and the Savonlinna Festival in Finland. Born and trained in her native Romania, Florian began

her professional career with the Romanian National Opera in Bucharest from 2008 through 2010. Particularly in demand for her Verdi and Puccini roles, she includes in her repertoire Magda in *La Rondine*, the title role of *Luisa Miller*, Mimì in *La Bohème*, Lida in *La Battaglia di Legnano*, Amalia in *I Masnadieri*, Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*, and Marguerite in *Faust* (the latter of which she performed last season with New Israeli Opera). Later this year, Florian makes her house and role debut as Leonora in *Il Trovatore* at the Aalto Theater in Essen and returns to Den Norske Opera as Violetta.



**ATALLA AYAN**

(Belem, Brazil)

**Alfredo Germont**

Making his San Francisco Opera debut as Alfredo Germont in *La Traviata*, Atalla Ayan has quickly established himself as one of the most sought-after tenors of his generation. A member of the Stuttgart Opera since 2012, Ayan has been equally well received at major international houses, including the Metropolitan Opera (in the roles of Alfredo and Christian in *Cyrano de Bergerac*); Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (Alfredo, Ruggero in *La Rondine*, and Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*); Teatro alla Scala (Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*); the Bavarian State Opera in Munich (Nemorino); and Deutsche Oper Berlin (Rodolfo in *La Bohème*). Recent engagements include Alfredo at the Glyndebourne Festival, Rodolfo at the Cologne Opera, and the title role of *Faust* at Stuttgart Opera. Later this season, Ayan makes his debut at Paris' Opéra Bastille as Rodolfo and his role debut as Des Grieux in *Manon* at the Cologne Opera. He also returns to Stuttgart as Faust and to Covent Garden as Rodolfo.



**ARTUR RUCIŃSKI**

(Warsaw, Poland)

**Giorgio Germont**

Making his San Francisco Opera debut as Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata*, baritone Artur Ruciński experienced his career breakthrough in spring 2010, when conductor Daniel Barenboim invited him to sing the title role of *Eugene Onegin* under his baton and alongside tenor Rolando Villazón at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin.

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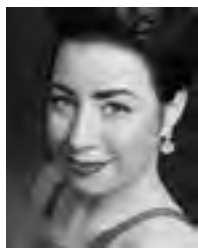
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Other career highlights include Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, Francesco di Moor in *I Masnadieri* at Venice's La Fenice, Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore* at the Salzburg Festival, Ford in *Falstaff* at Frankfurt Opera, Paolo Albani in *Simon Boccanegra* at La Scala, Giorgio Germont at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and the title role of *Don Giovanni* at Paris' Opéra Bastille. Future plans involve house debuts at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma (*I Masnadieri*) and Teatro Real in Madrid (*Il Trovatore*), as well as a return to Opéra Bastille (Marcello in *La Bohème* and the title role of *Gianni Schicchi*). Ruciński will also appear in concert with the Orchestra del Teatro Regio di Torino.



**RENÉE RAPIER**

(Marion, Iowa)

**Flora Bervoix**

After receiving her training as a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow (2012–13) and Los Angeles Opera Domingo Thornton

Young Artist, mezzo-soprano Renée Rapiér has gone on to make debuts with Los Angeles Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Ravinia Festival, and Seattle Opera. Her 2016–17 season included returns to Seattle Opera (Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*), Opera Parallèle, and a debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Rapiér was the 2012 winner of the Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition, and the 2013 Brava! Opera Theater and James M. Collier Young Artist Program Vocal Competition. She also was a 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions semifinalist, a finalist of the 2013 Seoul International Music Competition, and a semifinalist at Operalia 2015. She appeared as Mercédès in the Company's 2016 production of *Carmen* and made her San Francisco Opera debut as a Maid in Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*. Later this season, Rapiér makes her *Ring* cycle debut as Grimgerde in the Company's *Die Walküre*.



**AMITAI PATI**

(Auckland, New Zealand)

**Gastone**

A first-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow and tenor of Samoan descent,

Amitai Pati made his Company debut last summer as Matteo Borsa in *Rigoletto*. He was a participant in the 2016 Merola Opera Program, where he performed his first principal role as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*, and at the 2014 Young Singers Project in Salzburg. He won the Lexus SongQuest in 2012 and the Waiariki Institute of Technology New Zealand Aria competition in 2015. Pati, along with his brother, tenor Pene Pati, and their cousin, baritone Moses Mackay, comprise the highly successful New Zealand vocal trio Sol3 Mio, which mixes both classical and contemporary music, and performs at the War Memorial Opera House in December.



**PHILIP SKINNER**

(Jacksonville, Florida)

**Baron Doupoul**

Bass-baritone Philip Skinner made his San Francisco Opera debut as Quinault in the 1985 production of *Adriana Lecouvreur* and has

appeared with the Company in more than 35 roles, including as Edgar Ray Killen in the world premiere of Philip Glass' *Appomattox*, The Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*, and King Priam and the Ghost of Priam in *Les Troyens*. More recent engagements have been with Opera Parallèle as the Immigration Officer in Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, the Pacific Symphony as the King of Egypt in *Aida*, and San Diego Opera as Eric Gold and Ghost of Bazzetti in Jake Heggie's *Great Scott*. Skinner is a graduate of the Merola Opera Program and former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow.



**ANDREW G. MANEA**

(Troy, Michigan)

**Marquis d'Obigny**

Romanian-American baritone Andrew G. Manea made his San Francisco Opera debut as Marullo in *Rigoletto* last summer.

A first-year Adler Fellow, he is a 2016 graduate of the Merola Opera Program where he appeared as Irons Hans and Wolf in Conrad Susa's *Transformations*. He also performed as Escamillo in *Carmen* last year in Wuhan, China, as well as the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* and the title role of *Don Giovanni*. His competition credits include semifinalist and Encouragement Award recipient at the Metropolitan Opera

National Council Auditions and finalist in the Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition. He is a career grant recipient with the Giulio Gari Foundation.



**ANTHONY REED**

(Alexandria, Minnesota)

**Doctor Grenvil**

Bass Anthony Reed made his San Francisco Opera debut in various roles in 2015's *Les Troyens*. A

third-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, he has also appeared on the War Memorial Opera House stage as Tutor of Orest in *Elektra*, Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*, King of Egypt in *Aida*, Schmidt in *Andrea Chénier*, Mayor of the Village in *Jenůfa*, The Speaker and Second Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*, Hans Schwartz in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and Doctor Primus in Gordon Getty's *Usher House*. A participant of the 2014 Merola Opera Program, Reed received a 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Regional Encouragement Award and has been a young artist at the Wolf Trap Opera Studio and the Seagle Music Colony.



**AMINA EDRIS**

(Christchurch, New Zealand)

**Annina**

Egyptian-born, New Zealand soprano Amina Edris is a second-year San Francisco Opera Adler

Fellow who made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2016 as Frasquita in *Carmen*. More recent Company appearances include Klytemnestra's Trainbearer in *Elektra* and Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto*. She also appeared earlier this year as Tina in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at Opera Parallèle. A participant in the 2015 Merola Opera Program, Edris is a winner of the Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition, Sydney Eisteddfod McDonald's Operatic Aria Competition, and the Deborah Reidel award in the Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyngé Bel Canto Award Competition 2013, as well as being awarded a Western Regional Special Encouragement Award in the 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.



**CHRISTOPHER JACKSON**  
(Buffalo, New York)  
**Giuseppe**

A member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus, tenor Christopher Jackson made his Company

debut in 2009 as the Pony Express Rider in *La Fanciulla del West* and has appeared in solo roles in 14 other Company productions, including as Uncle Yakuside in *Madama Butterfly*, Jeppo Liverotto in *Lucrezia Borgia* and a Backwoodsman in *Show Boat*.

Career highlights include several roles at New York City Opera, including Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Calaf in *Turandot* with New York Grand Opera, Don José in *Carmen* with Anchorage Opera, and concert performances at Carnegie Hall.



**TORLEF BORSTING**  
(Hilo, Hawaii)  
**Flora's Servant**

A member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus, baritone Torlef Borsting made his Company solo debut in 2006 as a Soldier

in *The Maid of Orleans*. Most recently, he appeared as a Custom-House Officer in *La Bohème*, a Moroccan Soldier in the world premiere of Marco Tutino's *Two Women*, a member of the Quintet and Ensemble in *Sweeney Todd*, and a Man's Voice in *Jenůfa*. Other Bay Area credits include roles with Opera San Jose, Opera San Luis Obispo, Sacramento Opera, Eugene Opera, and Opera Parallèle.



**BOJAN KNEŽEVIĆ**  
(Belgrade, Serbia)  
**Messenger**

Bojan Knežević made his Company debut as Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata* in 1995 and has since appeared with the Company

in over 30 roles. Most recently, the bass-baritone and San Francisco Opera Chorus member appeared as an Old Servant in *Elektra*, a Custom-House Sergeant in *La Bohème*, Notary in *Don Pasquale*, Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and as a member of the Ensemble in *Sweeney Todd*. A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow and Merola alumnus, Knežević also performed the title

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**LORENA FEIJÓO**  
(Havana, Cuba)

**Solo Dancer**

Making her San Francisco Opera debut with *La Traviata*, award-winning dancer Lorena Feijóo trained at Escuela Nacional de

Ballet de Cuba. She performed with Ballet Nacional de Cuba, Ballet of Monterrey, Royal Ballet of Flanders, and the Joffrey Ballet before joining San Francisco Ballet as a principal dancer in 1999. As a guest artist, Feijóo has performed extensively, including pas de deux from *Don Quixote* at the Benois de la Danse Gala at the Bolshoi Theater in Moscow in 2011; Garcia's *Majismo* at the American Ballet Theatre gala honoring José Manuel Carreño in 2011; and in ACT's *The Tosca Project* in San Francisco in 2010. Later this season at San Francisco Opera, Feijóo creates the role of Lola Montez in the world premiere of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West*.



**BLANCHE HAMPTON**  
(San Francisco, California)

**Solo Dancer**

A tenured member of the San Francisco Opera Dance Corps, Blanche Hampton made her Company

role debut in 2011 as Princess Negroni in *Lucrezia Borgia*. More recent San Francisco Opera appearances include a Kurogo in last season's *Madama Butterfly*.



**BRYAN KETRON**  
(Richmond, Virginia)

**Solo Dancer**

Bryan Ketron has been a member of the San Francisco Opera Dance Corps since 2005 and has appeared as a soloist in *Nixon*

*in China*, *Die Tote Stadt*, and *Les Pêcheurs de Perles*. He received his early training at the Richmond Ballet in Virginia and has danced with the San Diego Opera, Oakland Ballet, Smuin Ballet, Ballet San Jose, Robert Moses' Kin, State Street Ballet, Inland Pacific Ballet, and Liss Fain Dance. He has also choreographed for Anchorage Opera and

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has been a guest artist for the San Francisco Bay Area dance schools, Berkeley Ballet Theater, Petaluma City Ballet, and Marin Dance Theatre.



**JOHN COPLEY**  
(Birmingham, England)  
**Production**

John Copley made his San Francisco Opera debut directing *Giulio Cesare* in 1982 and celebrated his thirtieth engagement with the Company in 2010 with *Le Nozze di Figaro*. In addition to *Orlando* and *Semele*, his other San Francisco Opera credits include seven seasons of *La Traviata*, the U.S. premiere of Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage*, *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Queen of Spades*, *Il Trovatore*, *Idomeneo*, *Anna Bolena*, *Peter Grimes*, *Manon*, and *Ariodante*. Among his U.S. credits are *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Madama Butterfly*, *Rodelinda*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Ermione* for the Dallas Opera; and *Semiramide* and *Il Pirata* for the Metropolitan Opera. Copley's production of *Madama Butterfly* inaugurated the Santa Fe Opera's new theater in 1998. He has also directed in Berlin, Munich, Amsterdam, and Brussels, as well as at Milan's La Scala and several seasons at Venice's La Fenice. Recent stagings include *Die Fledermaus* at Welsh National Opera, *La Bohème* at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and *Albert Herring* at the Grange Festival in Northington, England.



**SHAWNA LUCEY**  
(Houston, Texas)  
**Stage Director**

Shawna Lucey is making her San Francisco Opera directorial debut with *La Traviata*. She has worked at the Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Bolshoi Theater, and Schauspiel Hannover, assisting directors David McVicar, Francesca Zambello, Stephen Lawless, Lee Blakeley, John Caird, and Peter Schumann, among others. For San Francisco Opera, Lucey served as assistant director for several productions including, most recently, *La Bohème*, *Aida*, *Andrea Chénier*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. For five years, Lucey worked with theater institutions in Russia where her projects included directing

and designing a puppet version of Primo Levi's *If This Is a Man*, which debuted at the Moscow Art Theater and toured the country. Prior to that, she worked for New York's Bread and Puppet Theater for five years. Recent directorial engagements include *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* for Wichita Grand Opera and *The Pirates of Penzance* for Skylight Music Theater. Next summer, Lucey directs *L'Italiana in Algeri* for the Santa Fe Opera.



**JOHN CONKLIN**  
(Hartford, Connecticut)  
**Set Designer**

John Conklin made his San Francisco Opera debut with the 1977 production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*; his designs for that opera have since returned five times to the War Memorial Opera House stage, most recently in 2014. He created the original designs for Wagner's *Ring* cycle presented at San Francisco Opera between 1983 and 1985. His work has also been seen at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, the San Diego Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the Santa Fe Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera, among other U.S. companies. Conklin's designs have appeared at English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Bavarian State Opera, and Opera Australia. He has also designed for major theaters around the country, including the New York Shakespeare Festival, American Repertory Theater, Hartford Stage, Long Wharf Theatre, Arena Stage, the Mark Taper Forum, and the Goodman and Guthrie theaters. Conklin currently teaches at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.



**DAVID WALKER**  
(Kolkata, India)  
**Costume Designer**

Internationally known for his designs in both opera and ballet, the late David Walker made his San Francisco Opera debut with *La Traviata* in 1987 and returned for *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Manon*, and *Semele*. His work was also seen at the Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, among other companies. The British designer's credits at the Santa Fe Opera include costume design

## Operatic Paintings by Barbara Fracchia



*La Traviata*  
36 x 18, oil on canvas

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for *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Semele*, *La Traviata*, and *Agrippina*. For ballet companies, his credits include costume design for *Cinderella* and sets and costumes for *The Sleeping Beauty* for the Royal Ballet, *Giselle* and *La Sylphide* for London Festival Ballet, and *Swan Lake* for Houston Ballet. Theater credits include designing costumes for *London Assurance* for the Royal Shakespeare Company.



**GARY MARDER**  
(San Diego, California)  
**Lighting Designer**  
Resident lighting designer for San Francisco Opera, Gary Marder made his Company debut with *Mefistofele* in 2013, and

his lighting designs most recently appeared in the Company's *Turandot*, *Don Giovanni*, *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Marder's other work includes *Madama Butterfly* in Washington D.C.; *The Magic Flute* in Sydney; *La Traviata* at Turin's Teatro Regio as well as in Tokyo; *The Makropulos Case* and *Samson et Dalila* at Houston Grand Opera; and *Samson et Dalila*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Carmen*, *Peter Grimes*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and *Norma* at San Diego Opera. Marder previously served as assistant resident lighting designer for the Metropolitan Opera for 12 seasons and associate resident lighting designer at New York City Opera for five years. Later this fall, his designs appear in the Company's *Manon*.



**CAROLA ZERTUCHE**  
(Torreon, Mexico)  
**Choreographer**  
Making her San Francisco Opera debut, Carola Zertuche currently serves as the artistic director of Theatre Flamenco,

which celebrated its 50th year in 2016. She has toured throughout Mexico, the United States, and the Middle East with highly revered flamenco companies including Maria Benitez Teatro Flamenco, and she has danced at New York's Joyce Theater, the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in western Massachusetts, the Lencic in Santa Fe, the Tablao Flamenco in Albuquerque, and the Fox Theatre in Atlanta. Zertuche has collaborated on projects with La Tania as guest artist with the Domingo Ortega Flamenco Company in Los Angeles, with the Andrés Marín Company in the First

Flamenco Festival San Francisco, and as a special guest artist with the Juan Siddi Flamenco Santa Fe Theatre Company at the Royal Daphna Hall in Doha, Qatar. Zertuche's work was showcased in the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival from 2002 to 2009, the Santa Barbara Ethnic Dance Festival in 2001, and at the Flamenco Festivals in Monterrey, Mexico and Mexico City.



**IAN ROBERTSON**  
(Dundee, Scotland)  
**Chorus Director**  
Recipient of the 2012 San Francisco Opera Medal, Ian Robertson has been chorus director and conductor with

San Francisco Opera since 1987, having prepared more than 300 productions for the Company. He was awarded the Olivier Messiaen Foundation Prize in 2003 for his artistic contribution to the preparation of the Company's North American premiere of *Saint François d'Assise*. Robertson has also conducted ten main stage productions with the Company. Other North American opera credits include productions with Sarasota Opera, Edmonton Opera, and Philadelphia's Curtis Opera Theatre. Before joining San Francisco Opera, Robertson was head of music and chorus director of Scottish Opera. He currently serves as artistic director of the San Francisco Boys Chorus.



**LAWRENCE PECH**  
(San Francisco, California)  
**Dance Master**  
Lawrence Pech is in his 22nd season as dance master and resident choreographer for San Francisco Opera. He

has created period and interpretive dances on more than 60 productions with the Company. Pech received his formal training from American Ballet Theatre (ABT) and was invited by Mikhail Baryshnikov to join that company in 1980. In 1986, he joined San Francisco Ballet, where he became a principal dancer in 1989. Pech founded two of his own dance companies and has choreographed more than 50 ballets, 30 musicals, and numerous self-produced evenings of music and dance around the world.



**DAVIE MAIER**  
(Great Neck, New York)  
**Fight Director**  
Resident fight director for San Francisco Opera, Dave Maier made his Company debut in 2013 with *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

His work has most recently appeared in the Company's *Turandot*, *Elektra*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Bohème*, *Aida*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, *Jenůfa*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Maier has directed fight scenes for American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Jose Repertory, Aurora Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, and Magic Theatre, among others. He is a five-time recipient of the San Francisco Bay Area Drama Critics Circle Award for Fight Direction, as well as an adjunct faculty member at the University of California Santa Cruz and St. Mary's College of California. He currently teaches combat-related courses in Berkeley.

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Laurel Cameron Porter	William Pickersgill
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Shelley Seitz	Valery Portnov
Carole Schaffer*	Ken Rafanan †
Donna Turchi	Colby Roberts
Mitzie Weiner	Sigmund Seigel
	Dan Stanley
	Jere Torkelsen*
	Andrew Truett
	Richard Walker †

† Chorus member on Leave of Absence

\* Chorus member appearing in a Solo Role

**EXTRA CHORUS**

Elizabeth Baker*	Ben Brady
Jennifer Brody	Stephen Cannon*
Cheryl Cain	Adam Flowers
Katie Carlson	Peter Girardôt
Kristin Clayton	Patrick Hagen
Margaret Genovese	Thomas Hart
Karen Winner Huff	Harlan Hays
Silvie Jensen	Bradley Kynard*
Carolyne Anne Jordan	Michael P.
Eileen Meredith	Mendelsohn
Aimée Puentes	Jim Meyer
Whitney Steele	Jim Monios
Nicole Takesono	Jess G. Perry
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	Pedro Rodelas
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	Michael Taylor
	Nicholas Volkert

# CORPS DANCERS

Lawrence Pech, *Dance Master*

Dwayne Brown	Brook Broughton†*
Bryan Ketron†*	Alysia Chang
Michael Levine†	Jamielyn Duggan
Jekyns Pelaez†*	Lorena Feijóo*
	Alexandra FitzGibbon
	Blanche Hampton†*
	Rachel Speidel Little*
	Laura O'Malley*
	Chiharu Shibata†

† Tenured

\* Solo Dancer

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# ORCHESTRA

Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director*

Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair

## FIRST VIOLIN

Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*  
 Laura Albers, *Associate Concertmaster\**  
 Heidi Wilcox, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
 Jennifer Cho  
 Dawn Harms  
 Mariya Borozina  
 Lev Rankov  
 Barbara Riccardi  
 Dian Zhang  
 Leonid Igudesman  
 Jennifer Hsieh  
 Asuka Annie Yano

## SECOND VIOLIN

Jeremy Preston, *Principal*  
 Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*  
 Beni Shinohara, *Assistant Principal*  
 Eva Karasik  
 Maya Cohon  
 Leslie Ludena  
 Linda Deutsch Twohy†  
 Craig Reiss  
 Heeguen Song \*\*

## VIOLA

Carla Maria Rodrigues, *Principal*  
 Sergey Rakitchenkov, *Associate Principal\**  
 Paul Nahhas, *Assistant Principal*  
 Patricia Heller  
 Jonna Hervig  
 Natalia Vershilova  
 Joy Fellows

## CELLO

David Kadarau, *Principal*  
 Thalia Moore, *Associate Principal\**  
 Peter Myers, *Assistant Principal*  
 Nora Pirquet  
 Emil Miland  
 Victoria Ehrlich  
 Ruth Lane

## BASS

Joseph Lescher, *Principal*  
 Jonathan Lancelle, *Associate Principal*  
 Steven D'Amico, *Assistant Principal*  
 Shinji Eshima  
 Mark Drury

## FLUTE

Julie McKenzie, *Principal*  
 Patricia Farrell  
 Stephanie McNab

## PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

## OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*  
 Deborah Henry, *Assistant Principal*†  
 Deborah Shidler\*\*  
 Janet Popesco Archibald

## ENGLISH HORN

Janet Popesco Archibald

## CLARINET

Jose Gonzalez Granero, *Principal*  
 Joanne Burke Eisler, *Assistant Principal*  
 Anthony Striplen

## BASS CLARINET

Anthony Striplen

## BASSOON

Rufus Olivier, *Principal*  
 Daniel MacNeill  
 Michael Severance

## CONTRABASSOON

Michael Severance

## HORN

Kevin Rivard, *Co-Principal*  
 Mark Almond, *Co-Principal*  
 Keith Green  
 Brian McCarty  
 Lawrence Ragent

## TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*  
 William Holmes†  
 Scott Macomber\*\*  
 John Pearson

## TROMBONE

Samuel Schlosser, *Principal*†  
 Jeffrey Budin, *Principal*\*\*  
 Donald Kennelly  
 David Ridge

## TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman

## TIMPANI

John Burgardt

## PERCUSSION

Richard Kvistad, *Principal/Associate Timpani*  
 Patricia Niemi

## HARP

Olga Ortenberg-Rakitchenkov

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Carrie Weick  
 Timothy Spears, *Assistant*

## ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Tracy Davis  
 Timothy Spears, *Assistant*

\* Principal for one or more fall season operas

† Leave of absence

\*\* Season substitute



# ORCHESTRA



Kay Stern  
Concertmaster



Laura Albers  
Associate Concertmaster



Heidi Wilcox  
Assistant Concertmaster



Jennifer Cho  
First Violin



Dawn Harms  
First Violin



Mariya Borozina  
First Violin



Barbara Riccardi  
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman  
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano  
First Violin



Jeremy Preston  
Principal  
Second Violin



Martha Simonds  
Associate Principal  
Second Violin



Beni Shinohara  
Assistant Principal  
Second Violin



Eva Karasik  
Second Violin



Leslie Ludena  
Second Violin



Linda Deutsch  
Second Violin



Craig Reiss  
Second Violin



Carla Maria Rodrigues  
Principal  
Viola



Sergey Rakitchenkov  
Associate Principal  
Viola



Paul Nahhas  
Assistant Principal  
Viola



Patricia Heller  
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Jonna Hervig  
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Natalia Vershilova  
Viola



Joy Fellows  
Viola



David Kadarrauch  
Principal  
Cello



Thalia Moore  
Associate Principal  
Cello



Peter Myers  
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Nora Pirquet  
Cello



Emil Miland  
Cello



Victoria Ehrlich  
Cello



Ruth Lane  
Cello



Joseph Lescher  
Principal  
Bass



Jonathan Lancelle  
Associate Principal  
Bass



Steven D'Amico  
Assistant Principal  
Bass



Shinji Eshima  
Bass



Mark Drury  
Bass

# SAN FRANCISCO ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



Julie McKenzie  
Principal  
Flute



Patricia Farrell  
Flute



Stephanie McNab  
Flute & Piccolo



Mingjia Liu  
Principal  
Oboe



Deborah Henry  
Assistant Principal  
Oboe



Janet Popesco  
Archibald  
Oboe & English Horn



Deborah Shidler  
Oboe  
Regular Substitute



Jose Gonzalez  
Granero  
Principal Clarinet



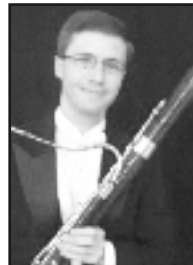
Joanne Burke Eisler  
Assistant Principal  
Clarinet



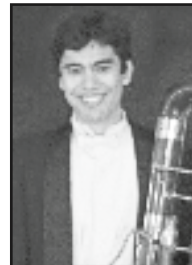
Anthony Striplen  
Clarinet &  
Bass Clarinet



Rufus Olivier  
Principal  
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill  
Bassoon



Michael Severance  
Bassoon &  
Contrabassoon



Kevin Rivard  
Co-Principal  
Horn



Mark Almond  
Co-Principal  
Horn



Keith Green  
Horn



Brian McCarty  
Horn



Lawrence Ragent  
Horn



William Klingelhoffer  
Horn  
Regular Substitute



Adam Luftman  
Principal  
Trumpet



William Holmes  
Trumpet



John Pearson  
Trumpet



Scott Macomber  
Trumpet  
Regular Substitute



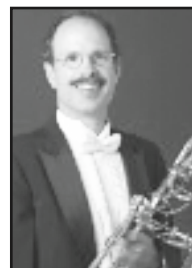
Samuel Schlosser  
Principal Trombone



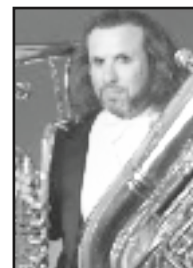
Jeffrey Budin  
Principal Trombone  
Regular Substitute



Donald Kennelly  
Trombone



David Ridge  
Trombone &  
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman  
Tuba/Cimbasso



John Burgardt  
Timpani



Richard Kvistad  
Principal Percussion &  
Associate Timpani



Patricia Niemi  
Percussion



Olga Ortenberg  
Rakitchenkov  
Harp



Tracy Davis  
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick  
Librarian

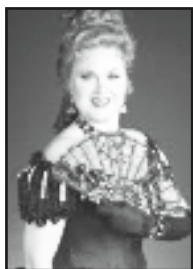


Timothy Spears  
Assistant Orchestra  
Manager & Librarian

**Most photos by John Martin. Not pictured:** Lev Rankov, Dian Zhang, and Jennifer Hsieh, *First Violin* and Maya Cohon, *Second Violin*



# REGULAR CHORUS



Kathleen Bayler  
*Soprano*



Sara Colburn  
*Soprano*



Dvora Djoraev  
*Soprano*



Mary Finch  
*Soprano*



Claire Kelm  
*Soprano*



Elisabeth Rom Lucio  
*Soprano*



Angela Eden Moser  
*Soprano*



Rachelle Perry  
*Soprano*



Virginia Pluth  
*Soprano*



Carole Schaffer  
*Soprano*



Mitzie Kay Weiner  
*Soprano*



Buffy Baggott  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Roberta Bowman  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Janet Campbell  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Sally Mouzon  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Sally Munro  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Erin Neff  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Laurel Porter  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Laurel Rice  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Shelley Seitz  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Claudia Siefer  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



Donna Turchi  
*Mezzo-Soprano*



C. Michael Belle  
*Tenor*



Alan Cochran  
*Tenor*



Chris Corley  
*Tenor*



Daniel Harper  
*Tenor*



Christopher Jackson  
*Tenor*



Michael Jankosky  
*Tenor*



Phillip Pickens  
*Tenor*



Chester Pidduck  
*Tenor*



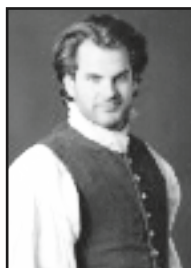
Colby Roberts  
*Tenor*



Sigmund Seigel  
*Tenor*



Dan Stanley  
*Tenor*



Andrew Truett  
*Tenor*



Richard Walker  
*Tenor*

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



Torlef Borsting  
*Baritone*



Anders Fröhlich  
*Baritone*



Cameron Henley  
*Baritone*



Ken Johnson  
*Baritone*



David Kekuewa  
*Baritone*



Frederick Matthews  
*Baritone*



Ken Rafanan  
*Baritone*  
*Leave of Absence*



Jere Torkelsen  
*Baritone*



Christopher Filipowicz  
*Bass*



Bojan Knežević  
*Bass*



William O'Neill  
*Bass*



William Pickersgill  
*Bass*



Valery Portnov  
*Bass*

*Most photos by John Martin. Carole Schaffer and Claudia Siefer photos by Pamela Dale.*

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

# CORPS DANCERS



Brook Broughton



Blanche Hampton



Bryan Ketron



Michael Levine



Rachel Speidel Little



Jekyns Pelaez



Chiharu Shibata





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Bernice Lindstrom,  
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John W. Lindstrom  
Dr. & Mrs. H. H. Loomis, Jr.  
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M.D.  
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**FIRST-YEAR REFLECTIONS**


There is an old quip that “life is short; opera is long; Wagner is eternal.” Opera time is certainly an odd phenomenon. On the one hand, we can bring time to a halt through achingly beautiful artistry in which we lose ourselves for hours as the world buzzes around us. On the other hand, we are one of the most tightly scheduled enterprises known to mankind. Everything happens in precise order and is often planned years into the future. I can tell you exactly what I’ll be doing at 6 p.m. on June 5, 2020. (It’s a piano technical rehearsal for the *(R)evolution of Steve Jobs*.) This duality of opera time makes reflecting on a year in this business an intriguing phenomenon.


Although I’ve been working here since 2005, this first year as your general director has been an incredible opportunity to see the Company from a new vantage point. I thought it might be interesting to share a few of my first-year observations with you.

1. **The breadth of talent here is phenomenal.** I knew from the moment I set foot in this building in 2002 that San Francisco Opera is capable of extraordinary art. One of the greatest privileges of the past year has been spending time with all the areas of the Company, understanding even more the dedication and talents creating that extraordinary art.
2. **Programming is emotionally charged.** As we work to design future seasons, I realize increasingly the emotional bond that comes when you are putting together a cast and creative team. There are so many pieces to come together that when it works it is elating, and when something goes awry, it is heartbreaking.
3. **This city is an incredible opportunity.** As I’ve had more interactions with other arts organizations, as we worked through Prop. 53 last year, and as we think strategically about our place within our broader community, I am increasingly in awe of the unique moment in which we exist. Today’s Bay Area is one of the most fertile moments of possibility in world history, and we’re at the nexus of that vitality. That’s a very exciting reality to seize!
4. **Our assumptions need to change.** It used to be that if you performed title x with singer y you could expect an audience of z. Nationwide that predictability has eroded in the past five years. Our assumptions need to change, and change quickly as we work to understand the dynamically changing region around us.
5. **You have to show up if you want a place at the table.** I’ve had the chance to travel to other companies, including European festivals, this year. This has been a chance to meet other general directors, talk about shared programming aspirations, and explore intriguing collaborative ideas. Through these interactions, you realize there’s no substitute for a face-to-face relationship. This is the time when we’re building our next generation of global partners, and it’s a very exciting process.
6. **The greatest positivity comes from patron conversations.** Being in this role gives one wonderful time with patrons, subscribers, and donors, and there is an exhilarating, positive energy that comes from those conversations. The level of dedication people have to San Francisco Opera is manifested in an inspiring passion and care for the art form. As we think about future programming, there is no greater creative spark plug than the energy of our audience.

As I move into my second year, I am so grateful for the kindness, support, and trust that this company and community have given me. I think this will always be a “pinch-me-it-can’t-be-real” job. The chance to work with you all in the creative arc of opera, from conception to creation to experience, is a thrillingly exciting one. I am committed to listening, learning, refining, and propelling this company forward towards our second century. It’s a privilege to be on this journey with you. 🌟

Connect with Matthew via Twitter, Instagram, and email.

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# YOUR OPERA EXPERIENCE

The **OPERA BOX OFFICE** is located in the Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, and is open Monday 10 AM–5 PM, Tuesday through Saturday 10 AM–6 PM, and through the first intermission on performance days. Tickets may also be charged by phone at (415) 864-3330 or ordered online at [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com). We accept American Express, VISA, MasterCard, and Discover.

If you are unable to use your tickets to a particular performance, you may exchange them for tickets to another performance, subject to availability, or donate them back to the Opera. Ticket exchanges for future performances can be accommodated up to one hour before curtain or during the first intermission. No refunds are associated with ticket exchanges, and a fee (plus any price differential) may apply.

**ACCESSIBILITY** San Francisco Opera is committed to providing easy access for all of our patrons. Please contact the Opera Box Office prior to your visit so that we can ensure your comfort.

**For Patrons in 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.

**LISTENING DEVICES** Assistive listening devices are available at the North and South Lobby coat checks. 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.

**DINING AND REFRESHMENTS** The Patina Group serves an elegant hot buffet in the lower lounge of the Opera House beginning two hours prior to all performances. Lighter fare is

San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and the San Francisco Symphony are experimenting with allowing audiences to enjoy beverages in the auditorium.

You may bring drinks purchased in the Opera House into the auditorium, as long as they are in the approved compostable cup with a lid, which is available at all bars.

## Performance Etiquette

- Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices before the performance, including digital watches and cell phones.
- No cameras or recording equipment are permitted in the Opera House.
- As a courtesy to those who may have fragrance allergies, please avoid wearing perfume or cologne.
- Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket; no babes in arms.

*Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.*

also served before performances and during intermissions at Patina's Café Express (Lower level) and Dress Circle Café. Call (415) 861-8150 or visit [opentable.com](http://opentable.com) for reservations or to pre-order. Patrons dining in the Opera House may enter through the North Carriage entrance (adjacent to the War Memorial courtyard) up to two hours prior to curtain.

The **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SHOP**, located on the South Mezzanine level of the Opera House, sells opera CDs, DVDs, SF Opera merchandise, and gift items. The Shop is open 90 minutes before performances, at

intermissions, and afterward. All proceeds benefit San Francisco Opera.

**COAT CHECK** For the safety and comfort of our audience, all large parcels, backpacks, luggage, etc. must be checked at the Opera House coat check, located at the North and South ends of the Main Lobby.

**COURTESY TELEPHONE**, for local calls only, is located in the main lobby across from the South passenger elevator

**DRINKING FOUNTAINS** are available on all levels except the Lower level, where there is a courtesy water station on the north side. Water bottles are permitted in the auditorium.

**OPERA GLASSES** may be rented for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested.

**LARGE PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSIS** are available at the coat check stations in the main lobby.

**FIRST AID STATION** is located on the South Lower level. In case of emergency, please ask the nearest usher to assist you.

**LOST AND FOUND** items may be 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 AM–5 PM, Monday–Friday).

**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. Accommodations are provided on a first come, first served basis, and cannot be guaranteed as service is based on availability of licensed taxis. Staff will be on hand to assist.

## San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center War Memorial Opera House

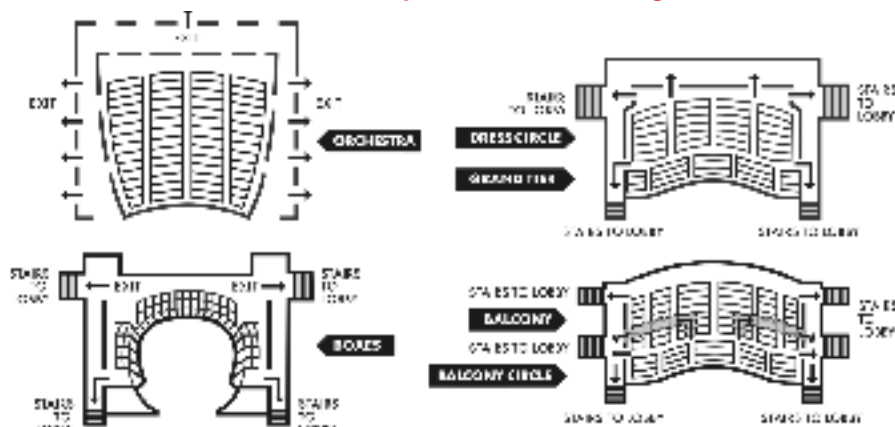
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