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On the cover:

Omar Gasparini
Mural Escenográfico
Photo credit: Marco Scalisi
The street art stands at the entrance of the La Boca district in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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Encore Media Group
Corporate Office
425 North 85th Street
Seattle, WA 98103
p 800.308.2898 | 206.443.0445
f 206.443.1246
info@encoremidiagroup.com
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A MESSAGE FROM

THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to San Francisco Opera's 96th season! After an extraordinarily successful run of Wagner's *Ring* cycle this summer, we are delighted that you have joined us at the War Memorial Opera House for another unforgettable year of opera.

This fall, San Francisco Opera presents five emotionally thrilling productions, all of which are new to our stage. They include the perennial favorite double bill of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*,



DREW AUTIZER

Keith B. Geeslin and John A. Gunn

the beautiful and rarely performed *Roberto Devereux* starring Sondra Radvanovsky and Russell Thomas, a sumptuously romantic *Arabella*, and a magnificent new production of *Tosca*, an opera closely identified with San Francisco Opera since our founding in 1923, with Carmen Giannattasio making her Company debut in the title role. We are also thrilled to be presenting the West Coast premiere of *It's a Wonderful Life* by beloved Bay Area composer Jake Heggie.

As always, we partner with the San Francisco Opera Guild in celebrating the excitement of a new season with Opera Ball. This elegant celebration and its companion BRAVO! Club gala are just one part of a busy opening weekend of opera, which includes our annual free Opera in the Park concert in Golden Gate Park's Robin Williams Meadow, presented with the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Special thanks go to Diane B. Wilsey for her sponsorship of opening weekend, to Opera Ball Co-chairs Shannon Cronan and Kathy Huber, and San Francisco Opera Guild President Jane Mudge for all their hard work and dedication.

This season is made possible by our talented guest artists, orchestra, chorus, dance corps, staff, and crew who create the uniquely compelling art form that is opera. It is also made possible by you, our community of patrons and donors, whose loyal support keeps San Francisco Opera at the forefront of opera companies worldwide. We extend special thanks to our Company sponsors for their extraordinary annual support. They include the Dolby family, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Ann and Gordon Getty, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, 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, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey, and Barbara A. Wolfe. We also wish to recognize our generous Season Sponsor, Wells Fargo, and our Corporate Partners, Chevron and United Airlines.

Thank you for joining us, and for helping us make it possible to share opera's transformative power with tens of thousands of music lovers this season!

John A. Gunn
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Did You Know?

For the Company's current production of *Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci*, incorporating the sights and sounds of the Italian quarter of Buenos Aires, Argentina, the song "Caminito" by Carlos Gardel (1890–1935) sets the scene. The French-born tango singer, actor, and songwriter died tragically in an airplane crash in Medellín, Colombia at the height of his career.

Cavalleria Rusticana composer Pietro Mascagni and *Pagliacci* composer Ruggero Leoncavallo were warmly received in San Francisco during their separate U.S. tours in the early 20th century. In appreciation of the city, Mascagni wrote a piece for piano in February 1903 entitled *Un pensiero a San Francisco* (*A Thought for San Francisco*), which was published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"Vesti la giubba" from *Pagliacci* might be one of the most borrowed operatic arias in American popular culture. Prominently used in the 1987 film *The Untouchables*, an episode of *The Simpsons*, and in the 1984 Queen song "It's a Hard Life," it was also popularized in a '60s-era Rice Krispies advertisement, named one of the top 10 TV commercials of all time by *Entertainment Weekly*.

Queen Elizabeth I, who is the subject of the Company's current production of *Roberto Devereux*, was both an avid arts patron and lover of languages. She was known to be fluent in French, Italian, and Latin, and is also believed to have spoken Spanish, Irish, Welsh, Greek, Flemish—and the now nearly obsolete tongue of Cornish.

Although she was the only English queen who never married, Elizabeth I (1533–1603) received wedding proposals from King Philip II of Spain, King Eric XIV of Sweden, Archduke Charles of Austria, and French brothers Henry III and Francis, Dukes of Anjou. She died at age 69, the last of the five kings and queens to rule under the Tudor dynasty.

New Dining Options at the War Memorial Opera House



Global Gourmet Catering has been selected as the new exclusive in-house food and beverage services provider for the San Francisco War Memorial & Performing Arts Center and Opera House, effective August 1. Based in the Bay Area, Global Gourmet Catering is known for specializing in highly customized, large-scale catering, high-end weddings and receptions, intimate fine dining experiences, and for providing the highest caliber concession food and beverage services.

"We have tremendous respect for San Francisco Opera, and we are excited to be able to celebrate and emulate this fine institution with our service, food, and beverage offerings. We believe that every patron who visits the War Memorial Opera House should have a holistic experience from start to finish," says Global Gourmet Catering Chief Executive Officer Laura Lyons.

Global Gourmet will operate pre-show and intermission food and beverage concession services in lobby areas. **The Café at the Opera**, located in the lower lounge of the Opera House, will offer a changing seasonal buffet and elevated *à la carte* dishes for pre-performance dining and intermission. **The North Box Restaurant** on the North Mezzanine (Box) level will feature locally sourced California cuisine with global influences.

Opera patrons will be able to enjoy snacks, sandwiches, and drinks in the newly renovated **Dress Circle Lounge** and enjoy small bites and a variety of premium wines and spirits at **Café Express**.

Call (415) 861-8150 or visit opentable.com for dining 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.

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New Company Staff Appointments

CORY WEAVER



Over the summer, San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock announced two new appointments to the Company's senior staff.

Director of Human Resources **Sarah DeCuir** joins the Opera after serving as the senior vice president of human capital for a real estate development startup in San Francisco. While there, she created its human resources department, spearheaded all recruiting efforts, and helped create an innovative, collaborative, and energized organizational culture. Her professional credits include serving as the director of human resources for Paramedics Plus, Alameda County's 911 provider, where she oversaw the recruitment and selection process, employee compensation plans, employee benefits, health and wellness, organizational development and training, payroll, labor relations, and affirmative action. An opera newbie with an abiding interest in alternative rock music, Sarah studied at the Academy of Art and resides in the East Bay with her family.

CORY WEAVER



San Francisco Opera is also pleased to announce the appointment of Director of Development **Andrew Morgan**. Andrew joined the Company's development department in 2008, holding key leadership roles over the past ten years and, today, overseeing a team of 24 professionals in leadership and individual gifts, corporate and institutional giving, donor stewardship, and special events. His distinguished and recent accomplishments have included managing the Company's Wilsey Center capital campaign, the David Gockley Gala and 2018 *Ring* fundraising efforts, as well as serving on the Opera's Medallion Committee. Andrew holds a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has both performed and directed in the Bay Area with Chanticleer, Philharmonia Baroque, American Bach Soloists, San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Berkeley Opera, and Pocket Opera. Andrew resides in San Francisco with his family.

Chorus Concert in November

The San Francisco Opera Chorus will offer a public concert of sacred, secular, and operatic music on **Friday, November 30 at 7:30 p.m.**, in the intimate Taube Atrium Theater of the Wilsey Center for Opera. Under the baton of Chorus Director Ian Robertson, with assistance from Associate Chorus Master and pianist Fabrizio Corona, the 47-member chorus will take center stage in an eclectic blend of musical selections.

The Opera Chorus was established in 1927 by General Director Gaetano Merola who also served as the ensemble's director through 1943. As part of General Director Kurt Herbert Adler's development of the Company, the Chorus became full-time in 1981, working a minimum of 31 weeks, typically from March through early December. The Opera Chorus was the subject of the 1992 Academy Award-winning feature-length documentary *In the Shadow of the Stars* and has been featured in numerous video presentations.

Tickets for the choral concert are \$35 and available now at the San Francisco Opera Box Office or by visiting sfopera.com/chorusconcert.

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA *Profile*

Darin Burnett

Production Stage Manager

Since 2009, Darin Burnett has “called shows” for San Francisco Opera from the stage manager’s console backstage. To perform this crucial service, he wears a headset, operates innumerable knobs, switches, and levers, and manages every performance detail, ensuring that the show does, in fact, go on. With one eye on the conductor, Burnett follows along in his own heavily annotated score while quietly giving cues to everyone involved in the artistic and technical aspects of presenting the opera. Stage managers are, by necessity, the ultimate multitaskers; Burnett’s unflappable calm while synthesizing music, drama, visual elements, technology, stage craft, and an army of personnel into a smooth-running performance is no mean task.

“In a sense, my job is to tell everyone what to do and when,” Burnett says. “You’re sort of like an air traffic controller: isolated in one place, seeing the big picture and making sure everything is happening safely and on time.” In addition to the ability to read music and follow the conductor, the job requires an intangible “it” factor. “You have to be a leader and be able to galvanize people to do what needs to happen,” he says.

To observe Burnett calling a show at the console is akin to witnessing a master class on grace and precision under pressure. Every few seconds he gives instructions while simultaneously receiving updates on every detail of how the performance is going. “At San Francisco Opera, we have many different communication channels on our headsets, one each for the lighting design team, spotlight operators, backstage electricians, the carpenters who move the stage elements, sound technicians, stage management, and so on. Everybody is separated by department which is good because I can talk to everybody at once or each group individually.” Adding even greater complexity, Burnett constantly listens to all the



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groups at once. “Each channel is its own party line and I’m listening to all of them at the same time. Sometimes it’s no big deal, but there are times when you want to rip the headset off your head because your ear just can’t take it anymore.”

“I am generally not someone who gets riled, even when there is chaos around me,” he says. “That comes partly from experience, but I think the key is to focus, clear your head, and always be thinking ahead so that you can not only be in the moment, but also be ready for what is coming next. If you can do that, then you won’t be stressed when it’s busy or when things go wrong.”

A stage manager’s opera score typically has dozens of tabs and multicolored sticky notes on each page. To the uninitiated, this visual cacophony can look daunting, but to Burnett and his team of stage managers each colored note represents a specific instruction and precisely when it must be delivered. These moments also have warning cues that are issued in advance, a handy system that alerts Burnett if a possible problem is brewing backstage—a broken piece of scenery, a faulty pyrotechnic effect, a singer battling stage fright—so he can troubleshoot promptly and safely before the performance underway is affected. “In opera, the stage manager is giving warnings for everything before it happens. Even before singers make their entrances on stage, we page them over the backstage PA system: ‘Ms. so-and-so to the stage, please.’”

“The ultimate goal of a good stage manager is to support everyone involved throughout the entire production process and to deliver smooth performances in which all the elements come together seamlessly. Although there are many of us backstage out of sight, we all feel a real sense of pride in hearing the audience react to the performance.”

— JEFFERY McMILLAN



In Honor of John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn

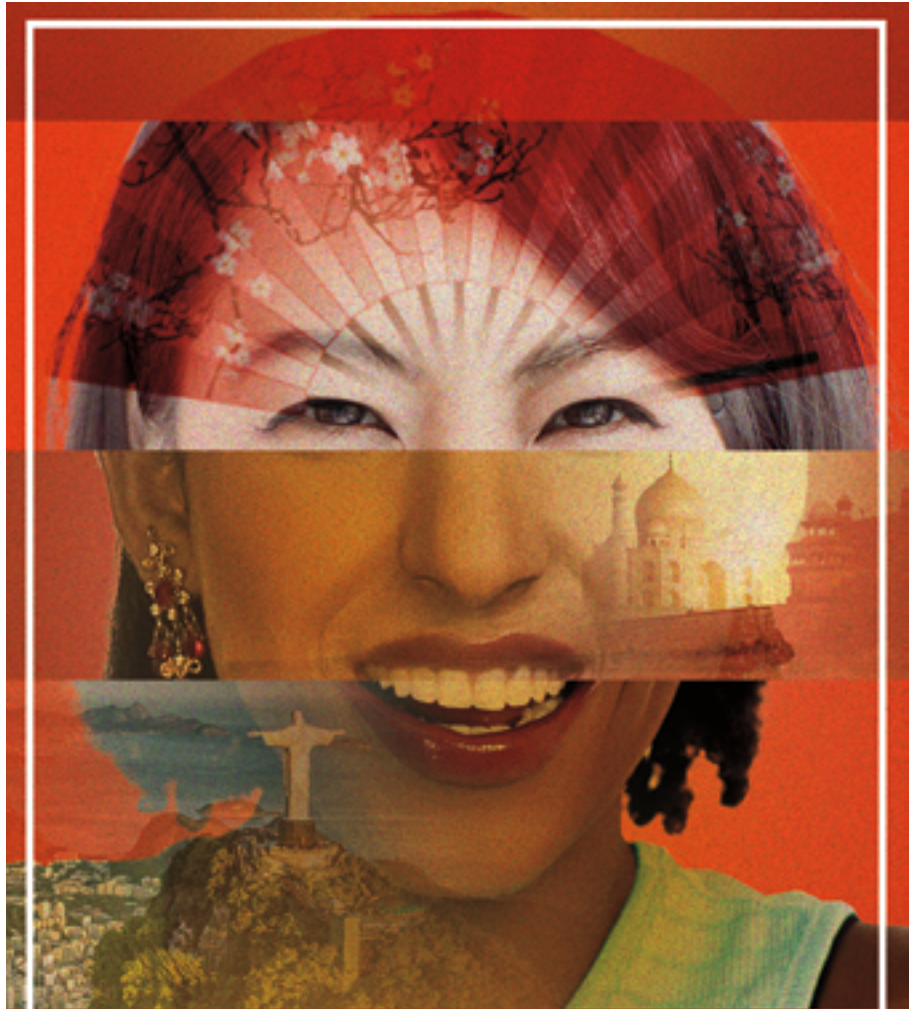
San Francisco Opera Guild presents *An Evening on the Stage* honoring longtime San Francisco Opera and Opera Guild supporters John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn. Co-chaired by Kim Dempster and Linle J. Froeb, this celebratory black-tie gala helps support San Francisco Opera Guild's education and outreach programs that reach more than 50,000 students in nearly 200 schools throughout Northern California.

On **Wednesday, November 28, 2018**, the evening starts at 6 p.m. with cocktails in the lobby of the War Memorial Opera House. A lavish onstage dinner, prepared by McCalls Catering with décor by designer J. Riccardo Benavides, is followed by dancing to the music of the local band Notorious.

The Gunns have been generous supporters of the Company since John joined the Opera Board in 2002. In addition to their support of San Francisco Opera, 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 Museum.

Individual tickets for *An Evening on the Stage* are priced at \$1,250, \$2,500, \$5,000, and \$7,500; seating is limited. For tickets and more information, contact San Francisco Opera Guild at (415) 565-3204.

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BY KIP CRANNA

ALL HAIL PLÁCIDO!

KAORI SUZUKI

The indefatigable “King of Opera” returns to San Francisco Opera on October 21 for a special sold-out concert

As San Francisco Opera prepares to welcome the world-renowned opera superstar—and local favorite—Plácido Domingo back to the War Memorial Opera House for a program with the Opera Orchestra, his admirers will surely reflect on the tenor’s long and remarkable history with the Company. And why not start our recollections with the most remarkable event of all? For many longtime Opera patrons, it’s hard to believe that this year marks the 35th anniversary of Plácido’s most celebrated appearance here (among many memorable performances): his legendary “saving” of the 1983 season opener by flying cross-country from New York in a private plane as a last-minute replacement in the title role of *Otello*. As Mr. Domingo himself has remarked, “It was one of those performances: you know, there are 3,000 seats in the War Memorial Opera House, but today there are probably 20,000 people who say they were there that evening.”

And those of us who *were* among the lucky 3,000 will certainly never forget it. The gala Opera Ball scheduled to take place after the show was instead held before it, to give Domingo’s plane enough time to arrive. A well-lubricated crowd finally sat down to a performance that began at 10:30 p.m., and they remained—loyal and enthralled—until it ended (after four acts and three intermissions) at 2 a.m. (The stage manager’s report for that performance is a masterpiece of understatement: “The role of *Otello* was sung by Plácido Domingo. The performance was delayed because of Mr. Domingo’s late arrival.”)

What the evening demonstrated above all wasn’t only the famous tenor’s unsurpassed sense of adventure, but also his admirable professionalism, stamina, and dedication to his fans—all this, of course, combined with the matchless vocal talents, viscerally thrilling sound, astounding musical acumen, and vivid onstage charisma that have made his name a household word. In fact, in today’s digital age characterized by myriad options for getting one’s information, he is arguably the only living classical singer whose stardom extends beyond operatic circles to the “man on the street.”

The 1983 *Otello* was not Mr. Domingo’s first rescue for San

Francisco Opera. His Company debut in 1969 at age 28, as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, was also an eleventh-hour substitution. (Devotees of the wildly popular “Three Tenors” concerts of the 1990s and early 2000s might be interested in a noteworthy coincidence: each of the three made his San Francisco Opera debut as Rodolfo: Luciano Pavarotti two years before Domingo, in 1967, and José Carreras just a few years later in 1973.) Domingo saved the day for San Francisco Opera yet again in 1971, substituting as Manrico in *Il Trovatore*, opposite the Leonora of Leontyne Price.

Domingo’s versatility and can-do spirit were also on display in 1980, this time at an Opera in the Park concert at the bandshell in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, where a rare September downpour had forced the orchestra to go home. The dauntless tenor gamely agreed to brave the damp, robustly singing with piano accompaniment alongside his *Samson et Dalila* co-stars mezzo-soprano Shirley Verrett and baritone Wolfgang Brendel. Domingo even took to the piano at one point to accompany Brendel! (He had supplemented his early career as a singer in Mexico City by working as a ballet pianist.)

Born in Spain and raised in Mexico, Domingo began as a youngster singing with a company founded by his parents that presented *zarzuelas* (Spanish-style light operas)—an art form that has remained one of his persistent loves throughout his career. He performed a program of *zarzuela* highlights at the War Memorial in 1984, joined by Spanish soprano Pilar Lorengar, and included several *zarzuela* selections in his 1990 concert here with soprano Ann Panagulias. His October concert in San Francisco can be expected to feature *zarzuela* hits as well.

A mere glance over Plácido’s professional history makes it impossible to imagine a singer with more impressive career statistics. He has racked up more than 3,900 performances of an astounding 150 operatic roles, challenging the notion that the human brain has a finite capacity to memorize. The list now includes baritone parts (to be represented in his upcoming concert), which he began adding in 2009 with Verdi’s Simon Boccanegra, as well as newly created roles in the challenging contemporary operas he has championed. His more than a hun-



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“Plácido is the greatest talent the opera world has produced in the last half century and probably over a much longer period of time. The sheer beauty of his instrument, the sensitivity of his musicianship, the keen intelligence with which he approaches every assignment... I cherish the good fortune that has allowed me to live during the ‘Era of Domingo!’”

— David Gockley,
San Francisco Opera General Director Emeritus



ALITZER

Domingo and Gockley at a 2010 champagne reception in the Veterans Building’s Green Room.

dred recordings—including “crossover” albums with artists like John Denver, Josh Groban, Susan Boyle, and Harry Connick, Jr.—have earned him 12 Grammy Awards, and his more than 50 music videos have garnered two Emmys. Three commercially available San Francisco Opera recordings feature him, all in French repertoire: videos of Saint-Saëns’ *Samson et Dalila* and Meyerbeer’s *L’Africaine* as well as an audio CD of Massenet’s *Hérodiade*.

As if life as a globe-trotting operatic megastar were not enough to keep him busy, Domingo has made conducting a mainstay of his career as well, beginning with his podium debut for a New York City Opera *Traviata* in 1973. To date, he has conducted over 500 performances, including a run of Wagner’s *Die Walküre* this past summer at the famed Bayreuth Festival dedicated to the composer’s works.

Putting his creative skills to work behind the scenes, he has had a prodigiously productive life as an opera administrator, acting as artistic director at Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center from 1996 through 2011, and taking on a similar role at Los Angeles Opera in 2000, where he continues in the post of general director.

Now at age 77, this operatic Renaissance Man shows no sign of slowing down, famously protesting, “If I rest, I rust.” This September, he sings a concert marking the reopening of Houston Grand Opera’s Wortham Theater Center after a year of flood-damage repairs, then performs a Los Angeles run of Verdi’s *Don Carlo* (in the baritone role of Rodrigo). After his San Francisco concert in October, it’s on to New York’s Metropolitan Opera for the title role in Puccini’s comic *Gianni Schicchi*. A long list of Verdi baritone roles fills out the rest of his season ahead, including the elder Germont in *La Traviata* at the Met, La Scala, Covent Garden, and Munich, Simon Boccanegra in Vienna, Macbeth in Berlin, and Nabucco in Dresden, plus Juanillo in Manuel Penella’s *El Gato Montés* back in Los Angeles.

It’s natural to wonder how he manages to find time for it all—



From left to right:

On September 9, 1983 at 9:55 p.m., Domingo arrived at the War Memorial Opera House to sing the title role of *Otello*.

Domingo performed *Vasco da Gama* in Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* opposite the *Sélika* of Shirley Verrett, both in 1972 and 1988 (pictured).

In 1976, Domingo sang *Canio* in *Pagliacci*, opposite Noelle Rogers as *Nedda*.

(Top) Domingo serving as grand marshal of the 1979 Opera Fair; (bottom) performing a duet with John Denver for the Company's 1981 *Fol de Rol*.

let alone the energy. He is famous for arriving very late in the rehearsal process for his roles, but rarely seems unprepared thanks to his renowned gift for being a “quick study.” As late stage director and former San Francisco Opera General Director Lotfi Mansouri once remarked, “I would personally rather have one day with Plácido than a month with many other singers. He is an artist who makes a stage director look good.”

For his most recent production in San Francisco, in the title role of Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac* in 2010, Plácido made the unusual advance request to have a TV-style teleprompter available in case he forgot his words, not having sung the opera in recent years. But any need for that memory aid quickly evaporated as his famous powers of score recall sprang into action.

Industry insiders sometimes hear complaints that he can be stretched too thin, and difficult to reach to make management decisions. Yet under his leadership, the companies he has helmed in Washington and Los Angeles have made great strides artistically, for which he can justly claim credit. It helps that he is indefatigable, often getting on a plane after a rehearsal or performance in one city to attend a board meeting, opening night, or donor event in another.

He has also been unflagging in promoting young signers, principally with his international opera competition *Operalia*, founded in 1993, which has fostered a host of talented artists, including his two co-stars for October's “Plácido Domingo in Concert”: soprano Ana María Martínez and tenor Arturo Chacón-Cruz. Other *Operalia* winners include (to name just a few) Nina Stemme, José Cura, Eric Owens, Joyce DiDonato, Rolando Villazón, Brian Jagde, the late Brian Asawa, and Carmen Giannattasio who will perform next month the title role of *Tosca* in the Company's new production. “I'm proud to say that with Plácido's help early on in my career, next year I will celebrate 20 years of professional singing,” says the Italian soprano.

Domingo's unstinting dedication to the opera public continues

to be a model for performing artists everywhere. A former colleague recalls his 2002 tour to Japan in *Otello*—in his final performances of what had become his signature role. Unphased by the taxing demands of the part, he heartily faced an endless line of well-wishers after each performance, spending hours signing photos and programs for each eager fan who had waited for him. This degree of generosity, patience, and respect for the paying public has helped make him a beloved figure world-wide.

Anyone who has been in the rehearsal room with Plácido can attest to his intense commitment to his art. He arrives in the hall on time, greets everyone (with an uncanny ability to remember names in theaters across the globe), and is frequently the last to leave the rehearsal, offering an admirable example of discipline, politeness, and consideration for all. Amusing and endearing anecdotes about the famous tenor abound, but temper tantrums and ego trips do not feature prominently among them.

A gracious social presence adds to the esteem Domingo has earned among his professional associates. Whether taking care that the guest list for a post-performance dinner doesn't exclude a deserving colleague, or offering a fellow staffer a lift, he can be relied upon for a tireless sense of duty that is a rarity in superstars. Nobody is a better candidate for disproving the adage that nice guys finish last.

During his nearly 50-year association with San Francisco Opera, Plácido Domingo has earned a permanent place in the pantheon of the city's beloved performers. He once remarked that “San Francisco is a place where I have been able to do a lot of my main repertoire but also to satisfy my curiosity about new roles.” And he, in turn, has helped San Francisco audiences satisfy their craving for inspirational singing coupled with captivating artistry. It will be nice to welcome him back. 🌟

Clifford (“Kip”) Cranna is dramaturg at San Francisco Opera and is beginning his 40th year with the Company.

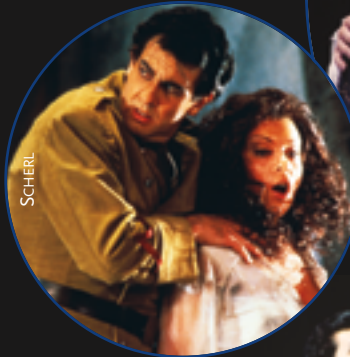
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA AND PLÁCIDO DOMINGO

- 1969 *La Bohème* (Rodolfo)
- 1970 *Carmen* (Don José)
Tosca (Cavaradossi)
- 1971 *Il Trovatore* (Manrico)
- 1972 *Tosca* (Cavaradossi)
L'Africaine (Vasco da Gama*)
- 1975 *Andrea Chénier* (title role)
- 1976 *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Turiddu)
Pagliacci (Canio)
Il Barbiere di Siviglia (conductor of student matinee)
- 1978 *Otello* (title role)
- 1979 *La Fanciulla del West* (Dick Johnson)
- 1980 *Samson et Dalila* (Samson)
- 1981 *Carmen* (Don José)
- 1983 *Otello* (title role, Opening Night only)
- 1987 *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (title role)
- 1988 *L'Africaine* (Vasco da Gama)
- 1994 *Hérodiade* (John the Baptist*)
- 2010 *Cyrano de Bergerac* (title role)

* Role debut



Above: Domingo made his role debut as John the Baptist in 1994's *Hérodiade*, opposite Renée Fleming as Salomé.



Above left: Domingo was San Francisco Opera's Don José in 1970 and 1981 (pictured, opposite the *Carmen* of Hanna Schwarz).



Left: Domingo was *Andrea Chénier* in the Company's 1975 eponymous production.



Above: In 1976, Domingo performed as Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, opposite Tatiana Troyanos as Santuzza.

Far left: Singing the title role of 1987's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*.

Middle left: Domingo performing the title role of *Samson et Dalila* in 1980.

Left: Domingo's previous appearance at San Francisco Opera was in 2010 as *Cyrano de Bergerac*.



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Photo: Tosca Act 1 set model by Production Designer Robert Innes Hopkins.

BEFORE YOU GO

GET “IN THE KNOW”

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

FAMILY PROGRAMS

San Francisco Opera offers family programs for all ages, including movie screenings and interactive workshops, throughout the year and all over the Bay Area. Visit 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.

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 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. \$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.

Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci: Robert Hartwell

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Tosca: Alexandra Amati

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TBD (October 19 and November 3),
and Heidi Waleson (October 28)

It’s a Wonderful Life: Clifford Cranna interviewing
Jake Heggie and/or Gene Scheer

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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 General Director David Gockley, including new operas and productions, multimedia projects, and outreach programs, and have proudly continued that support for General Director Matthew Shilvock. This season, the Gunns' inspired generosity is helping make possible four productions—*Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, the company's new production of *Tosca*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, and *Rusalka*.

The Gunns hope that their support inspires others to give. John comments, "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 chairs the advisory board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, is Vice Chairman of the Board of Stanford Hospital Care and is a former trustee of Stanford University. Cynthia currently serves as an overseer of Stanford's Hoover Institution and a trustee of the San Francisco Fine Arts Museums and has been a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services and the board of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health.

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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Diane B. Wilsey (Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor, *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*)

Dede Wilsey, a longtime San Francisco Opera board member, patron, and Opera Ball supporter, believes deeply in the transformative power of the arts, particularly the multi-faceted world of opera. Says Dede, “It’s a marvelous spectacle. From the voices and pageantry to the scenery, costumes and acting, opera fills the senses and takes you to another place.” She also believes fervently that such experiences should be available to all. “We work hard to make events open to the public at no cost,” she explains. “And because a love of any art form starts at a young age, we take opera into the schoolroom.” Thanks to Dede’s generosity, opera enthusiasts of all ages have much to celebrate. As Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor for the thirteenth consecutive year, she is supporting the opening production of the 2018–19 Season, *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, the celebratory

floral arrangements that grace the War Memorial Opera House on September 7, and the free, annual Opera in the Park concert at Robin Williams Meadow on Sunday, September 9. Dede’s leadership support was critical in the creation of the Wilsey Center for Opera, a dynamic, intimate space at the Veterans Building, which opened in spring, 2016. The Center consolidates the Company’s activities onto the War Memorial campus, enabling San Francisco Opera to engage in exciting new programming and immersive education work. Dede’s philanthropic commitment to the community extends to many organizations. She is president of the Fine Arts Museums and serves on the boards of the San Francisco Ballet and War Memorial, and is a lifetime trustee of UCSF.

Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund (Production Sponsor, *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*)

Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci is the 23rd production supported by the Littlefield Family, a Company Sponsor since 2002. This gripping “verismo” double-bill has not been seen on the War Memorial stage in over 15 years and is sure to provide a powerfully dramatic opening to the 2018–19 Season. The Littlefield name became especially familiar to opera fans in 2006, when Jeannik Littlefield made her historic \$35 million commitment to San Francisco Opera. She held a subscription to seats in Box K for over 40 years, until her passing in 2013. Jeannik’s daughter, Denise, underwrote the LED lighting effects for the recent production of the *Ring*. The Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Endowment Fund provides a permanent and unrestricted source of income for the company, and a legacy of support for generations to come.



Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem/Conductors Fund and Great Interpreters of Italian Music Fund (Production Sponsor, *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*; Sponsor, Daniele Callegari in *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* and Riccardo Frizza in *Roberto Devereux*)

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 noted 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 exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season.

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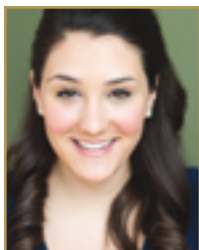
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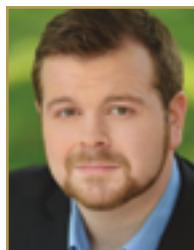


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2018–19 REPERTORY

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA/PAGLIACCI

Pietro Mascagni and Ruggero Leoncavallo

September 7, 12, 16, 19, 22, 28, 30

Production made possible, in part, by:

Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey.

Additional support is provided by:

John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn; the Diana Dollar Knowles Foundation; the Edmund W. & Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund; and Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem.

ROBERTO DEVEREUX

Gaetano Donizetti

September 8, 11, 14, 18, 23, 27

Production made possible, in part, by:

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TOSCA

Giacomo Puccini

October 3, 7, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23, 26, 30

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John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn; Burgess & Elizabeth Jamieson; the Koret Foundation; the E. Nakamichi Foundation; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem; the Thomas Tilton Production Fund; Barbara A. Wolfe; and Chevron.

ARABELLA

Richard Strauss

October 16, 19, 24, 28; November 3

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Jake Heggie

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CARMEN

Georges Bizet

June 5, 11, 14, 20, 23, 26, 29

Production made possible, in part, by:

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ORLANDO

George Frideric Handel

June 9, 15, 18, 21, 27

Production made possible, in part, by:

Bernard & Barbro Osher; and Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem.

RUSALKA

Antonín Dvořák

June 16, 19, 22, 25, 28

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BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Pietro Mascagni

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA



BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Ruggero Leoncavallo

PAGLIACCI

**SAN FRANCISCO
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Maestro Callegari's appearance is made possible by
the Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Conductors Fund.

Mr. Aronica, Mr. Berti, Ms. Haroutounian, Mr. Platanius, and
Ms. Semenchuk's appearances are made possible by
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SYNOPSIS

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA / PAGLIACCI

This production of the double bill, as conceived by José Cura, takes place in the same neighborhood, among the same villagers, including characters from both operas.

Cavalleria Rusticana

Turiddu, son of the tavern owner Mamma Lucia, has returned from military service to find his fiancée, Lola, married to a prosperous wagon owner, Alfio. As revenge against Lola's betrayal, Turiddu has seduced Santuzza, hoping to make Lola jealous. As a result, Lola has taken up with Turiddu again in an adulterous affair, leaving Santuzza heartbroken.

As the curtain rises, Silvio arrives to open the bar. He discovers his lover, the comedienne Nedda, in the company of her fellow actors, putting up posters advertising their circus. Nedda is married to Canio, a once famous clown.

As Silvio prepares the tables for the Easter Sunday customers, Turiddu is heard praising Lola. Santuzza witnesses Lola's joy upon hearing Turiddu's song. Villagers arrive in the square, some taking seats at Lucia's bar for breakfast. Alfio enters, extolling the pleasures of his wandering life as a wagoner and boasting publicly of his love for Lola and of her fidelity.

Santuzza leaves her house to go to Easter Mass, but she is prevented from entering the church. She has been excommunicated for her affair with Turiddu. Santuzza confides in Mamma Lucia, telling her all that has happened. When Turiddu arrives, Santuzza accosts him. He tries in vain to deny his affair with Lola, when she purposefully passes in front of them, leading to a caustic exchange between the two women. Santuzza and Turiddu engage in a storm of recriminations, before Santuzza tells him she is going to have his child. Horrified and afraid, Turiddu breaks away and goes into church.

Santuzza reveals to Alfio that his wife has been unfaithful to him, before realizing that Alfio's fury will doom them all. As worshippers emerge from church, Turiddu publicly toasts Lola's "loves." In accordance with established ritual, Alfio and Turiddu agree to a duel. To shield Santuzza from future recrimination, Turiddu tells everyone that he had promised to marry her to restore her honor. Turiddu bids farewell to his mother and leaves. Santuzza delivers the news that Turiddu has been killed. Lola echoes the tragic news in despair.

Pagliacci

On the following day, an elegant man emerges from the mournful procession for Turiddu's coffin. He is Leoncavallo, the

composer of *Pagliacci*, who expresses the credo of the *verismo* movement. He is supported by Mascagni, his fellow composer, who has been watching the events from the very beginning: "The author has been inspired by real life to tell a story about people with the same joys and sorrows as other human beings." Time stops as Leoncavallo expresses his thoughts.

Six months later, a company of touring actors arrives. The head of the troupe, Canio, announces that the performance will begin at the "23rd hour," that is, one hour before sunset. When a person in the crowd jokingly suggests that Tonio, a fellow actor, is courting Canio's wife, Nedda, behind his back, Canio angrily warns the crowd that the joke isn't funny. Canio goes off to Mamma Lucia's bar to enjoy a drink. People gather in church, leaving Nedda alone with her thoughts.

While Silvio sets the tables, Nedda expresses her dream to be free as soaring birds, sweetly provoking her young lover. Soon afterward, Tonio, who has witnessed Nedda's reverie, declares his passion for her, but, when Nedda mocks him, he tries to force himself on her. She manages to strike him. Silvio arrives and urges Nedda to flee with him. Tonio spies on the lovers and reports the tryst to Canio. A chase ensues, but Silvio manages to escape before Canio can recognize him. Tonio advises Canio to wait until evening for vengeance. Alone, Canio laments his lot as an actor: he must laugh through his tears for the audience's amusement. Mamma Lucia, who has witnessed his despair, consoles him with a drink.

The villagers assemble to see the play. Taking advantage of the commotion, Nedda exchanges a few words with Silvio, assuring him of their midnight elopement. The *commedia*, based on the familiar tale of Pagliaccio and Colombina, begins. In the absence of her husband Pagliaccio (played by Canio), Colombina (Nedda) is serenaded by her lover, Arlecchino (Beppe). Together they drive away her servant, the buffoon Taddeo (Tonio), and plot to poison Pagliaccio, whose sudden return interrupts their flirting. After Arlecchino has escaped, Taddeo, with pointed malice, assures Pagliaccio of his wife's "innocence." Obsessed with jealousy, Canio forgets he is onstage and demands that Nedda name her lover. She tries desperately to continue the comedy, but the audience begins to comprehend the reality of the situation. Maddened by her continued defiance, Canio first stabs Nedda and then Silvio, who has rushed forward to help her. In absolute despair, Lucia cries, "*La commedia è finita.*" ("The comedy is over.")

Conductor
Daniele Callegari*

Production
José Cura

Revival Director
Jose Maria Condemi

Set Designer
José Cura

Costume Designer
Fernand Ruiz*

Original Lighting Designer
Olivier Wéry*

Revival Lighting Designer
Justin Partier*

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Choreographer
Lawrence Pech

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Assistant Conductor
Robert Mollicone

Musical Preparation
**Maureen Zoltek, Ronny Michael Greenberg,
César Cañón*†, John Elam†,
John Churchwell, Fabrizio Corona**

Prompter
Matthew Piatt

Diction
Alessandra Cattani

Supertitles
Paul Moor

Assistant Director
E. Reed Fisher

Stage Manager
Thea Railey

Assistant Stage Managers
**Jayne O'Hara, Jenny Harber,
Andrew Landis**

Costume Supervisor
Jai Alltizer

Head of Wig and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

An Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège
production.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2018 AT 8 PM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 AT 2 PM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 AT 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 AT 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 AT 2 PM

Opera in one act by **Pietro Mascagni**
Libretto by **Guido Menasci** and **Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti**, after the story by **Giovanni Verga**

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

RUSTIC CHIVALRY

(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Mascagni</i>	David Whatley*
<i>Arguing Couple</i>	Buffy Baggott, Alan Cochran
<i>Turiddu</i>	Roberto Aronica
<i>Lola</i>	Laura Krumm
<i>Santuzza</i>	Ekaterina Semenchuk
<i>Mamma Lucia</i>	Jill Grove
<i>Alfio</i>	Dimitri Platanias*
<i>Solo Dancers</i>	Alexandra FitzGibbon*, Jekyns Peláez
<i>Townfolk</i>	

PLACE AND TIME: The Italian immigrant neighborhood of La Boca
(Buenos Aires, Argentina) in the 1920s, Easter Day

—INTERMISSION—

Opera in two acts and a prologue by **Ruggero Leoncavallo**
Libretto by the composer

PAGLIACCI

CLOWNS

(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Leoncavallo / Tonio</i>	Dimitri Platanias*
<i>Paperboy</i>	Sebastian Vera Cuevas
<i>Canio</i>	Marco Berti
<i>Nedda</i>	Lianna Haroutounian
<i>Beppe</i>	Amitai Pati†
<i>Citizen</i>	William O'Neill
<i>Mayor</i>	Chester Pidduck
<i>Silvio</i>	David Pershall
<i>Townfolk and circus people</i>	

PLACE AND TIME: La Boca; Ferragosto (August 15),
the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary

*San Francisco Opera debut †Current Adler Fellow

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 until intermission.

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.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE



Tango dancing
in Buenos Aires' La Boca.

When I was first commissioned to direct and design *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, the idea of molding the double bill into a tribute to the Italian immigration of early 1900s Argentina quickly prevailed. The spirit of these two emblematic works of the *verismo* movement—both excessive and timid, light and dark, affectionate and brutal—seemed very applicable to those uprooted Italian ancestors. Thus La Boca, the Italian quarter of Buenos Aires, for all its history and picture-perfect, multicolored beauty, was the ideal setting. To fit the libretto, I had to resolve to add spaces to the set which do not actually exist: a canteen, a church, Alfio and Lola's house, etc. The rest of the scenery—the square, the windows laced with clothes lines, the parish—all came to be during the planning stages.

I bombarded my costume designer, Fernand Ruiz, with ideas for costumes which, in my opinion, need not be the gray palette with which *Cavalleria Rusticana* is usually identified, but rather colors and that sense of “improvisation” which can happen when a group of people from humbler backgrounds dress in the best clothes they own. The revelation came when I found a photograph of the *Mural Escenográfico* in Buenos Aires' Lezama Park. Finished in 1999, this piece of street art, which marks the entrance to La Boca, depicts a series of characters that I could perfectly associate with *Pagliacci*.

Cavalleria Rusticana and *Pagliacci* are based on the literary tradition of *il verismo italiano*. Both Giovanni Verga and Ruggero Leoncavallo found their literary inspiration in events created by Life itself (the playwright of playwrights). There are two versions explaining the origin of *Pagliacci*. The first is that Leoncavallo himself, as a young child, witnessed the murder of the comedienne Nedda at the hands of her acting partner (and husband) Giovanni D'Alessandro, who had caught her red-handed in the arms of her lover. The second says that Ruggero Leoncavallo's father related to his son a similar crime which he himself had to adjudicate. To add more complication, there are musicologists who have insinuated that Leoncavallo's piece is “dangerously” similar to a play by Spanish playwright Manuel Tamayo y Baus, entitled *Un Drama Nuevo* (1867). I believe that accusing Leoncavallo of plagiarism is going a little too far. I would rather “accuse” him of having been very well versed in the trends of the theater, which means he was likely aware of Tamayo's work, and was thus influenced. Traditionally, that has always been the case in the creative world and will continue to be.

In principle, the plots of *Pagliacci* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* are fairly similar to one another: the illicit relations of a married woman trigger the jealousy of a betrayed husband. But the relevance of Canio's character to today is overwhelming: an artist in decline, crushed by life and alcohol. Never before today have we seen so much talent thrown away once its “novelty” has worn off: actors who fall from grace after two films, or worse, giants of the stage and screen being relegated to play bit parts so they can keep food on their tables—effectively, background decoration to the briefly shining “star of the moment.” The list of victims is tremendously long and not only includes actors. There are singers thrown into dizzyingly fast-moving careers without preparation and athletes who under the pressure to win resort to doping.



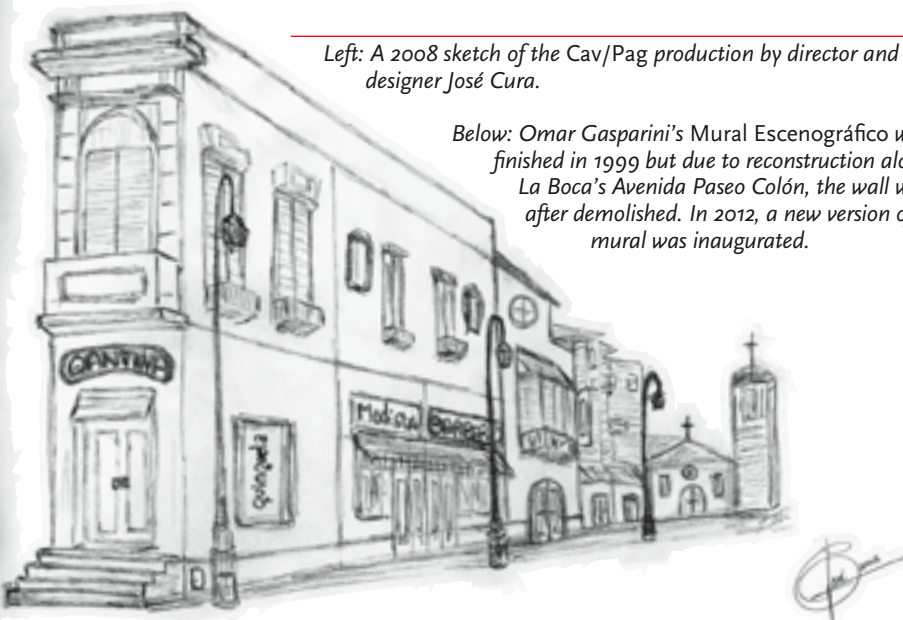
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The list can be made even bigger; we only need to look carefully around us. The “Canio syndrome” prevails today more than it ever has: “Instead of only our costume, consider our souls, as we too are men of flesh and bone,” pleads the author in the Prologue.

The Prologue remains one of the most touching moments of this production for me, its words heard and felt only by the beggar and the paperboy. The use of these characters to narrate a united story animates an essential part of the staging: the presence of the two casts during both operas. With the choice of both operas sharing the same set, the challenge was to establish a socially structured town with its priest, mayor, bartender, barber, grocer, children, etc. So, we see Nedda and the clowns posting the company poster at the beginning of *Cavalleria*, we see Santuzza sporting her seven-month belly in *Pagliacci*, as well as Mamma Lucia still managing her tavern, assisted by her waiter, Silvio. But my favorite moment remains the ending: hearing Lucia—almost an “oracle” in her own right—shouting “La commedia è finita.” It is not just the voice of an old woman, but the voice of Earth, the voice of creation, shouting “Basta!” (“Enough!”) to the entire world. 🌸

Left: A 2008 sketch of the Cav/Pag production by director and set designer José Cura.

Below: Omar Gasparini’s Mural Escenográfico was finished in 1999 but due to reconstruction along La Boca’s Avenida Paseo Colón, the wall was soon after demolished. In 2012, a new version of the mural was inaugurated.



First performances:

Cavalleria Rusticana Rome, Teatro dell’Opera di Roma; May 17, 1890;
Pagliacci Milan, Teatro Dal Verme;
May 21, 1892.

First performances in the U.S.:

Cavalleria Rusticana Philadelphia, Grand Opera House; September 9, 1891;
Pagliacci New York City, Grand Opera House; June 15, 1893.

First San Francisco Opera performances:

Cavalleria Rusticana September 24, 1927;
Pagliacci October 6, 1923.

Cavalleria Rusticana has been performed in 16 previous seasons at San Francisco Opera; *Pagliacci* has been performed in 22 previous seasons. For complete casting and other information, visit archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 11 principals, 60 choristers, 18 children choristers, 2 dancers, 17 supernumeraries; **108 total.**

Orchestra: *Cavalleria Rusticana*

2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, 2 percussion, 2 harps, 1 organ, 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **65 total.**

Pagliacci 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 tuba, 2 percussion, 2 harps, 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **67 total.**

Backstage: *Cavalleria Rusticana* 1 harp;
Pagliacci 1 trumpet, 1 oboe,
1 bass drum, 1 violin.

The children singing in this production (listed after the artistic profiles) are members of the San Francisco Girls Chorus and San Francisco Boys Chorus. The San Francisco Girls Chorus is led by Artistic Director Valérie Sainte-Agathe. The San Francisco Boys Chorus is led by Artistic Director Ian Robertson.

Background: The Italian Quarter of La Boca in Buenos Aires is known for its colorful buildings and lively arts scene.

BY FRED PLOTKIN



TRUE SOUTH

The Italianissimo
Cavalleria Rusticana
and *Pagliacci*

DE AGOSTINI PICTURE LIBRARY / A. DAGLI ORTI / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Without any question, the most popular double bill in all of opera is Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. Audiences have always been moved by the gorgeous music and sure-fire emotional impact of these two works. Both were submitted to a competition in 1890 sponsored by Sonzogno, an important Italian music publisher that sought to develop new talent and repertory. (The rule was that the opera be in one act. The winner was *Cavalleria Rusticana*. *Pagliacci* was not disqualified even though, technically speaking, it is made of two acts that run continuously.)

While there are countless operas set throughout Italy, especially in Venice and Rome, a special group of them takes place in the south, the part of the nation that looms large in the global imagination because many of the immigrants who left Italy came from regions such as Campania (and its capital, Naples), Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily. What's more, Southern Italy has been a setting for many operas by leading composers, including Mozart (Naples in *Così fan tutte*), Bellini (Sicily in *Il Pirata*), Rossini (Syracusa in *Tancredi*), Verdi (Palermo in *I Vespri Siciliani*), and even Wagner in his early comedy, *Das Liebesverbot*, which is set in Palermo.

The way they were originally intended, *Cavalleria Rusticana* takes place in Sicily and *Pagliacci* is set in rural Calabria. Unlike operas that seem to have Southern Italy as a backdrop, *Cav* and *Pag* are entirely informed by the life, suffering, and insistent rhythms of changing seasons and religious celebrations. The fact that *Cav* takes

"Rustic chivalry" may require a certain behavioral code toward outsiders or those who do not adhere to the norms and traditions of the village (such as circus people). But if their behavior is out of bounds, retribution is customary. The men in both these operas fight and kill each other over the question of honor (*onore*). As is often the case in opera, a man may lose his life, but it is the heroine (Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Nedda in *Pagliacci*) whose sufferings we connect to most. Their reactions are part of the powerful storytelling and music which these composers knew how to deploy with great effect.

The style of these works is often referred to as *verismo*, a term that has been corrupted through the decades. The word derives from *vero* or *verità*, both of which connote truthfulness but may also imply reality. In our own times, in which "reality television" seldom has much to do with truthfulness or realism, it is hard to know what to believe. Scholars who say that *verismo* began in 1890 with these two operas ignore the fact that realism and truthfulness existed in earlier operas, most notably *La Traviata* (1853) in which Verdi dealt with contemporary characters and used his opera as a mirror to his audience and suggest that they were being hypocritical as judges of morality.

Perhaps a better way to think of *verismo* is to view characters in its operas as having to deal with the rigors of everyday life, including poverty, illness, and violence. As often as not, the language of the libretto will include simple words and direct speech and might be spoken in dialect. This stands in contrast to the more literary

Perhaps a better way to think of verismo is to view characters in its operas as having to deal with the rigors of everyday life, including poverty, illness, and violence.

place on Easter Sunday and *Pag* is set on Ferragosto (August 15, the celebration of the Assumption of the Virgin into Heaven) is no coincidence. The religious underpinnings amplified audience perceptions of these works' characters when the operas were new. Because these are holidays when families gather, the townspeople in both operas impart an important sense of cohesive community.

A key to understanding the traditional life of rural Calabria and Sicily comes in acknowledging the citizenry's great need for structure. This is provided, above all, by family, but also by church and occasionally by outside individuals. Since ancient times, southerners have sought protection from troubles such as poverty, plague, earthquakes, drought, and foreign occupation. While prayer may resolve some of these problems, others are said to require intervention from so-called men of honor. This might partly explain the origin of the Mafia, which was originally a form of protection, not a criminal organization. Loyalty was expected by the family or individual who provided protection.

You can find these sentiments in subtle ways in both operas.

Left: Keeping with Sicilian custom, Turiddu bites Alfio's ear, signifying a fight to the death. The climactic scene from Cavalleria Rusticana is depicted by the artist Rauzzini in an 1891 oleograph.

usage found in works about larger-than-life characters.

Cavalleria Rusticana (Rustic Chivalry) is based on a novella by Giovanni Verga that became a famous play. For audiences in the 1880s in central and northern Italy, seeing characters in native costume, speaking in dialect and drinking wine from large jugs, was akin to watching a documentary on a foreign civilization. Italy only unified as a nation in the 1860s and northern cities such as Milan or Turin had much more in common with Paris than with Naples or Palermo.

Cav premiered in Rome in 1890 and even that city, only recently made the capital of a united Italy, had little in common with life further south. The opera is about Santuzza, whose name is a Sicilianized one that implies "saint gone wrong." She is a good woman who has been excommunicated because of her relationship (and pregnancy) with Turiddu, who has abandoned her for a married woman. Turiddu's mother, Mamma Lucia, owns a tavern that sells powerful wine (Turiddu describes it as "generoso"), and she is the one person who talks to Santuzza, in part because she senses that her son is endangered because of his recklessness.

Pagliacci (Clowns) is the story of an itinerant group of commedia dell'arte performers who pitch a tent in Montalto, Calabria on Ferragosto and announce to the locals that there will be a show an



Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* inspired Federico Fellini's iconic 1954 film *La Strada*, starring (from left to right) Giulietta Masina (as Gelsomina), Anthony Quinn (Zampanò), and Richard Basehart (*The Fool*).

hour before sunset (“un grande spettacolo a ventitre ore”). Circuses in Italy date back to at least the time of the Roman Empire. Until very recently, small circus troupes would ply the backroads of rural Italy, going to towns without theaters.

The iconography of *Pagliacci* is central to Federico Fellini's classic film *La Strada* (1954), a story of traveling players in the rural south. A mix of Canio and Tonio, the cruel and jealous Zampanò (whose name must derive from *zampogna*, the shepherd bagpipe one hears in the opera) travels with Gelsomina (Nedda in the opera), a timid woman whose pathos and humanity elicit sympathy from everyone except Zampanò. The expression of caring from a happy-go-lucky character called the Fool (the counterpart of Silvio in the opera) leads to Gelsomina's tragic demise.

In rural Calabria, Ferragosto is a rare day off for poor people who must work seven days a week to earn a living. When the touring troupe of comic players arrive to perform, the entire town gathers in great anticipation and watches the clowns (*pagliacci*) act out a comedy about infidelity. In fact, this is what has been happening in real life as Canio, the lead actor, knows that his wife Nedda has been having an affair with Silvio, a younger man. The audience onstage watches with excitement and then horror as reality merges with the story being told by the performers. Comedy turns to tragedy as Canio kills Nedda and then Silvio.

Initially, many opera companies chose *Pagliacci* to start the evening that concluded with *Cavalleria Rusticana*. While it has been customary for more than a century to pair these two operas

for an evening program, they are not always presented that way. At its first performance in the Metropolitan Opera House in 1891, *Cavalleria Rusticana* was preceded by Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*. The Met first paired *Cav* and *Pag* in 1893. It has been presented with works as diverse as Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* and, even, Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*.

Pagliacci is often presented on its own or has been paired with a ballet or operas as diverse as Puccini's dark comedy *Gianni Schicchi* or Richard Strauss' lurid *Salome*. Both operas are audience favorites. Purists insist that *Cav* is the superior work because of its flawless construction and gorgeous music. Others prefer *Pagliacci* for its powerful final scene. In the not-too-distant past, companies such as the New York City Opera liked to stage *Cav* and *Pag* as either a matinee or evening performance on a weekend with *Carmen*. Why? Because all three works usually include a horse. By presenting them all in the same day, the company only paid one horse rental fee and saved on insurance and stage personnel.

However they are presented and for whatever reason, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* are a pleasure to rediscover and enjoy. While no work of art can be called perfect, these two masterpieces come very close. And they remind us that opera can uniquely represent a special kind of truth that is at its most rewarding and gratifying when we don't attempt to analyze it but simply give ourselves over to the music and story. 🍷

Fred Plotkin is the author of Opera 101 and six Italian cookbooks.

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For more than a century, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* have been regular presences in the opera houses of California and around the world. If we dig deeper into San Francisco history, we discover fascinating tales of touring composers and ambitious dreams of enterprising immigrants—down to the very roots of San Francisco Opera.

Mascagni and Leoncavallo Go West

By the turn of the 20th century, both Pietro Mascagni and Ruggero Leoncavallo had achieved a high level of fame in their home country. The two composers shared similar career trajectories: both were prolific and ambitious artists who strived for global recognition beyond their most popular works, *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*. When the opportunity arrived, they both enthusiastically embarked upon tours of the U.S.

For Mascagni, the opportunity arose in 1902, when he first signed a contract for a North American tour. He traveled to New York first, then Chicago, and reached California in February 1903, after an invitation from San Francisco manager Will Greenbaum. “The greatest of living opera composers had to come to the Golden Gate to discover America,” leading drama critic Ashton Stevens proudly reported in *The San Francisco Examiner*. In fact, his visit marked a celebratory moment for Italian immigrants as well as the Bay Area music community. In *Sunset* magazine, celebrated playwright and scholar Porter Garnett declared that it was in the Bay Area that the Italian composer had risen to his well-deserved glory: “Mascagni represents the new movement and San Francisco has discovered him.” When the composer was made honorary member of the Bohemian Club, Garnett himself wrote a poetical greeting to the maestro from “that sweet land where Palestrina strove / Where proud Rossini sang and Verdi wrought.”

The composer presented a series of performances at different venues—such as the Alhambra Theater and the Mechanical Pavilion—during what the *San Francisco Chronicle* labeled the “Mascagni season.” He conducted his own works (especially the beloved Intermezzo from *Cavalleria*) and those of diverse artists, from Rossini to Tchaikovsky and Wagner to Goldmark. The highlight of Mascagni’s visit was a series of performances of *Cavalleria* at the Tivoli Opera House, accompanied by non-operatic works such as his *Hymn of the Sun*. The concerts were a success, and in the *Examiner*, Stevens wrote: “No other leader has ever been bravoed and boot-thundered and hand-crashed by San Franciscans as Mascagni was last night [...] One person more packed into the theater would have cracked the old building that for more than 22 years has been the most faithful music teacher of the West.”

In 1906, only three years after Mascagni had left the West Coast, Leoncavallo arrived in New York, eager to immerse himself in American culture and to gather materials to compose a work set in the U.S. “I want to go to the theatres,” the composer declared, “to see the people and meet and talk with them, to learn their ideas and ideals, and see if I can capture them in words and music.” Although his American opera never became a reality, it was with the same enthusiasm that he traveled back to the U.S. in 1913, when he arrived in San Francisco.



Licia Albanese as Nedda in San Francisco Opera's *Pagliacci* from 1955.



Irene Dalis (*Santuzza*) and Thomas Tipton (*Alfio*) from the Company's 1962 *Cavalleria Rusticana*.



Leoncavallo with Native Americans during his 1906 U.S. tour.

Leoncavallo's major engagement during his California tour was at the Tivoli Opera House, after having been appointed musical director of the Western Metropolitan Opera Company. The company's managing directors, Ettore Patrizi and Eugene D'Avigneau, planned to present a "grand opera season" in October and November 1913. In this context, Leoncavallo conducted a series of concerts of his own works, such as the Intermezzo from *Maïa* and the Overture to *Roland von Berlin*, as well as other popular pieces—including *Cavalleria* in a double bill with his own *Pagliacci*.

The West Coast tours of the two Italian maestros were overwhelming successes, and their California experience inspired them to dedicate original compositions to places and people that welcomed them so generously. In 1903, Mascagni wrote the piano miniature *Un pensiero a San Francisco* (*A Thought for San Francisco*), published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, while in 1913 Leoncavallo started work on the song, "O California, Italia dell'America" ("O California, Italy of America"). These pieces are a testament to the Californian warmth that welcomed the two artists.

An Operatic Home for San Francisco

Mascagni and Leoncavallo both hoped to return to the U.S. They never did, but their celebrated one-act operas became a staple in repertoires all over North America and the world. San Francisco Opera boasts a long performance tradition of these two works—one as old as the Company itself. In fact, *Pagliacci* was part of the inaugural 1923 season at the Civic Auditorium, in a double bill with Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, while *Cavalleria* was first presented there in 1927. The two operas were later performed as a double bill during the first season in the newly completed War Memorial Opera House, where the company made its permanent home in 1932.

A deeper legacy ties one of these works, *Pagliacci*, with the history of San Francisco Opera, even before the Company existed. To unearth these operatic roots, we need to travel back to when another Italian sailed to the U.S. to make the Bay Area his home: Gaetano Merola, the conductor from Naples, who, in the early 1900s, first came to the West Coast as a touring conductor, later to become the founder and first general director of San Francisco Opera from 1923 to 1953.

Conscious of Californians' profound passion for opera, Merola first saw the actual potential of a Bay Area opera season in 1921 during a quintessential American event: the football match between Stanford and the University of California, Berkeley known as the Big Game (a popular event to this day). "When he heard the band down on the field," Arthur Bloomfield wrote in his authoritative history of



The plaque commemorating Merola's 1922 opera productions at Stanford Stadium adorns the War Memorial Opera House lobby.

San Francisco Opera, "he was immensely stirred. The acoustics were surprisingly impressive. With tenors more on his mind than quarterbacks, Merola decided the [Stanford Stadium] had excellent possibilities for opera. It reminded him of Verona's celebrated Arena, and the Baths of Caracalla in Rome." With the broad financial support of the Italian immigrant community and philanthropists who trusted in his vision, Merola gathered the necessary funds and permits to organize a series of performances in the 17,000-seat stadium. A stage was built, and special trains from Palo Alto were organized to ensure patrons reached the performances. Merola borrowed the orchestra from the San Francisco Symphony and put together a chorus. As for the repertoire, three operas were planned, and Merola had no doubt: the inaugural performance on June 3, 1922 would be *Pagliacci*, followed by *Carmen* on June 7 and 16, and *Faust* on June 10.

Ads in the *Stanford Illustrated Review* spoke of a "grand opera" festival and

boasted the size of the enterprise: "These operas will be produced on a gigantic scale." For the performance of *Pagliacci*, the stadium wasn't full (6,000 attended), but the audience grew with each performance. All three operas were met with wide acclaim, despite the fact that the financial burden turned out to be heavier than expected, resulting in a deficit.

The most significant outcome of this enterprise was that the festival's success—cultural if not financial—cemented the idea that San Franciscans were eager and ready to have their own operatic home.

About a month later, in a front-page article titled "Brilliant Grand Opera Season Assured," the *Pacific Coast Musical Review* published a statement by Merola. The conductor admitted that better financial support was necessary to make an opera house sustainable, but he had no doubt that the Bay Area would become a prestigious music center thanks to the patronage of cultural entities and music lovers. He went on to announce the first season of San Francisco Opera at the Civic Auditorium—including, once again, *Pagliacci*.

And indeed, Merola was right: since the first *al fresco* *Pagliacci* in Stanford Stadium, San Francisco Opera has continued to shine as an international center of artistic excellence. Because of the support of Bay Area music lovers and beyond, as well as the enterprising vision of artists and music professionals, the dream of an operatic home for the Bay Area has been a reality for almost a century. 🌸

Marina Romani is a music and film researcher and performer, trained in Western classical voice and Afro-Caribbean music. She holds a doctoral degree from UC Berkeley.

ARTIST PROFILES



DANIELE CALLEGARI
(Milan, Italy)

Conductor

Making his San Francisco Opera debut with *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, Daniele Callegari was principal

conductor at the Wexford Opera Festival in Ireland from 1998 to 2001 and was appointed chief conductor at the Royal Flanders Philharmonic in Antwerp, Belgium in 2002. Callegari has led performances at Carnegie Hall, the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Deutsche Oper and Staatsoper in Berlin, Teatro alla Scala, Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, La Monnaie in Bruxelles, Dresden Semperoper, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, La Fenice in Venice, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Teatro Massimo in Palermo, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, New National Theatre in Tokyo, Opéra Bastille in Paris, Teatro dell'Opera in Rome, and the Vienna State Opera, among other companies. He has conducted several world premieres, including *Alice* by Giampaolo Testoni at the Teatro Massimo in 1993 and *Oedipe sur la route* by Pierre Bartholomé at La Monnaie in 2003. Upcoming engagements include *Norma*, *Rigoletto*, and *L'Elisir d'Amore* at the Bavarian State Opera and *Turandot* and *Madama Butterfly* at La Fenice.



EKATERINA SEMENCHUK

(St. Petersburg, Russia)

Santuzza

Russian mezzo-soprano Ekaterina Semenchuk made her San Francisco Opera

debut in 2015 as Federica in *Luisa Miller* and in 2016 she returned as Amneris in *Aida*. Her recent engagements include Eboli in *Don Carlo* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala and Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Amneris in Tokyo and Madrid; her role debut as Santuzza at the Metropolitan Opera; and La Principessa in *Adriana Lecouvreur* at the Verbier Festival and in Baden-Baden. Career highlights encompass Marina in *Boris Godunov* at the Metropolitan Opera; Azucena and Amneris at La Scala; Iocasta in *Oedipus Rex* and Ascanio in *Benvenuto*

Cellini at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; the title role of *Carmen* at Arena di Verona; Didon in *Les Troyens* at the Mariinsky Theatre, Carnegie Hall, and in Vienna and Tokyo; Laura in *La Gioconda* and Dalila in *Samson et Dalila* at Rome Opera; and Eboli and Azucena at the Salzburg Festival. On the concert stage, she has appeared as a soloist in Paris, Amsterdam, New York, Vienna, London, and Salzburg. Upcoming engagements include Giovanna Seymour in *Anna Bolena* at the Opéra National de Bordeaux, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* with Plácido Domingo at Los Angeles Opera, and Marfa in *Khovanshchina* at La Scala.



LIANNA HAROUTOUNIAN

(Metsamor, Armenia)

Nedda

Soprano Lianna Haroutounian made her San Francisco Opera debut in

2014's *Tosca* and in 2016 she returned as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*, a role she has also recently sung to great acclaim at Hamburg State Opera and Seattle Opera. She has performed Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* at Deutsche Oper, Berlin State Opera, and Royal Opera, Covent Garden. Her operatic appearances also include *Tosca* for her Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia debut in Valencia, Leonora in *Il Trovatore* at Covent Garden, Amelia in a concert performance of *Simon Boccanegra* at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Bern and Tours. Upcoming performances include her house debuts at the Vienna State Opera and Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu as *Madama Butterfly*, and she will return to the Teatro Real in Madrid as Leonora in Francisco Négrin's new production of *Il Trovatore*. She also sings Elisabeth in Peter Konwitschny's production of *Don Carlos* at the Hamburg State Opera and the title role of *Iolanta* at the Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia.

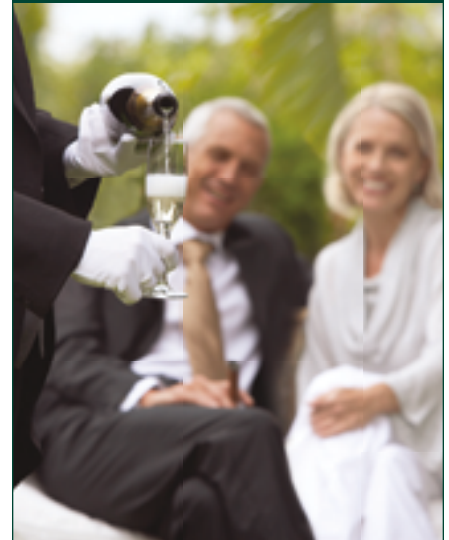


JILL GROVE

(San Antonio, Texas)

Mamma Lucia

In 2017, mezzo-soprano Jill Grove returned to San Francisco Opera to sing the role of First Maid servant in *Elektra*.



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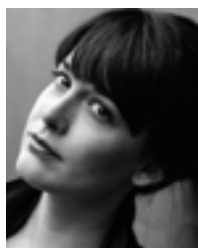
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Other Company appearances include Madelon in *Andrea Chénier*, Grandmother Buryjovka in *Jenůfa*, Erda in *Das Rheingold*, and Preziosilla in *La Forza del Destino*. She has also made recent returns to Houston Grand Opera as Ježibaba in *Rusalka* and to Pittsburgh Opera as Baba the Turk in *The Rake's Progress*. Grove is a frequent guest at the Lyric Opera of Chicago where she has sung Marthe in *Faust*, Margret in *Wozzeck*, the Witch in *Hänsel und Gretel*, the Nurse in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Amneris in *Aida*, Erda in *Götterdämmerung*, and Countess Geschwitz in *Lulu*. At the Metropolitan Opera, her performances include Erda in *Götterdämmerung* and *Das Rheingold*, Magdalene in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Madelon, Pantalís in *Mefistofele*, Emila in *Otello*, and Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*. Later this season, she sings First Maidservant with Canadian Opera Company, returns to the Metropolitan Opera for their productions of *Götterdämmerung* and *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and sings Verdi's Requiem with the Calgary Philharmonic.



LAURA KRUMM
(Iowa City, Iowa)
Lola

A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm has appeared on the War Memorial Opera

House stage as Siegrune in *Die Walküre*, Javotte in *Manon*, the Second Maidservant in *Elektra*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville for Families*, Countess Ceprano and a Page in *Rigoletto*, and a Maid in the world premiere of Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*. For the San Francisco Opera Center, she created the role of Martha in the world premiere of Nolan Gasser's *The Secret Garden*, and she sang Laura in Jack Perla's *Love/Hate* at the ODC Theater in association with the Opera Center. In recent seasons, Krumm made role and Company debuts as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* at Nashville Opera, Mrs. Webb in Ned Rorem's *Our Town* at Fresno Grand Opera, and Meg in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* at Michigan Opera Theatre. Later this season, Krumm returns to San Francisco Opera as the Kitchen Boy in *Rusalka*.



ROBERTO ARONICA
(Citavecchia, Italy)
Turiddu

Before making his San Francisco Opera debut in 1993 as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*, tenor Roberto Aronica

studied with famed singer Carlo Bergonzi and completed his training at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. He made his professional debut as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* at Teatro Municipal in Santiago, Chile. More recent engagements have included Paolo in *Francesca da Rimini* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala, the title role of *Don Carlo* at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna and Florence's Maggio Musicale Festival, Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at the Metropolitan Opera, Don Alvaro in *La Forza del Destino* at Amsterdam's Dutch National Opera, Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West* at Naples' Teatro di San Carlo, and Don José in *Carmen* at Rome's Terme di Caracalla and Venice's La Fenice. Upcoming engagements include Calaf in *Turandot* at Madrid's Teatro Real, Cavaradossi at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, and Turiddu at Teatro di San Carlo.



MARCO BERTI
(Como, Italy)
Canio

Italian tenor Marco Berti made his San Francisco Opera debut as Don José in *Carmen* in 2006, and he returned to

the Company as Manrico in *Il Trovatore* in 2009, Calaf in *Turandot* in 2011, and Pollione in *Norma* in 2014. Sought internationally for his interpretations of the dramatic Italian repertory, Berti has performed Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) at the Metropolitan Opera, Covent Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and in Paris, Naples, and Florence. Other career highlights include Gabriele Adorno in *Simon Boccanegra* and Radames in *Aida* at Houston Grand Opera and in Verona and Florence; Radames at the Arena di Verona as well as in Tokyo and Florence; Calaf at Milan's Teatro alla Scala; Luigi in *Il Tabarro* with Paris Opéra; Dick Johnson in *La Fanciulla del West* in Seville; and Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at La Scala, the Vienna State Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago,

Florence's Maggio Musicale Festival, and Madrid's Teatro Real. Engagements in the current season include the title role of *Otello* at La Fenice, Dick Johnson at Hamburg State Opera, and Calaf at Valencia's Palau de les Arts Reina Sofía.



AMITAI PATI
(Auckland, New Zealand)
Beppe

Second-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow Amitai Pati made his Company debut as Matteo

Borsa in 2017's *Rigoletto* and appeared last season as Gastone in *La Traviata*. As a participant of the 2016 Merola Opera Program, he performed his first principal role as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*. Pati won the Lexus SongQuest in 2012 and the Waiariki Institute of Technology NZ Aria in 2015. Pati, along with his brother Pene Pati and their cousin Moses Mackay, comprise the highly successful New Zealand vocal trio SOL3 MIO, which mixes both classical and contemporary music. He can also be heard this season as Lord Cecil in *Roberto Devereux* and as part of the Angel Quartet in Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*.



DIMITRI PLATANIAS
(Kalamata, Greece)
Alfio and Tonio
Greek baritone Dimitri Plataniás is making his U.S. and San Francisco Opera debuts with this production.

He has received acclaim in the title role of *Rigoletto* at London's Covent Garden, Brussels' La Monnaie, Venice's La Fenice, and Palermo's Teatro Massimo; Amonasro in *Aida* at the Bregenz Festival; the title role of *Simon Boccanegra* at the Bavarian State Opera; Iago in *Otello* at La Fenice and Oper Frankfurt; the title role of *Nabucco* at Bavarian State Opera and Florence's Maggio Musicale Festival; and Scarpia in *Tosca* at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Oper Frankfurt. In 2015, he made his debut at the Salzburg Easter Festival as Tonio and at Covent Garden as both Alfio and Tonio. Upcoming engagements include the title role of *Nabucco* at Hamburg State

Opera, Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* at Covent Garden, and Guido di Montfort in *I Vespri Siciliani* at the Bavarian State Opera.



DAVID PERSHALL

(Temple, Texas)

Silvio

Baritone David Pershall made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2016 as Roucher in *Andrea Chénier*, and he returned in 2017 as

Lescaut in *Manon*. A 2008 graduate of the Merola Opera Program, he debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 2015 in the title role of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, which he quickly followed with performances the following year as Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Lord Cecil in *Maria Stuarda*. He has also been seen at the Vienna State Opera, including the title role of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, Sebastian in Thomas Adès' *The Tempest*, and Lescaut. This season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera for performances in *Carmen*, performs with Greensboro Opera, and he makes his role debut as Don Giovanni with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra.



WILLIAM O'NEILL

(Providence, Rhode Island)

Citizen

Bass-baritone William O'Neill is a Bay Area performer, conductor, and member of the San Francisco

Opera Chorus. His repertoire includes the title roles of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Falstaff*, Don Magnifico (*La Cenerentola*), the Pirate King (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*), Sam (*Trouble in Tahiti*), Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), and Gobineau (*The Medium*).



CHESTER PIDDUCK

(St. Louis, Missouri)

Mayor

Tenor Chester Pidduck is a Bay Area performer and member of the San Francisco Opera Chorus.

Roles in his repertoire include Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Almaviva (*Il Barbiere*



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di *Siviglia*), and Rodolfo (*La Bohème*). He has also appeared in the Company's recent productions of *Manon*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *La Bohème*.



ALEXANDRA FITZGIBBON
(Fresno, California)
Solo Dancer

A member of the San Francisco Opera Dance Corps, Alexandra FitzGibbon received her training at State University of New York at Purchase and Butler University. She has spent summers at Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, Ballet Austin, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and American Ballet Theatre. She has also attended workshops at Northwest Dance Project LAUNCH:9 (Portland, Ore.) and Post:Ballet (San Francisco). She currently dances with Oakland Ballet and was previously with Dance Theatre of San Francisco, and the companies of Marika Brussel and Milissa Payne Bradley.



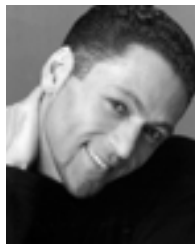
JEKYNS PELÁEZ
(Cali, Columbia)
Solo Dancer
Dancer Jekylns Peláez made his San Francisco Opera debut as the Matador in 2009's *La Traviata*. He has also appeared in

the Company's *Aida*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Turandot*, *Nixon in China*, *Moby-Dick*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Show Boat*, and *Sweeney Todd*, among other productions. Peláez has made guest appearances with Ballet Arizona, Ohio Ballet, Chautauqua Ballet, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Histrion Theatre of Art, Ballet San Jose Silicon Valley, American Conservatory Theatre, Oakland Ballet, Diablo Ballet, and Los Angeles Opera. His principal dance repertoire includes Balanchine's *Apollo*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *Nutcracker*, *Serenade*, *Esplanade*, and *Carmen*.



JOSÉ CURA
(Rosario, Argentina)
Production and Set Designer
Internationally acclaimed tenor José Cura made his San Francisco Opera debut as Don José

in *Carmen* in 1996. In addition to singing, he is a composer, conductor, opera director, and stage designer. After studying composition and orchestral conducting in his hometown of Rosario, Argentina, Cura moved to Buenos Aires in 1984 and worked for four years in one of the professional choirs at the Teatro Colón, where his voice developed as one of the great tenors of the Italian and French repertoires. In 1999, José Cura resumed his conducting career, working with top orchestras such as the London Philharmonia, London Symphony, Vienna Philharmonic, and Hungarian Philharmonic, among others. 2007 saw the world premiere of *La Commedia è finita*, a creative re-imagining of *Pagliacci*, which marked the beginning of his career as a stage director and designer. Praise by audiences and critics for his productions of *Samson et Dalila*, *La Rondine*, *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* sealed his stature as a director of distinction. His productions of *Turandot* at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in 2016 and *Peter Grimes* in Bonn in 2017 also received acclaim. Upcoming directorial productions include *Nabucco* at Prague's National Theatre and *La Fanciulla del West* at Estonian National Opera. Next summer, he sings Cavaradossi in *Tosca* at Oper Köln.



JOSE MARIA CONDEMI
(Buenos Aires, Argentina)
Revival Director
Jose Maria Condemí made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2005 with

Così fan tutte, and he has returned to direct productions of *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Faust*, *Tosca*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, and the world premiere of Nolan Gasser's *The Secret Garden*. Other notable engagements include *Ernani* and *Tristan und Isolde* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Aida* at Houston Grand Opera; *Orphée et Eurydice* and *La Bohème* at Seattle Opera; Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar* and *Don Giovanni* at Cincinnati

Opera; André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Kentucky Opera; and *Carmen* at Central City Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Condemí is the Carol Franc Buck Distinguished Chair at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. He was also the artistic director of Opera Santa Barbara from 2010 until 2015 where he oversaw artistic planning and its studio artists program. Upcoming engagements include *Rigoletto* at New Orleans Opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro* at San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and Robert Xavier Rodríguez's *Frida* at Florida Grand Opera.



FERNAND RUIZ
(Seville, Spain)
Costume Designer
Making his San Francisco Opera debut, Fernand Ruiz is the head of the costume department at

the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Liège, Belgium where he designed the original costumes for this production of *Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci*. Other productions for the same company include *Otello*, Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Donizetti's *Rita* and *Il Campanello di Notte*, and the Beaumarchais play *Le Barbier de Séville*. Upcoming engagements include *Aida* and *Anna Bolena* at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie and *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Opera de Toulon.



OLIVIER WÉRY
(Liège, Belgium)
Original Lighting Designer
Making his San Francisco Opera debut, lighting designer Olivier Wéry has been engaged

at the Opéra Royal de Wallonie in Liège for over 20 years. Among his work for the Belgian company are productions of *Tosca*, *Don Carlo*, *Andrea Chénier*, *La Forza del Destino*, *The Magic Flute*, this current production of *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*, and *Turandot* (another collaboration with director José Cura). He has also collaborated on productions of *Don Pasquale* and *Nabucco* at the Opéra de Nice, Rossini's *La Gazzetta* at Israeli Opera, and *Andrea Chénier* at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo, among other engagements.



JUSTIN A. PARTIER

(San Francisco, California)

Revival Lighting Designer

The recently named lighting director at San Francisco Opera, Justin A. Partier has designed numerous operatic and musical theater productions throughout the United States. Career highlights include Argento's *Postcard from Morocco* at the Merola Opera Program, the Verdi Requiem at San Francisco Opera, *Fascinating Rhythm* at the Transcendence Theater Company, *Rich Girl* at Florida Studio Theater, and *Mary Poppins*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, and *Singin' in the Rain* at the Merry-Go-Round Playhouse in Auburn, New York. Partier has also served as associate or assistant lighting designer for numerous San Francisco Opera productions, including *Dolores Claiborne*, *Falstaff*, and *Mefistofele*.



IAN ROBERTSON

(Dundee, Scotland)

Chorus Director

Recipient of the San Francisco Opera Medal in 2012, 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 mainstage 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.

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LAWRENCE PECH
(San Francisco,
California)
Choreographer
Lawrence Pech is
in his 23rd 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.



DAVE 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
Ring, *Girls of the Golden West*, *Manon*,
La Traviata, *Turandot*, *Elektra*, *Rigoletto*,
Don Giovanni, *La Bohème*, *Aida*, *Madama
Butterfly*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Dream of the
Red Chamber*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, *Jenüfa*,
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.

SUPERNUMERARIES

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- Simone Brooks
- Jim Bowes
- James Crow
- Albert Covera
- Steve Lavezzoli
- Michael LeBaron
- Jahla Love
- Amarech Mendez
- Orion Rosedale
- Alexander Smith
- Jeremy Vik
- William "Bill" Watt
- David Whatley
- Zane Wilcox
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- Frank Zepeda

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

- Sofia Alling
- Alia Azad
- Sophia Bayson
- Julien Scott Chernick
- Cate Cross
- Constantine Sebastian DeFabio
- Ariana Frey
- Embley Fuchs
- Sofia Fung-Lee
- Rebecca Jia
- Aram Kim
- Francisca Li
- Leonora Steward
- Sebastian Vera Cuevas
- Pearl Watson
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 Denni Sayers
 Keturah Stickann

* San Francisco Opera debut

** U.S. debut

† = Former Adler Fellow

‡ = Current Adler Fellow

♫ = Merola Opera Program participant (past or present)

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Fabrizio Corona, *Associate Chorus Master*

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Mary Finch, *Assistant Chorus Manager/*

Chorus Librarian

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† Chorus member on Leave of Absence

* Chorus member appearing in a Solo Role

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Silvie Jensen	Harlan Hays
Carolyne Anne Jordan	Michael Jankosky
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Kali Wilson	Alexander Taite
Igor Vieira*	

* Chorus member appearing in a Solo Role

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Jekyng Pelaez*
Chiharu Shibata‡

Brook Broughton†‡
Jamielyn Duggan
Alexandra FitzGibbon*
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* Solo Dancer

‡ Tenured

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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
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
Elizabeth Prior**

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Jonathan Lancelle, *Associate Principal*
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Shinji Eshima
Mark Drury

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Julie McKenzie, *Principal*
Patricia Farrell†
Barbara Chaffe**
Stephanie McNab

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*
Deborah Shidler**
Janet Popesco Archibald

ENGLISH HORN

Janet Popesco Archibald

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Joanne Burke Eisler, *Assistant Principal*
Anthony Striplen

BASS CLARINET

Anthony Striplen

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Michael Severance

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Michael Severance

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Lawrence Ragent

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† Leave of absence

** Season substitute



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



Dian Zhang
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman
First Violin



Jennifer Hsieh
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano
First Violin



Jeremy Preston
Principal
Second Violin



Martha Simonds
Associate Principal
Second Violin



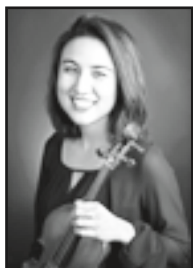
Beni Shinohara
Assistant Principal
Second Violin



Eva Karasik
Second Violin



Leslie Ludena
Second Violin



Maya Cohon
Second Violin



Craig Reiss
Second Violin



Heeguen Song
Second Violin
Regular Substitute



Carla Maria Rodrigues
Principal
Viola



Sergey Rakitchenkov
Associate Principal
Viola



Paul Nahhas
Assistant Principal
Viola



Patricia Heller
Viola



Jonna Hervig
Viola



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



Joy Fellows
Viola



Elizabeth Prior
Viola
Regular Substitute



David Kadarauich
Principal
Cello



Thalia Moore
Associate Principal
Cello



Peter Myers
Assistant Principal
Cello



Nora Pirquet
Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Victoria Ehrlich
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello



Joseph Lescher
Principal
Bass

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



Jonathan Lancelle
Associate Principal
Bass



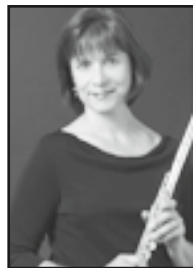
Steven D'Amico
Assistant Principal
Bass



Shinji Eshima
Bass



Mark Drury
Bass



Julie McKenzie
Principal
Flute



Patricia Farrell
Flute



Stephanie McNab
Flute & Piccolo



Barbara Chaffe
Flute
Regular Substitute



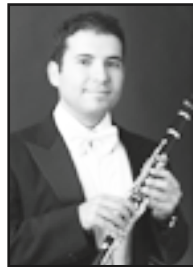
Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



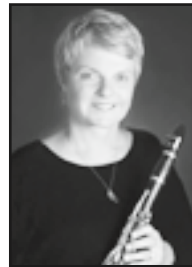
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Archibald
Oboe & English Horn



Deborah Shidler
Oboe
Regular Substitute



Jose Gonzalez
Granero
Principal Clarinet



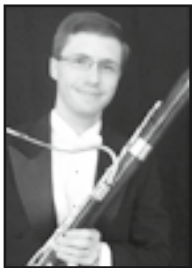
Joanne Burke Eisler
Assistant Principal
Clarinet



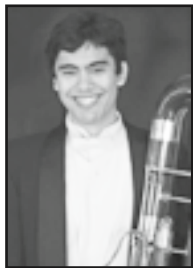
Anthony Striplen
Clarinet &
Bass Clarinet



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



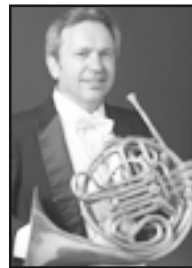
Michael Severance
Bassoon &
Contrabassoon



Kevin Rivard
Co-Principal
Horn



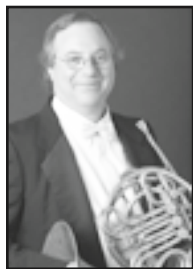
Mark Almond
Co-Principal
Horn



Keith Green
Horn



Brian McCarty
Horn



Lawrence Ragent
Horn



Adam Luftman
Principal
Trumpet



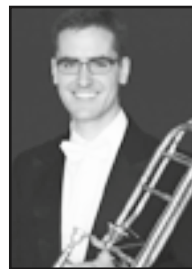
William Holmes
Trumpet



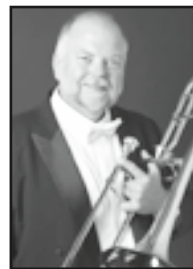
John Pearson
Trumpet



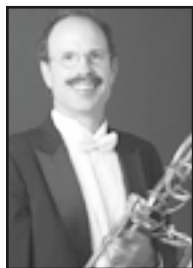
Scott Macomber
Trumpet
Regular Substitute



Samuel Schlosser
Principal Trombone



Donald Kennelly
Trombone



David Ridge
Trombone &
Bass Trombone



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Most photos by John Martin.

Not pictured: Lev Rankov, First Violin

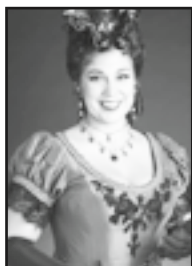
REGULAR CHORUS



Nadima Avakian
Soprano



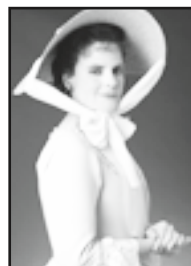
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



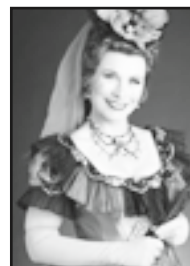
Sara Colburn
Soprano



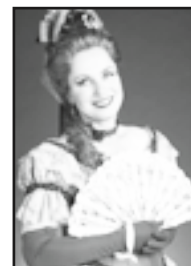
Dvora Djoraev
Soprano



Mary Finch
Soprano



Claire Kelm
Soprano



Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Soprano



Angela Eden Moser
Soprano



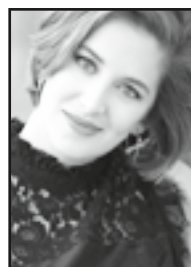
Rachelle Perry
Soprano



Virginia Pluth
Soprano
Leave of Absence



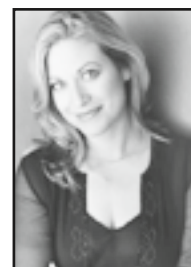
Carole Schaffer
Soprano



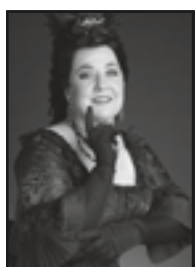
Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Mitzie Kay Weiner
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano



Roberta Bowman
Mezzo-Soprano



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



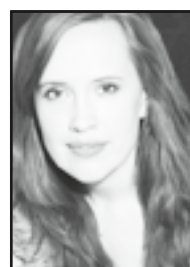
Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



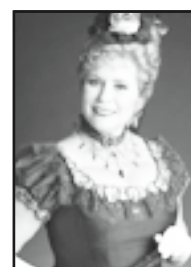
Sally Munro
Mezzo-Soprano



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



Laurel Porter
Mezzo-Soprano



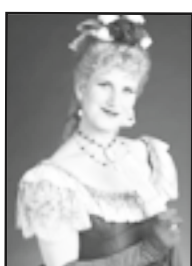
Laurel Rice
Mezzo-Soprano



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

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Colby Roberts
Tenor



Sigmund Seigel
Tenor



Dan Stanley
Tenor



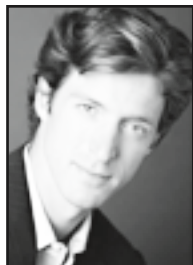
Andrew Truett
Tenor



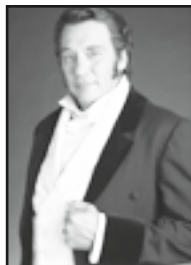
Richard Walker
Tenor



Torlef Borsting
Baritone
Leave of Absence



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



Ken Johnson
Baritone



David Kekuewa
Baritone



Frederick Matthews
Baritone



Jere Torkelsen
Baritone



Christopher Filipowicz
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass

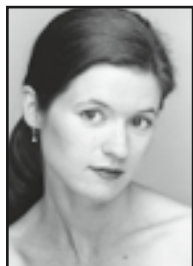


Valery Portnov
Bass

*Most photos by John Martin.
Carole Schaffer and Claudia Siefer
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

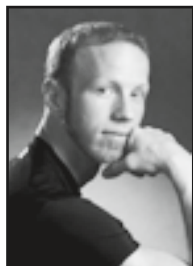
CORPS DANCERS



Brook Broughton
Leave of Absence



Blanche Hampton



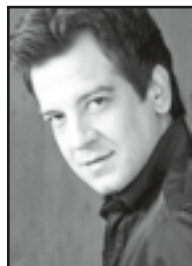
Bryan Ketron



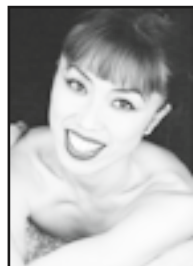
Michael Levine
Leave of Absence



Rachel Speidel Little



Jekyns Pelaez



Chiharu Shibata

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Dr. H. Nona Hungate
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in memory of Lottie Ilg
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Mr. Scott Beth
Mr. Guyton N. Jinkerson

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Prof. Roger Bourland
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Lowell S. Young &
Celeste Young
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Christopher Zaccalini
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Anne Zucchi
Anonymous (19)

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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. 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 & REFRESHMENTS Global Gourmet operates pre-show and intermission food and beverage concession services in lobby areas. Beginning two hours prior to all performances,

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.

the Café at the Opera in the lower lounge of the Opera House offers a changing seasonal buffet, as well as elevated *à la carte* dishes for pre-performance dining and intermission. The North Box Restaurant on the North Mezzanine (Box) level features locally sourced California cuisine with global influences.

Opera patrons can also enjoy snacks, sandwiches, and drinks in the newly renovated Dress Circle Lounge and enjoy small bites and a variety of premium wines and spirits at Café Express.

The **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SHOP**, located in the South Mezzanine lobby, front lobby, and North Dress Circle 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

Owned and operated by the City and County of San Francisco through the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco

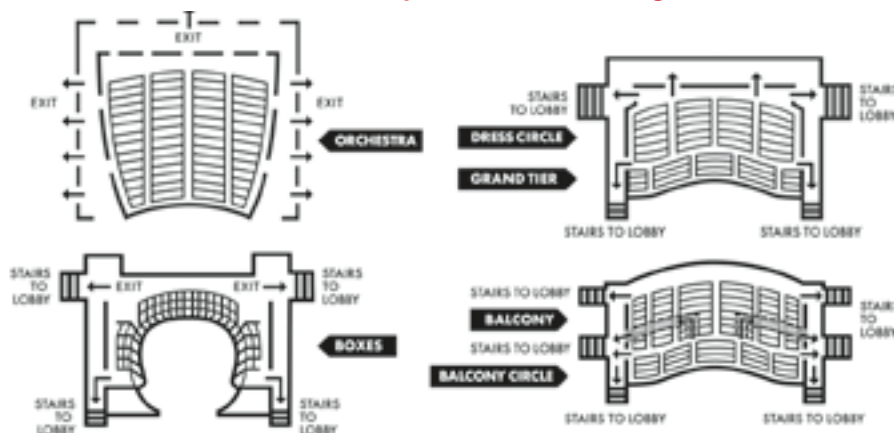
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San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center War Memorial Opera House Exit Diagram



PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, follow any lighted exit sign to the street. **WALK**, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons, proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.



SIMON PAULY

A JIGSAW PUZZLE OF INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

When we announced the 2018–19 Season last January, I experienced something akin to what I imagine a singer feels when they pick up a review. It was a raw, personal, apprehensive moment. Here were artistic choices suddenly under the microscope, being scrutinized by a wonderfully passionate and knowledgeable audience. How would the critics and the public react?

This season is the first programming of the new administration. Only *It’s a Wonderful Life* was in existence prior to my announcement as general director in 2015. Otherwise, we had a blank canvas, and you are about to experience the choices that we made!

Programming a season at San Francisco Opera means carrying forth the mantle of a stage that has quite literally shaped operatic history. What lies ahead must honor and further the exceptional legacy of what has gone before. We have been a company of life-changing experiences, of breathtaking excellence, of bold risk taking. We must continue to be that company. We must celebrate the absolute best in our art form, and we must do so across a fantastic swathe of repertoire, styles, and aesthetics.

That is the enormously exciting (and daunting) opportunity that a blank season presents. How do we go about filling it?

*Season planning takes the convictions of artistic aspirations,
passes them through lenses of feasibility,
and determines whether the elements you need are available.*

First, season planning is not a solo endeavor. It touches every single aspect of the Company, and I am so proud that our planning is undertaken by a group of people who understand the art and craft of this art form with such nuance, and who come together with openness and collegiality, examining artistic possibilities from every angle.

Those angles include such facets as: What balance of titles will be most compelling for our audience? How do we utilize our extraordinary resources to the greatest impact? How do we create a variety of visual and aural worlds that will engage audiences in powerfully different ways? What are the stories that will resonate with our community? How will different productions fit together backstage? Are we creating a season that we can afford financially?


Those are some of the filters we apply, but what titles make it into the cauldron to begin with? There are a number of places from which inspiration can come. There are the titles that are burning needs and wants for the Company—titles that we’ve not done in many years and that allow our talents to shine (e.g., *Arabella*). There are the titles that can be strong investments for our future (*Tosca*). There are opportunities to partner with other companies (*It’s a Wonderful Life*). There are intriguing curiosities that offer new perspectives to audiences (*Orlando*). Where can we take risk? Where can we be the most creative expressions of ourselves? Where do we lead? Where do we join others?


These are all facets in play as we plan for future seasons, as we think about what projects are right for which artists, as we talk with fellow companies and develop partnerships. Then there is the reality check of who and what is available. Is the right cast available for the roles? Is there a production that will work aesthetically and logistically with the other productions of the season? Will the flow of repertoire fit into our calendar?

Season planning takes the convictions of artistic aspirations, passes them through lenses of feasibility, and determines whether the elements you need are available. There is a magical moment when everything locks in. Our brochure goes to print, we announce the season, and then bring everything to life on the stage. The hope is that what results are moments of transformative impact for you, the audience. It’s really very simple!

I can’t wait to hear what you think! 🌟

Connect with Matthew via
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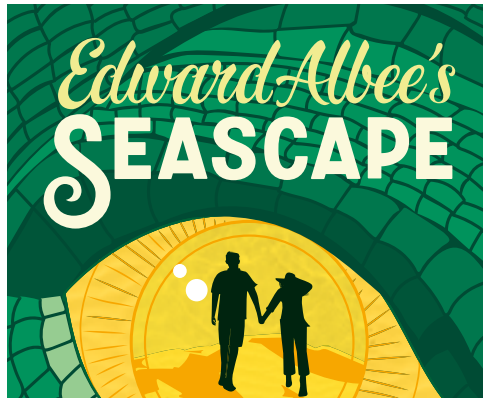
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