

SEPTEMBER 25 - OCTOBER 14, 2022

2022-23 CENTENNIAL SEASON | SFOPERA.COM

Eugene Onegin

BY PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

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Vol. 100, No. 3 • 2022–23 Season • September/October 2022

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FEATURES

12

STREAMING THE FIRST CENTURY: SESSION 1

Historic San Francisco Opera performances from the Slavic repertoire are available for free through this centennial celebration at sfopera.com/firstcentury.

31

INSTIGATING OPERA BY ELENA PARK

Meet the Instigators, six creative leaders from a range of disciplines who are infusing San Francisco Opera with fresh perspectives and ideas.

36

AN INTIMATE GRANDEUR BY LARRY ROTHE

Finely built, powerfully communicative, and filled with some of Tchaikovsky's most rapturous music, *Eugene Onegin* arose during a uniquely challenging episode in the composer's life.

40

"MY BURNING HEART ACHES WITH YEARNING"

BY MARIA SONEVYTSKY

The works of 19th-century Ukrainian composers were overlooked and erased by Imperial Russia in favor of Tchaikovsky, a dynamic that has important ramifications in our time.

47

SPANNING THE DECADES: DIRECTOR EDITION

Second in a series of conversations among San Francisco Opera professionals past and present features director Francesca Zambello and Company Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna.

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 At a Glance
- 7 San Francisco Opera News
- 8 Welcome Message from the Board
- 9 San Francisco Opera Association
- 10 Your Guide to San Francisco Opera
- 13 Subscribers of 25+ Years
- 34 Synopsis
- 35 Cast
- 42 Artist Profiles
- 50 Administration

- 52 Artists Roster, Chorus
- 53 Orchestra, Dancers, and Supernumeraries
- 54 Backstage Personnel
- 61 San Francisco Opera Donors
- 74 Adler Fellows
- 75 Merola Opera Program
- 77 San Francisco Opera Guild
- 79 Postlude by General Director Matthew Shilvock

Cover illustration by Brian Stauffer

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Skip the Line, and Enjoy!



Avoid lines during intermission by pre-ordering your favorite beverage and snack at any concession location before the performance.

At a Glance

WORLD PREMIERE *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA*

BY JOHN ADAMS

Sep 10, 15, 18, 23, 27; Oct 2, 5

Structure: 2 acts, with 1 intermission

Running time: ~3 hrs

Language: Sung in English with English supertitles

Key Characters:

Antony—Roman general, Triumvir, and Cleopatra's lover

Cleopatra—Queen of Egypt whose power threatens Caesar's ambition

Caesar—Octavius, Triumvir of Rome whose ambition is to become sole ruler

Did you know? John Adams had the idea for composing an opera based on Shakespeare's drama after setting two of the playwright's soliloquies in his 2017 opera, *Girls of the Golden West*, which premiered at San Francisco Opera.

EUGENE ONEGIN

BY PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY

Sep 25, 28; Oct 1, 6, 9, 11, 14

Structure: 3 acts, with 1 intermission

Running time: ~3 hrs

Language: Sung in Russian with English supertitles

Key Characters:

Eugene Oegin—A taciturn aristocrat

Tatyana—A young woman with unrequited feelings for Oegin

Lensky—Oegin's friend, a poet

Olga—Tatyana's younger sister, in a relationship with Lensky

Listen for: In the opera's final act, Oegin is overcome with ardent feelings; he claims to be poisoned with desire for Tatyana. His music at that point corresponds directly to Tatyana's in Act I when she pours her passion for Oegin into a letter.



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FREE! EXHIBITION

Bringing the Opera to the People and the People to the Opera

September 10, 2022–January 12, 2023

Presented by San Francisco Public Library
Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, 4th Floor

FREE! SIMULCAST

Opera at the Ballpark: *La Traviata*

November 11, 2022 at 7:30pm

Oracle Park



FREE! CONCERT

Opera in the Park

September 11, 2022 at 1:30pm

Robin Williams Meadow, Golden Gate Park



PERFORMANCE

The Traviata Encounter

November 19, 2022 at 7:30pm

War Memorial Opera House



FREE! FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Community Open House

October 23, 2022

War Memorial Opera House



FREE! EXHIBITION

San Francisco Opera: A Centennial Celebration

November 19, 2022–August 20, 2023

Presented by SFO Museum at San Francisco International Airport
San Francisco International Airport, Harvey Milk Terminal 1

LEARN MORE AT [SFOPERA.COM/100](https://www.sfopera.com/100)

Photos: (Top row) Morton & Co., Drew Altizer; (Bottom Row) Kristen Loken, unknown. Centennial illustrations by Brian Stauffer.

San Francisco Opera News

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Join San Francisco Opera and the San Francisco Public Library for *The Opera in You*, a series of free writing and storytelling workshops. Led by experienced teachers, the workshops will explore the unique experiences within us all as participants build storytelling literacy skills in a creative and collaborative environment. Each 5-part workshop series culminates in free public events where participants are encouraged to share their story. There is no cost to participate, but registration is strongly encouraged. To register, email San Francisco Opera's Department of Diversity, Equity, and Community at DEC@sfopera.com.



Nicole Cabell in *La Traviata*, 2014. / CORY WEAVER



KRISTEN LOKEN

In addition to the Opera's 100th season, this year also marks the 90th anniversary of the War Memorial Opera House. In celebration of both anniversaries, San Francisco Opera opens the doors of its historic home for a free open house on Sunday, October 23. The day's activities will include musical performances, backstage show-and-tell tours, an operatic scavenger hunt, and hands-on crafts. Bring the whole family and spend the day in one of the Bay Area's historic gathering spaces.

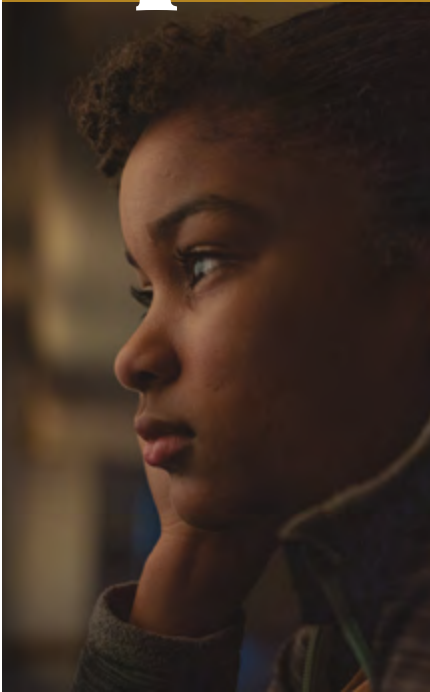
\$10 Prime Seats to Every Performance

In celebration of its centennial, San Francisco Opera is partnering with the Dolby Family to provide Bay Area residents a limited number of \$10 tickets in prime seating locations for every performance. Eligibility for these *Opera for the Bay* tickets is limited to those with a home address zip code between 94000–95999 who have not purchased a San Francisco Opera ticket in the past three years. For more information or to purchase Dolby Family Tickets, visit sfopera.com/operaforthebay.



BRIAN STAUFFER

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Show up for foster kids.**

**Give your time or money at
HelpFosterChildren.com**



WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to San Francisco Opera's Centennial Season! We've arrived at this incredible milestone because of the passion and dedication of patrons like you. Your support has sustained us through our most challenging period and has given us the strength to imagine an even greater future for this company and our community.



John A. Gunn



Keith B. Geeslin

After years of planning and preparation, we're thrilled to see this year's exciting productions come to life. San Francisco Opera has always had a focus on showcasing new work, and this season is no exception. We begin this fall with the world premiere of *Antony and Cleopatra* by renowned composer John Adams, followed by Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, presented in the Bay Area premiere of Robert Carsen's acclaimed production. Both operas merge the old with the new and present the epic emotions of humanity in deeply moving ways.

In addition to our mainstage productions, we hope you'll bring your friends and family to our free events this fall: our *Opera in the Park* on September 11, *Community Open House* on October 23, and *Opera at the Ballpark* on November 11.

In celebration of 100 years, San Francisco Opera is partnering with the Dolby Family to provide a number of \$10 tickets in great seating locations for every performance this season to new ticket buyers. We are deeply grateful for the Dolby Family's generosity in sponsoring this effort, which serves the Company's mission to share the transformative power of opera with new audiences. It is a wonderful opportunity to share this art form with anyone who has not yet experienced San Francisco Opera's emotion-filled productions.

Thank you for supporting San Francisco Opera as we launch our second century. We hope that you continue to celebrate with us all season long!

John A. Gunn

Chairman of the Board
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Every weekend from
September 24 - October 30

This fall, join us in the Gentleman's Orchard as we celebrate and learn about the harvest season! The Gentleman's Orchard will be open from 10am - 5pm, featuring delightful foods, local musicians, and more.



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

**WELCOME! WE'RE SO HAPPY YOU'RE HERE.
PLEASE READ OUR GUIDE TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR TIME AT THE OPERA.**

ACCESSIBILITY

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

For patrons using wheelchairs, San Francisco Opera offers wheelchair-accessible seats at a range of prices. All entrances at the War Memorial Opera House are wheelchair accessible. Wheelchair-accessible stalls in restrooms can be found on all floors (except the Main Lobby and 5th floor Balcony levels). Accessible drinking fountains are located on all floors except the Balcony level.

COAT CHECK

Check your coat at the North and South ends of the main lobby. For the safety and comfort of our audience, large bags are strongly discouraged and are subject to search.

CONCESSIONS

Enjoy a great selection of snacks and refreshments at concession areas in the Lobby, Box, Dress Circle, and Balcony levels, as well as the Lower lounge.

DINING

Restaurants: Dine pre-show or reserve a table for intermission dining.

- **Prelude at the Opera House (Lower Lounge)**
- **North Box Restaurant and Bar (North Mezzanine Level)**

*Restaurants are open two hours prior to performances.
Reservations are strongly recommended,
by calling (415) 861-8150.*

Pre-Order!

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

Cafés: Enjoy a variety of sandwiches, snacks, and refreshments

- **Café Express (Lower Level, Open 2 hours before curtain)**
- **Dress Circle Lounge (Level 3, South, Open 1 hour before curtain)**

DRINKING FOUNTAINS

Quench your thirst at drinking fountains available on all levels or at the water station on the north side of the lower level.

FIRST AID STATION

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of everyone is our top priority. Please view up-to-date protocols at [sfopera.com/safetyfirst](https://www.sfopera.com/safetyfirst).

Audience members who do not follow the Front of House safety protocols will be asked to leave the venue.

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

- Turn off all electronic devices during the performance, including digital watches and cell phones. We ask this out of respect for the artists and for everyone in the theater enjoying a live, in-the-moment experience.
- Take photos before, during intermission, or after the performance, and leave cameras and recording devices off during performances.
- Keep your well-fitted mask on during the performance and when not eating or drinking in the lobbies.
- Enjoy food and drinks pre-show and during intermission, before entering the theater. To keep everyone safe, drinks are not allowed inside the theater.
- As a courtesy to those who may have fragrance allergies, please avoid wearing perfume or cologne.
- Get to know and enjoy this wonderful community of opera lovers. Say hello to one another pre-show, at intermission, or leaving the theater.

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

LARGE-PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSES

Visit the North Lobby coat check for large-print versions of the cast sheets and synopses.

LISTENING DEVICES

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

LIVE TITLES: TEXT-TO-VOICE SUPERTITLES

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

LOST AND FOUND

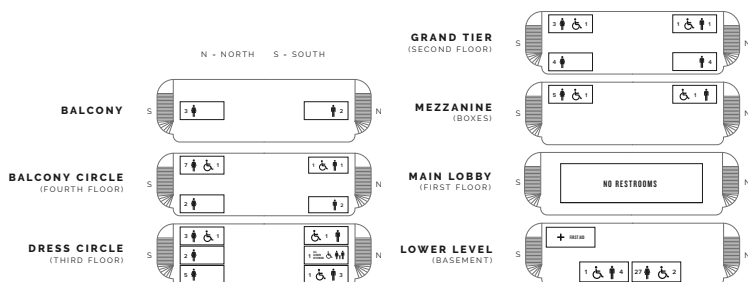
Items may be turned in or claimed at the North coat check during the performance. All unclaimed items are delivered to the War Memorial Performing Arts Center at 401 Van Ness Ave., Room 110, (415) 621-6600 (8 AM–5 PM, Monday–Friday).

OPERA GLASSES

See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

RESTROOMS

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



RIDESHARE

Direct your rideshare service to pick-up and drop-off using the white loading zone at 450 Franklin Street (located behind the Opera House).

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SHOP

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

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. Taxi availability is limited. Please note the Taxi Ramp is not staffed.

IMPROVING YOUR SAFETY
Meet Your Civic Center Ambassadors!
 As you leave the theater, be on the lookout for friendly community ambassadors in orange vests or coats along Grove Street. These ambassadors are there to assist you and escort you to and from the Opera House on performance days and evenings from 6:30–11:30pm.

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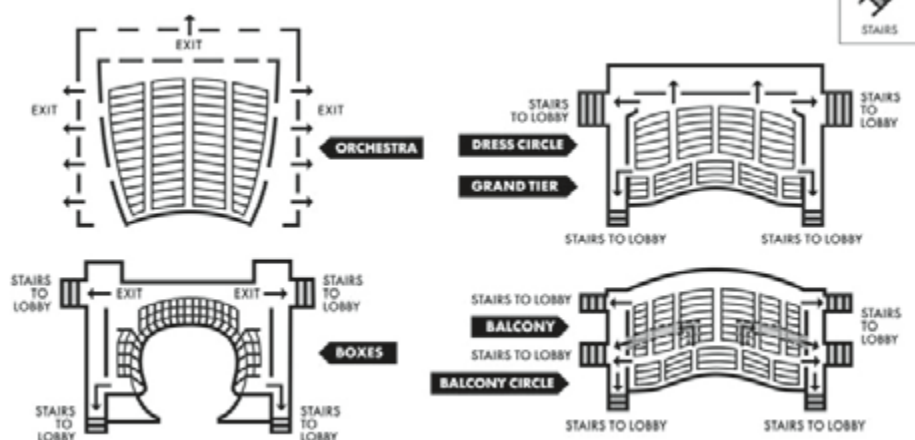
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Streaming the First Century: Session 1

As part of the Company's centennial celebrations, Streaming the First Century provides free access to historic San Francisco Opera performances, archival interviews, and much more! Session 1 (released on September 12) highlights the Slavic repertory. To explore, visit sfopera.com/firstcentury.

LEOŠ JANÁČEK'S *JENŮFA*

Starting in its 12th season in 1934, San Francisco Opera began presenting important works by Czech composers in English translation. The Company's performances of *Jenůfa* in 1980 marked a turning point. Two legendary interpreters—**Elisabeth Söderström** (left) and **Sena Jurinac** (right and below)—headline an unforgettable performance in the original Czech.



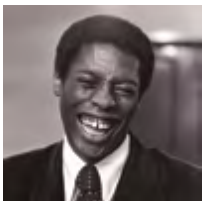
Sena Jurinac. / IRA NOWINSKI



RON SCHERL

DMITRI SHOSTAKOVICH'S *LADY MACBETH OF MTSENSK*

Kurt Herbert Adler presented *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* starring **Anja Silja** (center) as the centerpiece of his 28th and final season in 1981 as general director of San Francisco Opera. He entrusted the baton to his protégé **Calvin Simmons**, a versatile musician and rising star in the classical music world. One year after leading this incisive performance, Simmons died in a tragic boating accident. He was 32.



Calvin Simmons / DAVID POWERS



RON SCHERL

ADDITIONAL SESSION 1 FEATURES INCLUDE:

- Excerpts from Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (1945) sung in Italian; the U.S. premiere of Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* (1966) in English; Tchaikovsky's *Pikovaya Dama* (1975) led by Mstislav Rostropovich; and the Company premiere of Mussorgsky's *Khovanshchina* (1984).
 - Archival interviews with Sena Jurinac, Elisabeth Söderström, Calvin Simmons, and Regina Resnik.
 - Conversations with director Francesca Zambello, former Chorus Director Ian Robertson, Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna, and Hair and Makeup supervisors Stan Dufford and Jeanna Parham.
 - New essays by Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna, music journalist David Shengold, and writer Maurice Wheeler.
 - And much more!

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John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



TERRENCE MCCARTHY

Once again, the unprecedented generosity of Cynthia and John Gunn has set the stage for a dazzling season at San Francisco Opera.

Since 2002, when John joined the Opera Board, the couple has underwritten numerous productions and provided exceptional support for many of the Company's innovative endeavors. In September 2008, the Gunns made a historic commitment—believed to be the largest gift ever made by individuals to an American opera company—to help fund the signature projects of General Director David Gockley, including new operas and productions, multimedia projects, and outreach programs, and they have proudly continued that support for General Director Matthew Shilvock. This season, the Gunns' inspired generosity is helping make possible four productions—*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Eugene Onegin*, *La Traviata*, and *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*. The Gunns invite everyone to give and join them as a member of San Francisco Opera's donor community. John comments, "Opera is a dynamic art form, and all of us play a role in keeping it a meaningful part of our social fabric. With you we can propel San Francisco Opera into its next 100 years

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

Donor Spotlight



Diane B. Wilsey (Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor)

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.” Thanks to Dede’s generosity, opera enthusiasts of all ages have much to celebrate. As Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor for the sixteenth year, she is excited to celebrate the start of our Centennial Season with a concert of opera stars Nadine Sierra, Michael Fabiano, Pene Pati, and Lucas Meachem singing opera favorites and a few surprises, with our beloved San Francisco Opera Orchestra under the baton of Caroline H. Hume Music

Director Eun Sun Kim. Dede is also supporting the celebratory floral arrangements that grace the War Memorial Opera House on September 9, the world premiere of *Antony and Cleopatra* on September 10, and the free, annual Opera in the Park concert at Robin Williams Meadow on September 11. 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. Her philanthropic commitment to the community extends to many organizations. Dede has been chairman of the board of the Fine Arts Museums since 1996 and serves on the boards of the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, and the War Memorial Performing Arts Center and is a lifetime trustee of UCSF.



Carol Franc Buck Foundation (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

The Carol Franc Buck Foundation has generously supported the arts for more than forty years. With a mission to support the visual and performing arts in the western region of the country, the Carol Franc Buck Foundation was created in 1979, providing major underwriting and production grants to the opera companies of San Francisco, Houston, Portland, Nevada, and Arizona, as well as many others. Ms. Buck, who passed away in April 2022, was the youngest child of Frank and Eva Buck, a well-known agricultural, entrepreneurial, and political family in California history, from whom she learned the values associated with contributing to and working in one’s community. Born in San Francisco, Ms. Buck grew up in and around Vacaville at a time when it was a small rural

ranching area. She attended Stanford University, graduating cum laude with a degree in history. She served as the president of the Carol Franc Buck Foundation since its inception, was an original director of the Frank and Eva Buck Foundation, and was a valued board member of San Francisco Opera from 1981-2022. Matthew Shilvock says, “Creating opera with Carol was a joyful blessing. She had such a nuanced understanding of the art form and how we could propel it forward. She developed lasting and deep connections with artists and had great respect for the intensity of their work. And in her philanthropy and partnership she did so much to celebrate the vital role culture plays in the Bay Area. It was a privilege to know her. We miss her dearly but will feel the impact of her extraordinary spirit for decades to come.”



The Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

The Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation was established in 1996 by philanthropist Edgar Foster Daniels. The Foundation’s focus is to provide support to American and international opera companies. Mr. Daniels, who passed away in August 2020, served on the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera (honorary director), and Los Angeles Opera and was a lifetime board member of Lyric Opera of Chicago. Mr. Daniels, individually and through his Foundation, underwrote productions at San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and The Dallas Opera and also provided support to the Salzburg Festival,

Donor Spotlight

the Bayreuth Festival, Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and the Glyndebourne Festival. San Francisco Opera is grateful to Mr. Daniels for his support of our past productions of *Luisa Miller*, *Tannhäuser*, and our 1990 and 2018 *Ring* cycles. His passion for opera lives on through the Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation, and San Francisco Opera is especially thankful for the Foundation's support of this season's *Antony and Cleopatra*.



PHOTO VIA COMMUNITY HOSPITAL OF THE MONTEREY PENINSULA

Bertie Bialek Elliott (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

Roberta "Bertie" Bialek Elliott has a long history of volunteerism and philanthropic support on the Monterey Peninsula, in the Bay Area, and at her alma mater Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Bertie was born in Omaha, Nebraska and graduated from Northwestern in 1954 with a degree in History and Phi Beta Kappa honors. In 1963 she and her then-husband moved to Carmel, California to raise their family. Bertie was an early investor in Berkshire Hathaway, founded by her brother, legendary investor Warren Buffett. Bertie and her three daughters established the Berkshire Foundation in 1996 and have supported many organizations and institutions through it. Bertie has served on the boards of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Monterey County Symphony Association, Carmel Bach Festival, Community Foundation for Monterey County, and the

Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula. Most recently Bertie helped the Community Hospital in establishing the Ohana Center for Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health. Bertie has supported the San Francisco Opera for more than 20 years and is a big fan of John Adams. Bertie sponsored his *Girls of the Golden West* in 2017 and was a commissioning sponsor of *Doctor Atomic* in 2005.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jerome L. & Thao N. Dodson (Production Sponsor, *Eugene Onegin*)

"A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty, Hi-Yo, Silver!" Those words, accompanied by the galloping excitement of Rossini's *William Tell* Overture, transfixed a young Jerry Dodson as he listened to *The Lone Ranger* on the family radio in Oak Park, Illinois. Just as Bugs Bunny's *Rabbit of Seville* had done for many, a lighthearted entertainment sparked a future operatic devotion. That little boy grew up to attend Berkeley in the '60s, serve with the American Embassy in Vietnam where he and Thao met, and attend Harvard Business School. Eventually, the couple married, settled in the Bay Area, and raised a family. In the 1980s, Jerry was a pioneer in the field of socially responsible investing, with little interest in opera. But in 1992, when San Francisco Opera

decided to celebrate Rossini's bicentennial with the rarely performed *William Tell*, Thao, already an opera lover, suggested to Jerry that they go. *William Tell* was praised for its striking Lotfi Mansouri production, and the Dodsons began attending regularly. They became season ticket holders in 1999 and supporters, "in a small way," as Jerry puts it. A friendship with David Gockley, which endures to this day, led to a larger role as Company Sponsors. "I so admired what he did for the opera, but it was not very good for my pocketbook," Jerry laughs. Jerry also lends his financial expertise to the audit committee. In 2016, Dodson considered the import of Gockley's departure. He met with Matthew Shilvock and joined the Board that year. "We hit it off right away!" Jerry says. He felt a similar affinity with Keith Geeslin (President of the San Francisco Opera Association). Eager to continue their support, the Dodsons see the Centennial Season as a perfect time to revitalize and energize the Company within the San Francisco community. The initial fire ignited by *William Tell* continues to burn brightly.

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Donor Spotlight



KRISTEN LOKEN

Bob Ellis (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

Bob has been a longtime supporter of contemporary opera since he became a member of the board of directors in 2001. He has supported all of John Adams' new productions for SFO, beginning with the commission of *Doctor Atomic* in 2005, *Girls of the Golden West* in 2017, and now *Antony and Cleopatra*. "For me, John Adams has a unique gift for creating operatic portraits of major historical moments, with pulsing, lyrical singing and orchestration that keeps them alive in my memory." Other production sponsorships have included Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*, and the 2011 premiere of Francesca Zambello's production of Wagner's *Ring*. He has also served on the boards of Opera Parallèle, OPERA America, and Central City Opera.



**SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD**

San Francisco Opera Guild (Production Sponsor, *Eugene Onegin*)

Now celebrating its 83rd Anniversary, San Francisco Opera Guild delivers a full menu of education programs for Bay Area TK-12 students, teachers, adults, and the extended community. Each year hundreds of classrooms join the Guild in award-winning programs including Sing a Story, Opera Together, Book to Bravo!, Voices for Social Justice, and Student Dress Rehearsals. Young artists seeking more in-depth involvement participate in the youth training programs Summer Conservatory, Madrigals, and Opera Scouts for ages 7-18. This year expanded community programming will include Opera Primera and Kinder Choir for little ones aged 6 months to 5 years. With a particular focus on social-emotional skill building, the Guild believes the life lessons drawn from creative expression are the foundation of confidence, integrity, and compassion. San Francisco Opera Guild's Education Fund ensures the continuation of these vital programs. San Francisco Opera Guild is a proud supporter of San Francisco Opera and a Production Sponsor of *Eugene Onegin*. Giving Voice to Potential since 1939.



National Endowment for the Arts (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

Antony and Cleopatra is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts. Established by Congress in 1965, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. San Francisco Opera is grateful to the NEA for its long-time partnership and commitment to the work we do on stage.



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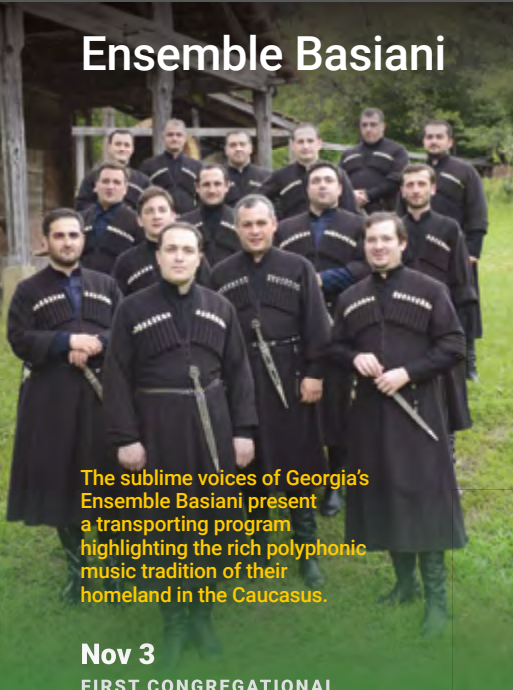
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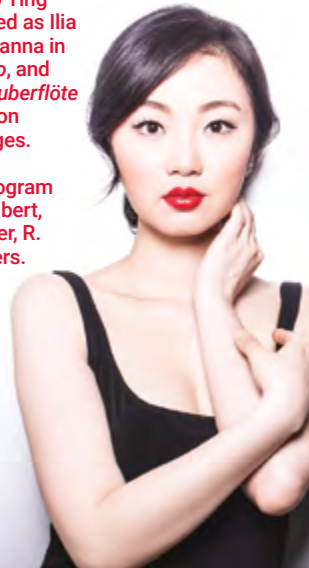


The sublime voices of Georgia's Ensemble Basiani present a transporting program highlighting the rich polyphonic music tradition of their homeland in the Caucasus.

Nov 3
 FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
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Ying Fang, *soprano* Ken Noda, *piano*

The lyric soprano Ying Fang has appeared as Ilia in *Idomeneo*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* to great acclaim on international stages. She is joined by Ken Noda in a program of songs by Schubert, Schumann, Mahler, R. Strauss, and others.



Nov 6
 HERTZ HALL

THANKSGIVING WEEKEND

Vienna Boys Choir *Christmas in Vienna*



The universally adored Vienna Boys Choir visits Berkeley in a festive program of Austrian folk songs, classical masterpieces, and Christmas hymns and carols from across the globe.

Nov 26
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Joyce DiDonato: *Eden*

A Cal Performances Co-commission

DiDonato is joined by the early-music ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro in a theatrical, semi-staged concert that features music from the 17th to 21st centuries by Handel, Gluck, Cavalli, Wagner, Mahler, Ives, and Copland.

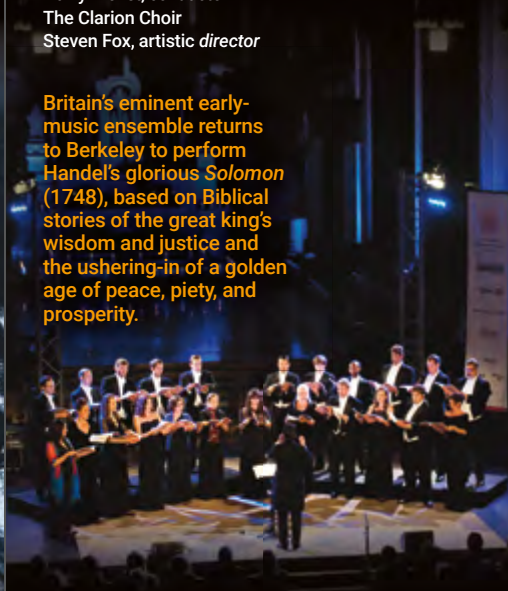


Jan 21
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The English Concert

Harry Bicket, *conductor*
 The Clarion Choir
 Steven Fox, *artistic director*

Britain's eminent early-music ensemble returns to Berkeley to perform Handel's glorious *Solomon* (1748), based on Biblical stories of the great king's wisdom and justice and the ushering-in of a golden age of peace, piety, and prosperity.



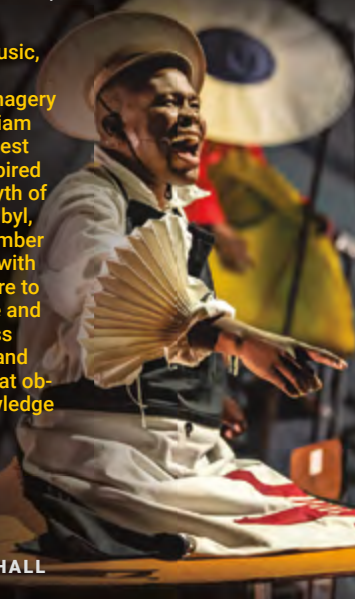
Mar 5
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US PREMIERE

William Kentridge's *SIBYL*

William Kentridge, *concept and director*

Myth, magic, music, movement, and mesmerizing imagery combine in William Kentridge's newest production. Inspired by the Greek myth of the Cumaean Sibyl, Kentridge's chamber opera wrestles with the human desire to know our future and our helplessness before powers and technologies that obscure that knowledge from us.



Mar 17-19
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Donor Spotlight



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem/Conductors Fund and Emerging Stars Fund (Sponsor, Amina Edris and Taylor Raven in *Antony and Cleopatra*; Vassilis Christopoulos, Gordon Bintner, Evan LeRoy Johnson, and Aigul Akhmetshina in *Eugene Onegin*)

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. As Company Sponsors for more than a decade, Jan and Maria have established four generous funds. The Conductors Fund helps ensure the continued appearances of noted conductors 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, the Emerging Stars Fund supports the Company in showcasing exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season, and the Luminaries Concert Fund enables San Francisco Opera to bring legendary artists to the stage for special events and performances.



Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions (Production Sponsor, *Antony and Cleopatra*)

San Francisco Opera will always owe a debt of gratitude to Phyllis C. Wattis for her many generous and visionary gifts to San Francisco Opera that include an endowment that established the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions. Mrs. Wattis passed away in June 2002 at the age of 97. During her life she generously supported many Bay Area nonprofit organizations and was especially interested in the arts, contributing also her time, wisdom, and leadership to the fine arts and the performing arts. She served prominently on the boards of San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco Opera, and San Francisco Symphony and was a committed financial and ideological supporter of each of these organizations as well. Mrs. Wattis helped underwrite

San Francisco Opera's world premiere productions, including *Dangerous Liaisons* (1994), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998), and the critically acclaimed *Dead Man Walking* (2000). San Francisco Opera deeply appreciates the many generous gifts from Mrs. Wattis and takes this opportunity to recognize the Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions for its sponsorship support of many operas, including *The Makropulos Case* (2010), *The Flying Dutchman* (2013), *Two Women* (2015), *Così fan tutte* (2021), *Don Giovanni* (2022), and this season's *Antony and Cleopatra*.



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To learn more about becoming a sponsor or making a gift in honor of the Centennial Season, please contact Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Bury at lbury@sfopera.com or **(415) 551-6226**.

Photo: Cory Weaver (Meistersinger, 2015–16 Season)

The Endowment Fund

San Francisco honors with gratitude those whose endowment contributions, received through July 31, 2022, have generously provided the Company with the financial stability and assurance to be the most exciting force in opera today and in the future. To learn about the Endowment Fund and its impact, contact Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Bury at (415) 551-6226 or lbury@sfopera.com.

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Lotte Lehmann as Tosca, 1934. / MORTON



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Ailyn Pérez as Tosca, 2021. / CORY WEAVER

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We are forever grateful for their visionary philanthropy.

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Instigating Opera

BY ELENA PARK

San Francisco Opera Instigators and team (front row) Jad Abumrad, Elena Park, Samantha Gorman, Paula Te, Jocelyn Clarke; (back row) Matthew Shilvock, Peter Zuspan, Lee Helms, Bryant Terry (Not pictured: Instigator Abhishek Majumdar). / KRISTEN LOKEN

“Opera is an art form that tries to build towards the sublime,” reflected writer-director **Samantha Gorman** during the opening session of the Instigators last June, when six remarkable thinkers and artists eagerly accepted San Francisco Opera’s invitation to dive headlong into the world of opera, kicking off the Company’s bold multidisciplinary program to help pioneer future directions for the field. Exploring new ground is something Gorman and her LA-based studio, TenderClaws, seek to do in immersive spaces and emerging media including AR [augmented reality] and VR [virtual reality], often with live performers.

This rumination—on the beauty and power of opera, how and what the art form traditionally has been and for whom, and what it might yet become—was part of an expansive,

lively conversation that unfurled over five days of immersive introductory activities hosted by San Francisco Opera for the Instigators. In addition to field trips to the Company’s scenic and costume shops and to the Institute of the Future in Palo Alto, the Instigators met with luminaries such as director Peter Sellars, composer Jake Heggie, librettist Roxie Perkins, and animation-VR creator Saschka Unseld. Exchanging ideas with a range of Company artists, artisans, and staff, they took part in hands-on activities around the Opera House and attended rehearsals and performances. It is all part of the San Francisco Opera’s collective effort, with support from the Creative Edge Fund, to tap creative leaders from a range of disciplines to infuse the Company, the art form, and the community with unexpected ideas.

Jad Abumrad, the storyteller-musician-journalist whose

INSTIGATORS



Elena Park (left) in conversation with Instigators Jad Abumrad, Samantha Gordon, Paula Te, Bryant Terry, and Peter Zuspan, at a June 8, 2022 launch event. Inset: Instigator Abhishek Majumdar. / KRISTEN LOKEN

groundbreaking podcasts include *Radiolab*, mused on the interplay between power and scale: “You can have the smallest story, but as soon as it’s on a stage and it’s set to music, you feel like these people are 30 feet tall. Audio [storytelling] is very much about intimacy and about a one-to-one connection ... is there a way that something can be operatic and also as intimate as a podcast?”

For architect, designer, and software engineer **Peter Zuspan**, whose firm, Bureau V, designs performance spaces and engages in artist collaborations, bigness is one of the things that draws him to opera (which he studied as a singer): “Just the scale of it is so important. That part is a really important thing for me, as a designer thinking about space all the time.”

Open-ended inquiry is at the heart of this new initiative, notes San Francisco Opera General Director **Matthew Shilvoek**. “There’s this willingness in the Bay Area to tread into unknown territory and see exciting things result, of pushing boundaries and being willing to do the unthinkable,” he told the Instigators. “I’ve long wished that we as a cultural organization could embody more of that sensibility. Because of where we are in the world, we should be able to tap into that mindset in a way that really nobody else can—unencumbered by the reality of the traditional side of what we do, without a fixed end goal.”

The initiative supports one- or two-year inquiries in a lab-like framework. With goalposts a fluid concept, the Instigators’ inquiry may take many forms, from research and experiments to workshops and prototypes, drawing upon expertise and partnerships with people from inside and outside the field of opera.

East Bay chef, educator, and author **Bryant Terry** has long admired how opera brings together so many different

genres but wondered about the role of the audience: “In a lot of European art forms, the norm is that as a viewer, you’re a very passive recipient. But in a lot of diasporic Black cultures, there’s this norm of interacting with the performance: you’re giving them energy, they’re giving you energy. And so there’s this kind of dialogue and interplay.”

Interplay and participation have always deeply informed the work of writer-scenographer-director **Abhishek Majumdar**, artistic director of Bangalore’s Nalanda Arts Studio. Referencing Asian forms such as Jatra, Lhamo opera, and Bengali opera, he asked, “How does [opera] connect to your life outside? And what’s the connection between that life and this life? Do you find your stories, and does this inform your life?”

Design technologist-researcher **Paula Te**, who explores how the design of interfaces and interactions can augment human learning and enable creative expression, inquired, “How can opera be something that’s more than a consumptive experience and feel more like something we’re participating in? What might it look like if audience members felt like their lived experiences were reflected in opera?”

As the Instigators—abetted by the Company’s Director of Innovation Programs Lee Helms, Instigators Curator Elena Park, and Creative Advisor Jocelyn Clarke—begin to tackle these and many more questions, they’ll help to dream a future for opera that we can only begin to imagine. 🌱

Keep up with the Instigators by visiting sfopera.com/instigators.

Instigators is made possible, in part, by the Creative Edge Fund with major support from Carol and Dixon Doll, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, and Bob Ellis.

Eugene Onegin

**OPERA IN THREE ACTS BY PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY
TEXT BY PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY AND KONSTANTIN SHILOVSKY
AFTER THE NOVEL IN VERSE BY ALEXANDER SERGEYEVICH PUSHKIN**

Production Sponsors:
Jerome L. & Thao N. Dodson
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Vassilis Christopoulos' appearance is made possible by
a gift to the Conductors Fund by Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

Aigul Akhmetshina, Gordon Bintner, and Evan LeRoy Johnson's appearances
are made possible by a gift to the Emerging Stars Fund
by Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

Additional support provided by Dr. Susan Kroll & Mr. Mark R. Kroll.

SEPTEMBER 25, 28; OCTOBER 1, 6, 9, 11, 14, 2022

The performance will last approximately three hours, including one intermission.



THE FUTURE OF OPERA

Eugene Onegin

ACT I

SCENE 1: Madame Larina and the old nurse Filipyevna are making fruit preserves. Inside the house, the Larin daughters, Tatyana and Olga, are singing a ballad. Peasants arrive with a decorated wheat sheaf. Tatyana daydreams to their folk tune, but it makes Olga want to dance. Tatyana continues reading a romantic novel and, when her mother reminds her there are no heroes in real life, she attributes her sad looks to the events of the story. Olga's fiancé, Lensky, arrives with Onegin, a friend from St. Petersburg. Onegin is surprised that Lensky has chosen the superficial Olga for a wife and turns his attention to the more enigmatic Tatyana. Tatyana, for her part, sees Onegin as the man of her dreams. Onegin is condescending about country life but has deeply impressed Tatyana.

SCENE 2: Filipyevna is helping Tatyana prepare for bed. Tatyana begs for stories of Filipyevna's youth, before confessing that she has fallen in love. When the nurse leaves, Tatyana pours out her feelings in a passionate letter to Onegin, declaring eternal love. Dawn is breaking as Tatyana finishes her letter, and Filipyevna is startled to find her awake. Tatyana gives her the letter to deliver to Onegin.

SCENE 3: Peasants sing as they work in the Larin garden. Tatyana enters, agitated, at the prospect of a visit by Onegin. When he arrives, he acknowledges receiving her letter and explains kindly but patronizingly that he was touched by it and admired its candor. But he adds that he has no intention of marrying. He could not conceivably be her lover and can offer no more than brotherly affection.

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

SCENE 1: At Tatyana's birthday ball, Onegin dances with her but is bored. Hearing the guests gossip about his relationship to Tatyana, he dances with Olga to provoke Lensky. Lensky feels betrayed by Onegin's flirtation with Olga. When Onegin laughingly persists in dancing with Olga, Lensky's jealousy flares. Lensky challenges Onegin to a duel, and Onegin realizes he has gone too far.

SCENE 2: Lensky gloomily awaits his opponent and broods over his love for Olga. Onegin arrives. Both regret their quarrel, but the conventions of the duel bind them to their commitment. Lensky is killed.

ACT III

SCENE 1: Onegin, just back from lengthy travels abroad, arrives at a magnificent ball in St. Petersburg but is unhappy and remorseful. The death of Lensky lies heavy on his heart. The glittering ball seems to symbolize the emptiness and aimlessness of his life. Prince Gremin, a retired general, arrives with his wife. Onegin, with shock and bewilderment, recognizes the Princess Gremina as Tatyana—a vision of dignity and grace. The Prince tells him he married Tatyana two years ago and that his life has been transformed and redeemed by the love of this beautiful woman. When introduced, Tatyana and Onegin are formal with each other. Onegin is distressed to realize he has fallen inopportunely but deeply in love with her.

SCENE 2: Tatyana, profoundly unsettled by the passionate love letter Onegin sent her, awaits him. Onegin arrives and falls at her feet. She reminds him that he once rejected her and tells him that, because of her marriage, and despite her love for him, she will not yield to him now. It is her clear duty to leave him immediately and forever. Onegin is left alone in misery and despair.

First performance: Maly Theatre, Moscow, March 29, 1879.

First performance in the United States: Metropolitan Opera, New York, March 24, 1920 (sung in Italian).

First San Francisco Opera performance: War Memorial Opera House, October 13, 1971 (sung in English). *Eugene Onegin* has been performed in 4 previous seasons at San Francisco Opera. For complete information on all past casts and productions, visit archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 12 principals, 63 choristers, 25 supernumeraries, 4 dancers; **104 total**.

Orchestra: 1 piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 timpani, 1 harp, 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **60 total**.

Eugene Onegin

Opera in three acts by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** • Libretto by **Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky** and **Konstantin Shilovsky**

Based on the novel in verse by **Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin**

(Sung in Russian with English supertitles)

Conductor

Vassilis Christopoulos*

Production

Robert Carsen

Revival Director

Peter McClintock

Production Designer

Michael Levine

Lighting Designer

Christine Binder

Choreographer

Serge Bennathan*

Chorus Director

John Keene

Assistant Conductor

Dennis Doubin

Prompter

Tamar Sanikidze

Musical Preparation

Alden Gatt, Bryndon Hassman,

Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad,

John Churchwell, Fabrizio Corona

Diction

Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad

Supertitles

Christopher Bergen

Assistant Director

Jose Maria Condemi

Stage Managers

Thea Railey

Jennifer Harber

Assistant Stage Managers

Anna Reetz, Jonathan S. Campbell,

Collette Berg

Dance Master

Colm Seery

Fight Director

Dave Maier

Costume Supervisor

Jai Alltizer

Hair and Makeup

Jeanna Parham

Canadian Opera Company production,
originally created for the Metropolitan Opera.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2022 • 2 PM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 • 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1 • 7:30 PM
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6 • 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 9 • 2 PM
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 11 • 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 14 • 7:30 PM

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Tatyana</i>	Evgenia Muraveva*
<i>Olga</i>	Aigul Akhmetshina*
<i>Madame Larina</i>	Deborah Nansteel*
<i>Filipyevna</i>	Ronnita Miller
<i>A Peasant</i>	Michael Jankosky
<i>Lensky</i>	Evan LeRoy Johnson*
<i>Eugene Onegin</i>	Gordon Bintner*
<i>A Captain</i>	Stefan Egerstrom†
<i>Monsieur Triquet</i>	Brenton Ryan
<i>Zaretsky</i>	Stefan Egerstrom†
<i>Guillot</i>	Ely Orquiza*
<i>Prince Gremin</i>	Ferruccio Furlanetto
<i>Dancers</i>	Brett Conway, Jekyns Peláez, Jamielyn Duggan, Blanche Hampton

Dancers, Peasants, Servants, Priests, Ball Guests, Lackeys

*San Francisco Opera debut †Current Adler Fellow

PLACE AND TIME: Russia, 19th century

ACT I

SCENE 1: The garden of Madame Larina's country estate

SCENE 2: Tatyana's room

SCENE 3: Another part of the garden

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

SCENE 1: The main room of the Larin house

SCENE 2: The open country, in the early morning

ACT III

SCENE 1: The Gremin Palace in St. Petersburg

SCENE 2: A room in the Gremin Palace, the next day

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

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

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

Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

Please keep your mask on at all times in the theater.

Please note, food and beverages are not allowed in the theater.

An Intimate Grandeur

IN *EUGENE ONEGIN*, TCHAIKOVSKY OUTLINES LOVE'S DEMANDS

BY LARRY ROTHE



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and Antonina Miliukova during their honeymoon, 1877. / STATE P. TCHAIKOVSKY MEMORIAL MUSEUM, KLIN.

Artists are often poor critics of their own work, so Tchaikovsky can be excused for failing to recognize he had made a masterpiece in *Eugene Onegin*. Perhaps the circumstances of its birth colored his judgment. Finely built, powerfully communicative, filled with some of the composer's most rapturous music, nothing about this opera suggests it emerged from the worst episode of his life.

Being gay at a time and in a society uneasy with sex in any form, Tchaikovsky was tortured with guilt and fear of being outed—so tortured and so scared that, in 1877, he determined at last to undergo a self-imposed conversion therapy. He planned to marry.

This plan, his biographer David Brown believes, enabled Tchaikovsky to convince himself he could build a solid domestic life, and because no specific bride existed, the project could remain a fantasy. In May 1877, everything changed. A letter arrived from a woman who claimed to have loved Tchaikovsky since her student days at the Moscow Conservatory, where he taught. Her name

had fallen in love with Pushkin's Tatyana. Disgusted with Onegin for lecturing her after she had poured out her heart, he determined not to repeat the mistake.

And so he met with Antonina. Yet his presumed wish to be kind seems more pretext than reason to have made contact with her, for here was a woman who suddenly offered a way to end his bachelorhood. After a second meeting with Antonina, he proposed.

Antonina was no Tatyana. Tchaikovsky told his bride that while she might have his companionship, she would never enjoy his love, an admission that failed to faze her. Predictably, the union of two such troubled and clueless souls disintegrated, and after a few months they each went their way. Tchaikovsky, though miserable and close to nervous breakdown, recovered quickly and returned to *Onegin*, immersing himself in a world that nurtured him, replacing what reality had drained. The parallels between *Onegin* and Tchaikovsky's life beg attention if only to grasp a sense of the inner forces he harnessed as he produced his greatest stage work. *Eugene Onegin* simmers

“The parallels between Eugene Onegin and Tchaikovsky's life beg attention if only to grasp a sense of the inner forces he harnessed as he produced his greatest stage work.”

was Antonina Ivanovna Milyukova. Although Tchaikovsky surely knew Pushkin's verse-novel *Eugene Onegin*—any educated Russian did—he had not yet considered an *Onegin* project of his own, and he may not have realized his response to Antonina echoed Onegin's response to the letter in which Tatyana declares her love. Both men, the real and the fictional, counseled the women to get a grip.

Then a friend suggested Pushkin's novel as a basis for an opera. Tchaikovsky scoffed. So complex a book would never translate to the stage. Yet over a solitary dinner at an inn, the idea gelled, and by the time Tchaikovsky headed home a scenario materialized. Soon he was working at top speed. But fate, a subject he had dramatized in his recently completed Fourth Symphony, had a way of confounding him. Now it came in the form of another letter from Antonina. “My first kiss will be given to you and to no one else in the world,” she wrote. “I cannot live without you, and so maybe soon I shall kill myself If you knew how I suffer, then probably out of pity alone you would grant my request.” By now Tchaikovsky

with what we call “operatic” passions. Its world is dominated by Tatyana, an ideal Tchaikovsky discovered by way of Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin.

Published in its final version in 1837, Pushkin's verse-novel *Eugene Onegin* differs from Tchaikovsky's opera in scope and tone, its pages packed with what musicologist Richard Taruskin calls “verbal dazzle” and “wry social commentary.” By Tchaikovsky's time, writes Taruskin, the novel had become “sacrosanct.” From this, Tchaikovsky fashioned his libretto, enlisting the help of his friend Konstantin Shilovsky. Though the librettists adopted much of Pushkin's phrasing, they ignored the sarcasms and digressions and narrative twists. What remains is straightforward: Pushkin bowdlerized, some believed—Turgenev and Nabakov among them—dismayed that a sacrosanct text had been cut and pasted into a sentimental romance. From Pushkin, Tchaikovsky took what he needed to feed his muse and help sort the emotions roiled by his time with Antonina.

He moved fast, starting in June 1877 and completing *Onegin* the following February 1. He believed he had made something different, not a grandly scaled opera but a collection of “lyric scenes” capturing the essence of Pushkin’s story. “There are no scenic effects,” he wrote to his patroness Nadezhda von Meck, “its music is devoid of brilliance and high-flown effectiveness.” His ideal audience would be eager for “the musical reproduction of ordinary, simple, universal sensations far removed from high tragedy and theatricality.” Tchaikovsky denied the premiere to the imperial theaters of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, wary their conventional staging would threaten the freshness of his new work. The first performance, by students and faculty of the Moscow Conservatory, took place on March 29, 1879. Tchaikovsky expected little from public or press, but both embraced the opera despite grumbling from the Pushkinites. One critic predicted it would become among the Russian repertory’s most popular entries.

While Tchaikovsky claimed not to have written on an opulent scale, no one can accuse *Onegin* of lacking

Four show-stopping numbers celebrate love; and if we fail to recognize love as their subject, musical correspondences make the likeness clear. In scene 1 of the first act, Lensky serenades Olga in an aria of spontaneous melody, cresting in a passage of proto-Puccini, as drenched in joy as the music of Tatyana’s letter scene will be saturated with blissful despair. To underscore the kinship of the emotions we encounter in Lensky’s serenade and in the letter scene, we hear shrewdly related foreshadowings in the orchestra: a variant of the horn figure that will dominate the letter scene, for example. That phrase recurs in Act 2 in the minor-key counterpart to Lensky’s serenade, his lament before his duel with *Onegin*. And as Lensky takes his weapon, the orchestra offers a poignant reminder of the serenade’s opening phrase. In the happier climate of Act 1, Lensky moves into even higher emotional gear in his love song’s peroration, concluding as the letter scene concludes, when Tatyana pens her last lines and the orchestra parallels Lensky’s gesture, erupting in a musical equivalent of ecstasy.

“Eugene Onegin’s real grandeur ... is subtle and intimate. It celebrates human dignity, a quality emerging from the music that drapes Tchaikovsky’s characters.”

grandeur, which infuses even the first-act peasants’ chorus and dance, the second-act waltz and mazurka, the third-act polonaise. In them and throughout, we hear signature Tchaikovsky, the Tchaikovsky who wrings every ounce of color and weight from a standard orchestral complement.

Onegin’s real grandeur, however, is subtle and intimate. It celebrates human dignity, a quality emerging from the music that drapes Tchaikovsky’s characters, namely those whose lives have been blemished by the callous *Onegin*. This is a tale of how *eros* plus *caritas* completes love’s equation, how a commitment to cherish the other physically requires an equal devotion to the spirit. Alone among the principals, *Onegin* suffers a stunted sensibility. Compared to what Tchaikovsky gives Tatyana, Lensky, and Gremin, who rejoice in love, *Onegin*’s music remains emotionally cool, igniting only when Lensky challenges his honor and when the loss of Tatyana triggers his passion, selfish though that passion remains.

Such ecstasy is echoed in Prince Gremin’s Act 3 aria—echoed literally in melodic shape, except now accompanied by an orchestra of chamber-like proportions and proceeding at a more measured pace. As Tatyana’s husband rhapsodizes, the music mirroring that of the letter scene, we understand that Gremin’s passion for his wife still smolders with the heat of young love, a point emphasized when he ends exactly as Lensky finished his serenade to Olga, Gremin singing “she appeared like a ray of sunlight, bringing me life and youth and happiness” to the same music in which Lensky pledged, “Never shall anything quench my love.” The match underscores the fusion of *eros* and *caritas*. Small wonder that Tatyana refuses to relinquish such a life.

The opera’s nucleus occurs some forty minutes into the work’s two-and-a-half-hours. This is no dramatic miscalculation. The letter scene seals our pact with Tatyana, so much so that *Onegin* will never succeed in gaining our sympathy. This is the heroine’s show, and if



A self-portrait by Alexander Pushkin showing the poet standing with Eugene Onegin by the Neva River. / ALAMY



Evelyn Lear as Tatyana and Thomas Stewart as Eugene Onegin in the opera's final scene, San Francisco Opera, 1971. / KEN HOWARD

the opera is not titled *Tatyana Larina*, it is because Tchaikovsky understood his limits in reshaping Pushkin.

The letter scene's music reveals both Tatyana's vulnerability and her passion. Crucial here is the haunting orchestral passage that introduces the scene's last section (immediately before Tatyana asks, "Are you my guardian angel, or my tempter?"). The pace slackens, the key shifts into the quiet rapture of D-flat major, and the oboe poses a question, phrased as a group of three descending tones plus five more (eight tones in all, dropping from a high F to A-flat). The first horn answers with a group of three tones plus four (seven tones in all, rising and falling from a low F to another A-flat). Tchaikovsky requests that this dreamy two-part passage be played *piano*, *andante*, and *molto espressivo*. When Tatyana breaks off to finish writing, the dreamy passage returns but now *fortissimo* in the full orchestra, and what was initially fragile becomes music of powerful resolve. But return to that introduction, the questioning oboe and answering horn. We have heard each phrase earlier, not always literally the same as these but alike in shape and mood. Never, however, have we heard both phrases together. Combined at last, the two phrases become one passage; hearing it whole after being exposed until now only to suggestions of its constituent parts, we experience a deep sense of completion. It is a stroke that transforms the letter scene from music to miracle.

Tchaikovsky deals with Onegin roughly, forcing him to endure the consequences of bad choosing, consequences the composer well understood. This is not the sentimental tale of lost love Turgenev and Nabakov condemned. Pushkin's Onegin is spurned after appealing to Tatyana by letter. Tchaikovsky accomplishes this irony musically, for when in Act 3 Onegin claims to be poisoned with desire for Tatyana, his music corresponds to hers as the letter scene began, and so do his words: he even appropriates her emotions. Encountering the older and wiser Tatyana, Onegin regrets dismissing her years earlier. Not, however, because he broke her heart, but because his cruelty has cost him a desirable woman—a princess! In his arrogance, he imagines the naïve girl whose spirit he crushed would have become the same woman, had she been at his side, and now, despite what once passed between them, he believes himself entitled to ask that she abandon the husband who adores her. Onegin has eluded wisdom. He has grown desperate, surely, but no less self-absorbed.

Our patience with this man, like Tatyana's, is at an end. We can imagine ourselves walking off the stage with her, leaving Onegin alone as the final curtain falls. 🍷

Larry Rothe's books include *For the Love of Music and Music for a City*, *Music for the World*. Visit larryrothe.com.

“... my burning heart aches from yearning ...”

A UKRAINIAN PERSPECTIVE ON *EUGENE ONEGIN*

BY MARIA SONEVYTSKY

The opera you are about to see is typically described as a story with timeless themes of longing, regret, and unrequited love. Tatyana’s letter scene burns with passion. The final duet laments the loss of a love that could never be. Embedded within *Eugene Onegin*, however, is another story: one of yearning and a relationship not between individuals but social groups; one fraught with pain and violence.

The words in the title above are not, as you might expect, those of Tatyana but of the “peasants” in the opening chorus: servants who in Tchaikovsky’s day would have been identified by his audience as serfs. Just as the plot of this opera is about those who win and those who lose, the story of *Eugene Onegin*’s success on the international operatic stage includes the message that those who attain fame and fortune often do so at the cost of others.

In 1891, 12 years after the Moscow premiere of *Onegin*, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) visited his contemporary, the composer Mykola Lysenko (1842–1912), at his home on Reitarska Street, a stone’s throw from the glittering onion domes of St. Sophia’s Cathedral in Kyiv. Tchaikovsky and Lysenko had been friendly since at least 1875, when the latter had organized a series of concerts in St. Petersburg—the seat of Russian imperial power—showcasing Ukrainian vernacular music. In the imperial lexicon of the time, this would have been referred to as “Little Russian” music, a term obviously considered demeaning by Ukrainians. These 1875 concerts were revelatory for Tchaikovsky, whose heritage was part-Ukrainian, and who had previously integrated Ukrainian folk motifs into his Symphony No. 2 in C minor. Tchaikovsky also admired Lysenko’s own compositions. (The latter’s 1885 choral work “Prayer for Ukraine” would go on to become a spiritual anthem of Ukraine. It was performed on *Saturday Night Live* days after the current Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine began and by the San Francisco Symphony Chorus a few months later).

Lysenko and Tchaikovsky, born two years apart, both traced their lineage to proto-Ukrainian Cossack warriors who had, for centuries, battled against Russian and other empires seeking to dominate the territory of Ukraine. Tchaikovsky is the Russified surname of a family that had, over generations, assimilated into the Russian imperial elite—the family’s original surname was “Chaika” (meaning “seagull”). Lysenko, meanwhile, had dedicated himself to Ukrainian causes: as an ethnographer, he pioneered the documentation of Ukrainian folk musics; as a composer, he synthesized vernacular with elite styles; as an activist, he promoted Ukrainian literature and culture.

Though respected among his cohort of elite composers in the Russian Empire, Lysenko’s fortunes departed sharply from Tchaikovsky’s in their lifetimes and beyond. At their 1891 meeting in Kyiv, Lysenko shared a draft of the score for his Ukrainian-language opera *Taras Bulba*—based on a novella by Nikolai Gogol—with his guest. Tchaikovsky appraised it positively and encouraged him to bring it to the imperial stage. Yet *Taras Bulba* never had its premiere in Lysenko’s lifetime, in part because Lysenko resisted translating the libretto into Russian. The systematic repression of the Ukrainian language—epitomized by the 1876 Ems Ukaz, a secret decree signed by Tsar Alexander II that banned the use of the Ukrainian language in public—insured the work would not be heard. Lysenko’s operas (*Taras Bulba*, *Natalka Poltavka*, *Pan Kotsky*, and others), which thematize the history and struggle of oppressed Ukrainians and poke fun at Russian imperial logics, have not made it into our canon.

As Lysenko eerily mirrors Tchaikovsky, Taras Shevchenko (1814–1861)—the Ukrainian poet who most inspired Lysenko’s music—offers a photo-negative contrast to another icon of Russian arts: Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837). Pushkin, the founder of modern Russian literature and author of *Eugene Onegin*, was born into Russian nobility. He was exiled during part of the 1820s for his provocative political poems. Before

dying in a duel at age 37, he also wrote nakedly imperialistic verses. Shevchenko, born a serf and eventually freed from bondage, went on to become the founder of modern Ukrainian literature. His poetry mounted explicit attacks on the system of Russian imperialism that attempted to repress Ukrainian language and identity. Between the years 1847–1857, Shevchenko, too, was exiled by explicit decree of the Tsar. But unlike Pushkin—who lived out his periods of exile in hedonic style or comfortable isolation, penning *Onegin* and other works at his mother’s rural estate—Shevchenko was arrested, banned from writing, and ultimately held in a brutal penal colony.

That Pushkin and Tchaikovsky both ascended to the most vaunted heights of “greatness” while Shevchenko and Lysenko were ignored or mocked is a parable about the power of empire to cultivate its own myth of exceptionalism.

Eugene Onegin, set in the 1820s, unfolds against the backdrop of the system of Russian serfdom which had matured, by the early 18th century—according to historian Peter Kolchin (1998)—to resemble chattel slavery in the United States. Serfs were forced laborers, denied mobility, brutally disciplined, and deemed inferior. While the snobbish anti-hero at the heart of the story and his flowing *cantilena* exposes the vacuous life of the 19th-century Russian nobility, we should also listen to the phrases of Madame Larina, a landowner, and the chorus of serfs who work her estate.

The opening scenes of *Onegin* reveal the forced labor conditions that enable the glittering, aristocratic story—not unlike the milieu of *Gone with the Wind*. Take the first scenes of Act I, where we hear an offstage call-and-response chorus



Ukrainian composer Mykola Lysenko.
LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS / ALAMY



Portrait of Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko by Ivan Kramskoi, 1871.
NIDAY PICTURE LIBRARY / ALAMY

of peasant complaints: “My swift feet ache from walking / my white hands ache from working / my burning heart aches from yearning / I don’t know how to forget my sweetheart.” Upon entering the stage, the peasants announce that they have completed the grueling work of the year’s harvest. Then, shaking off their sadness and exhaustion, they apparently choose to entertain their masters. Tchaikovsky’s score, with no hint of irony, shows the happy serfs commencing an ecstatic *khorovod*, or round dance. Tatyana is propelled into reverie by the peasant songs she adores. Later in the scene, we also witness the benevolence of Madame Larina, who offers the workers more refreshments and thanks them for their unfree labor.

At the time Tchaikovsky was composing *Onegin*, the conflation of Ukrainians with (recently emancipated) serfs was, as many scholars have noted, well-entrenched. This conflation is captured in the abhorrent

term *khokhol*, a Russian slur that bundles Ukrainians with stereotypes of backwardness, rurality, laziness, and—notably—musicality. An 1862 Moscow publication compiled by V. Dal entitled “Proverbs of the Russian People” includes a number of variations on this theme: “A *khokhol* is worth nothing, but their voices are good.” In today’s Ukraine, this pejorative is considered analogous to the racialized epithets that emerged from the institution of American slavery.

Both Pushkin and Tchaikovsky enjoyed considerable celebrity within the Russian Empire in their lifetimes. Both also had conflicted relationships to Tsarist autocracy, teetered at times on the edge of bankruptcy,

“Through the limited glimpses of enserfed humanity in Onegin, we might pose questions about how Russian imperialism obscured the reality of Ukrainians: excluding them from the halls of prestige, outlawing their language, denying their history and agency—while condescendingly prizing their melodious voices and tuneful songs.”

and were generally constrained by the conditions of life subjugated to the Tsar. And so, while it may be unfair to implicate Pushkin or Tchaikovsky in the revanchist imperialist war conducted now by Putin's Russia, we should nonetheless take this moment to think critically about the ways in which the logics of empire extend into the present, and how these two figures—perhaps above any others—have been instrumentalized for delivering ideas of “Russian greatness” to the world. Tchaikovsky's success was, after all, only possible by his complicity with an imperial culture that labeled and subjugated one people as “Little” in order to make itself “Great.”

Through the limited glimpses of enserfed humanity in *Onegin*, we might pose questions about how Russian imperialism obscured the reality of Ukrainians: excluding them from the halls of prestige, outlawing their language, denying their history and agency—while condescendingly prizing their melodious voices and tuneful songs. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine this year has prompted many Ukrainians to advance sharp critiques of the enduring imperial logics that undergird the operas we program and the names we associate with transcendent “greatness.” In April of 2022, Olena Korchova, a professor of musicology at the National Music Academy of Ukraine, contributed to an

ongoing debate about whether the Tchaikovsky Academy of Music in Kyiv should shed its namesake. Korchova wrote: “Our enemy is by no means Tchaikovsky himself, but only his simulacrum, the Soviet and Putin ideological brand of the same name, the attachment to which literally ties our hands, deprives us of our freedom, and turns us into hostages of a dead tradition.”

For every Tchaikovsky whose music was published copiously and elevated to global stature, there are Ukrainian artists who were silenced, erased, whose names we have yet to learn. This moment of tragic awakening calls for renewed attention to the chorus—to the voices historically backgrounded, to the overworked hands and the burning hearts of people yearning to be free. 🌻

The author extends gratitude to Marika Kuzma, as well as Taras Filenko and Gregory B. Moynahan, for consulting on earlier drafts of this essay.

Maria Sonevytsky is Associate Professor of Music and Anthropology at Bard College, New York. Her first book, Wild Music: Sound and Sovereignty in Ukraine, won the Lewis Lockwood First Book Prize from the American Musicological Society in 2020. Mariasonevytsky.com.

A Statement of Support for Ukraine

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CONDEMNS
THE ABHORRENT INVASION OF UKRAINE BY RUSSIA.**

Our intention is always to present music that transcends boundaries
and invites the community into a shared experience of humanity.

We encourage you to explore sfopera.com/onegin
to find resources on how you can support Ukraine.



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Artist Profiles

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



VASSILIS CHRISTOPOULOS **

Conductor

(Athens, Greece)

Recent and

Upcoming: *Wozzeck*
(Greek National

Opera); *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*
(Greek National Opera); *Bluebeard's
Castle* (Greek National Opera); *Madama
Butterfly* (Athens Festival); *Elektra*
(Wiesbaden State Opera); *Die Frau ohne
Schatten* (Wiesbaden); Hans-Werner
Henze's *Undine* (Graz Opera); concerts
with Frankfurt Radio Symphony
Orchestra, Athens State Orchestra,
Korean Symphony Orchestra, German
State Philharmonic, New Japan
Philharmonic, Lithuanian Chamber
Orchestra

Instagram: @vassilis.christopoulos



EVGENIA MURAVEVA **

Soprano (St.
Petersburg, Russia)

Tatyana

Recent and

Upcoming: Katerina

Ismailova in Shostakovich's *Lady
Macbeth of Mtsensk* (Salzburg Festival,
St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre); title
role of *Salome* (St. Petersburg, Moscow's
Bolshoi Theatre); Lisa in *The Queen of
Spades* (St. Petersburg), Gutrune in
Götterdämmerung (St. Petersburg),
Lyubka in Prokofiev's *Semyon Kotko* (St.
Petersburg)



GORDON BINTNER *+

Bass-Baritone

(Kelowna, British
Columbia, Canada)

Eugene Onegin

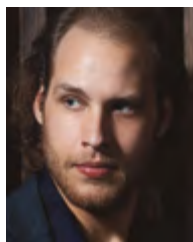
Recent and

Upcoming: Title role
of *Eugene Onegin*

(Canadian Opera Company); Figaro in *Le
Nozze di Figaro* (Opera Frankfurt); Count
Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera
Frankfurt, Canadian Opera Company);
Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* (Canadian
Opera Company, Frankfurt); Don Alfonso
in *Così fan tutte* (Frankfurt); Don Polidoro
in Cimarosa's *L'Italiana in Londra* (Frankfurt);
Argante in Handel's *Rinaldo* (Frankfurt);
Gorjančikov in Janáček's *From the House
of the Dead* (Frankfurt); Count in *Capriccio*
(Frankfurt); Harlekin in *Ariadne auf Naxos*
(Frankfurt); The Count in Franz Schreker's
Der Ferne Klang (Frankfurt); Plunkett in
Flotow's *Martha* (Frankfurt); Vladislav in
Smetana's *Dalibor* (Frankfurt); Escamillo in
Carmen (Frankfurt); Albert in *Werther*
(London's Royal Opera Covent Garden);
Junior in Leonard Bernstein's *A Quiet
Place* (Paris Opera); Guglielmo in *Così fan
tutte* (London); Phorbas in Enescu's
Oedipe (Salzburg Festival)

Instagram: @gordonbintner

Twitter: @GordonBintner



EVAN LEROY JOHNSON *

Tenor (Pine Island,
Minnesota)

Lensky

Recent and

Upcoming: Chevalier

de la Force in *Dialogues des Carmélites*
(Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Brighella
in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Munich); Narraboth
in *Salome* (Munich); Edmondo in *Manon
Lescaut* (Munich); First Armored Man in
Die Zauberflöte (Munich); Cassio in *Otello*

(Munich); Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (Munich,
Opera Philadelphia); Graf Albert in *Die
Tote Stadt* (Munich); Steuermann in *Der
Fliegende Holländer* (Munich, Milwaukee
Symphony); Ruiz in *Il Trovatore* (Munich);
Der Bucklige in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*
(Munich); Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*
(Frankfurt Opera, Dallas Opera); Edgardo
in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Lyric Opera of
Kansas City); Don José in *Carmen*
(Frankfurt, Philadelphia); Prince in *Rusalka*
(Glyndebourne Festival, Des Moines
Metro Opera); Verdi Requiem
(Philadelphia)

Ensemble member of Munich's Bavarian
State Opera



AIGUL

AKHMETSHINA **

Mezzo-Soprano

(Republic of
Bashkortostan,
Russia)

Olga

Recent and Upcoming: Title role of
Carmen (London's Royal Opera Covent
Garden, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Rosina in
Il Barbiere di Siviglia (London, Berlin,
Zurich Opera); Charlotte in *Werther*
(London); Maddalena in *Rigoletto*
(Metropolitan Opera, London); Elisabetta
in *Maria Stuarda* (Dutch National Opera);
Angelina in *La Cenerentola* (Madrid's
Teatro Real); Fenena in *Nabucco*
(Hamburg State Opera); Lola in
Cavalleria Rusticana (London); Polina in
Pique Dame (Baden-Baden Festival,
Berliner Philharmoniker); Szymanowski's
Stabat Mater (Netherlands Radio
Philharmonic Orchestra); Prince Orlofsky
in *Die Fledermaus* (Tokyo's New National
Theater); Varvara in *Katya Kabanova*
(Glyndebourne Opera Festival);
Beethoven's Ninth Symphony
(Barcelona's Palau de la Musica
Catalana, Madrid's Teatro Real)

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



FERRUCCIO FURLANETTO
Bass (Sacile, Italy)
Prince Gremin
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Ramfis in *Aida*; Alvisè Badoero

in *La Gioconda*; Don Diègue in *Le Cid*; Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*; title role of *Attila*; Philip II in *Don Carlo*

Recent and Upcoming: Gremin in *Eugene Onegin* (Vienna State Opera, Palermo's Teatro Massimo); Timur in *Turandot* (Metropolitan Opera, Arena di Verona); Arkel in *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Metropolitan Opera); title role of *Mefistofele* in concert (Opera Australia); title role of *Don Quichotte* (Opera Australia); Banquo in *Macbeth* (Vienna, Munich); Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* (London's Royal Opera Covent Garden, Baden Baden Festival); Padre Guardiano in *La Forza del Destino* (London, Paris); solo concert (Hungarian State Opera)



DEBORAH NANSTEEL *+
Mezzo-Soprano (Havelock, North Carolina)
Madame Larina
Recent and

Upcoming: Mother Gerald in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (San Francisco Opera); Alisa in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Metropolitan Opera); Mother in Scott Davenport Richards' *Blind Injustice* (Cincinnati Opera); Annina in *La Traviata* (Metropolitan Opera); Amneris in *Aida* (Opera Grand Rapids); Gertrude in *Hansel and Gretel* (New Orleans Opera); Mother Abbess in *Suor Angelica* (Opera Omaha); Paula in *Florença en el Amazonas* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (Toledo Opera, Opera Tampa in concert); Sally in Kevin Puts' *The Hours* (Philadelphia Orchestra);

Rosswisse in *The Valkyries* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin* (Santa Fe Opera); Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly* (Chicago); Siegrune in *Die Walküre* (Chicago) Merola Opera Program 2011



RONNITA MILLER +
Mezzo-Soprano (St. Petersburg, Florida)
Filipyevna
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Erda and First Norn in *Der Ring*

des Nibelungen

Recent and Upcoming: Schwertleite in *The Valkyries* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); Ella in Anthony Davis' *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (Detroit Opera, Opera Omaha); Erda in *Das Rheingold* (Atlanta Opera); Handel's *Messiah* (Indianapolis Symphony); Dett's *The Ordering of Moses* (Carnegie Hall); Big Stone in Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* (Metropolitan Opera); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (San Diego Symphony, North Carolina Symphony); *What the Heart Desires* recital (Merola Opera Program); Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Deutsche Oper Berlin, Chicago Symphony Orchestra); Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Berlin); Mary in *Die Fliegende Holländer* (Berlin); Madelon in *Andrea Chénier* (Berlin); Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Berlin); Fricka in *Die Walküre* (Het Concertgebouw Amsterdam); First Norn in *Götterdämmerung* (Metropolitan Opera) Merola Opera Program 2005
Instagram: @mezzogirl
Twitter: @RonnitaMiller



BRENTON RYAN ♫
Tenor (Sedalia, Missouri)
Monsieur Triquet
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Janek in *The Makropulos Case*;

A Novice in *Billy Budd*; Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Eros in John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*

Recent and Upcoming: L'Aumonier in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (San Francisco Opera); Pedrillo in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Monte-Carlo Opera); Missail in *Boris Godunov* (Munich, Metropolitan Opera); Second Jew in *Salome* (Munich); Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte* (London's Royal Opera Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); Loge in *Das Rheingold* (Dallas Opera); Spoletta in *Tosca* (Metropolitan Opera); Dancing Master in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Metropolitan Opera, Santa Fe Opera); Fool in *Wozzeck* (Metropolitan Opera); Nero in *The Coronation of Poppea* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Opera Philadelphia); John Wormley in Matthew Aucoin's *Crossing* in concert (LA Opera); Flute in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Santa Fe); Don Basilio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Santa Fe); Florian in Korngold's *Der Ring des Polykrates* (Dallas)

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



STEFAN EGERSTROM 🎵
Bass (Brooklyn Center, Minnesota)
Zaretsky / A Captain
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Jailer in

Tosca; Second Prisoner in *Fidelio*

Recent and Upcoming: Hunding in *Die Walküre* (Queen City Opera); King René in *Iolanta* (Queen City Opera); Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*; Sirocco in Chabrier's *L'Étoile*; Carlino in *Don Pasquale*; soloist in Bach's *Saint John Passion*; Schwabacher Summer Concert (Merola Opera Program); Merola Grand Finale (Merola) Adler Fellowship Program 2020, 2021, 2022 Merola Opera Program 2019



MICHAEL JANKOSKY 🎵
Tenor (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)
Peasant
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Sergeant in *Manon*; Prune

vendor in *La Bohème*; Stone (voice)/ Eunuch in Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*

Recent and Upcoming: Giuseppe in *La Traviata* (San Francisco Opera) Current member of San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Symphony Chorus



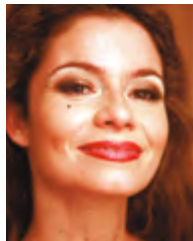
BRETT CONWAY
(Fort Wayne, Indiana)
Solo Dancer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Rusalka*
Recent and Upcoming: Current

member of San Francisco Opera Dance Corps (tenured); faculty member of LINES Ballet's education programs; Co-Artistic Director of SFDanceworks (2020–2021); former company dancer of LINES Ballet and Nederlands Dans Theater



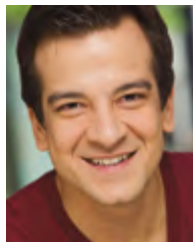
JAMIELYN DUGGAN
(San Francisco, California)
Solo Dancer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Madeline Usher in Gordon

Getty's Usher House; Manuelita in *Carmen*
Recent and Upcoming: Current member of San Francisco Opera Dance Corps (tenured); Creative Director of Eimaj Design; Co-Founder/Director and artist with the movement agency Collective Attention, producing, choreographing, performing, and designing live performance art and film collaborations in non-traditional settings; film premiere at the San Francisco Dance Film Festival; installation at Catherine Clark Gallery; collaborations with video artists John Sanborn and RJ Muna
Website: jamielynduggan.com



BLANCHE HAMPTON
(Tampa, Florida)
Solo Dancer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Manuelita in *Carmen*; *La Traviata*; *Iphigénie en*

Tauride; *Mefistofele*; *Tännhäuser*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Show Boat*
Recent and Upcoming: Current member of San Francisco Opera Dance Corps (tenured); past engagements with the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, LA Opera, Washington National Opera, Madrid's Teatro Real, San Diego Opera



JEKYNs PELÁEZ
(Cali, Colombia)
Solo Dancer
San Francisco Opera
Opera Highlights: *La Traviata*; *Aida*; *Cavalleria Rusticana*;

John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*
Recent and Upcoming: Current member of San Francisco Opera Dance Corps

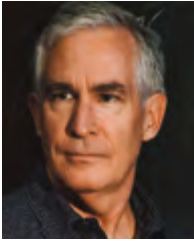
(tenured); Director and Choreographer of SoCal Arts; teacher at California School of the Arts; *The Nutcracker*; *Being the Ricardos* (film)



ROBERT CARSEN
(Toronto, Canada)
Production
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Mefistofele*; *Iphigénie en Tauride*

Recent and Upcoming: *La Traviata* (Venice's La Fenice); *Der Rosenkavalier* (Metropolitan Opera); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Falstaff* (Metropolitan Opera, London's Royal Opera Covent Garden, Milan's Teatro alla Scala); Detlev Glanert's *Oceane* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* (Paris Opera); *Die Zauberflöte* (Paris Opera); *Carmen* (Dutch National Opera); *Elektra* (Paris Opera); *Arabella* (Zurich Opera); *Don Giovanni* (Milan); *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); *Alcina* (Paris Opera); Giorgio Battistelli's *Julius Caesar* (Rome Opera); Emilio de' Cavalieri's *Rappresentatione di Anima e di Corpo* (Theater an der Wien); *Ritorno di Ulisse in Patria* (Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino); *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* (Salzburg Festiva); *Platée* (Theater an der Wien); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris Opera); *Hänsel und Gretel* (Zurich); *Don Carlo* (Venice); Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (Milan); *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* (Dutch National Opera); *Rinaldo* (Glyndebourne); *Idomeneo* (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Rusalka* (Paris Opera); *Mefistofele* (Metropolitan Opera); *The Beggar's Opera* (European tour); *Die Tote Stadt* (Komische Oper Berlin); *Richard III* (Venice)

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



PETER MCCLINTOCK

(Washington, D.C.)

Revival Director

San Francisco

Opera Highlights:

Stage Director,
Mefistofele;

Guillaume Tell; *Turandot*; *Don Carlo*;
Die Walküre; *Siegfried*

Recent and Upcoming: *Elektra*

(Metropolitan Opera); *La Clemenza di Tito* (Metropolitan Opera); *The Queen of Spades* (Metropolitan Opera)



MICHAEL LEVINE

(Toronto, Canada)

Production Designer

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Designer,
Wozzeck; *Mefistofele*

Recent and

Upcoming: *Atonement* (Zurich, Joffrey Ballet); *Peter Grimes* (Paris Opera, Madrid's Teatro Real, London's Royal Opera Covent Garden); *Semele* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Madame Butterfly* (Bregenz Festival); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Munich); *Jenůfa* (London); *Billy Budd* (Madrid, London); *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Zurich); *Sweeney Todd* (Zurich); *Eugene Onegin* (Rome Opera); *The Rake's Progress* (Moscow's Stanislavski Theatre); *Hell's Fury* (Toronto's Luminato Festival); *Die Tote Stadt* (Komische Oper Berlin); *The Seagull* (Stockholm)



CHRISTINE BINDER

(Oak Park, Illinois)

Lighting Designer

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Madama Butterfly*; *Falstaff*

Recent and

Upcoming: *Her Honor Jane Byrne* (Lookingglass Theatre); *Lookingglass Alice* (Lookingglass Theatre); *Whim!* immersive experience (Stage 773

Chicago); *Nina Simone: Four Women*

(South Coast Rep)

Head of Lighting Design for The Theatre School at DePaul University



SERGE BENNATHAN *

(Vancouver, B.C., Canada)

Choreographer

Recent and

Upcoming:

Choreographer of *Lohengrin* (Metropolitan Opera)
Painter: exhibitions (Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver, Japan)
Author and Illustrator: *Julius le piano voyageur*, *The Other Moon of Mr. Figlio*, *A Few Thousand Miles, Not-a-fear/Peurderien*
Website: sergebennathan.com



JOHN KEENE

(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

Chorus Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Don*

Giovanni; Bright Sheng

and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Eun Sun Kim Conducts *Verdi*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*
Recent and Upcoming: San Francisco Opera Chorus Director (*Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *La Traviata*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Gabriela Lena Frank's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*)

Seattle Opera Head of Music Staff and Chorus Master (*La Bohème*, *Die Walküre*, Jonathan Dove's *Flight*, *Tosca*, *Rigoletto*, *La Cenerentola*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Il Trovatore*, *Carmen*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Così fan tutte*, *Béatrice et Bénédicte*, *Aida*)

Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition judge

Twitter: @keenejohn

Instagram: @keenejohn



DAVE MAIER

(El Cerrito, California)

Fight Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Carmen*;

Tosca; the *Ring* cycle; *Pagliacci*;

Rigoletto; *Roméo et Juliette*; *Billy Budd*; *Manon Lescaut*

Recent and Upcoming: John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* (San Francisco Opera); *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (SF Opera); *La Traviata* (SF Opera); *Orpheus and Eurydice* (SF Opera); *West Side Story* (Opera San José); *Richard II* (African American Shakespeare Company); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Stanford University); *The Tempest* (Oakland Theater Project); *Romeo y Juliet* (Cal Shakes); *Fefu and Her Friends* (American Conservatory Theatre)



COLM SEERY

(Dublin, Ireland)

Dance Master

San Francisco Opera

Highlights:

Movement Director of John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; Revival Choreographer of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; *Andrea Chénier*; Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Dance Master of *Don Giovanni*

Recent and Upcoming: Choreographer of *Idomeneo* (Staatsoper Berlin); Britten's *Gloriana* (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Ariodante* (Vienna State Opera, Israeli Opera) Associate Choreographer of *Andrea Chénier* (Royal Opera Covent Garden) Revival Choreographer of *La Traviata* (Barcelona's Liceu, Welsh National Opera); *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Glyndebourne); *Rinaldo* (Glyndebourne)

Director Edition



Stage Director Francesca Zambella and then-Production Stage Manager Jerry Sherk working on supertitles, 1984. / DAVID POWERS

San Francisco Opera's Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna chats with director Francesca Zambello about her long history with the Company and some of the innovations she helped institute in how we experience opera. To listen to their conversation and for a complete transcript, visit Streaming the First Century, San Francisco Opera's free online hub for historic audio, archival interviews, contemporary conversations, and more at sfopera.com/firstcentury.

Kip Cranna: We're thinking about the Centennial, the 100-year anniversary of the founding of San Francisco Opera, and we want to look back and visit some of the highlights that Francesca has experienced here. Thanks for talking with me, Francesca! How are you?

Francesca Zambello: I'm great. Kip, it's so lovely to see you and talk about a company I love so much.

KC: It goes way back. I think you made your debut in San Francisco in 1983. How did that come about?

FZ: That was my first season with the company. I had been hired a year before by the then-Head of Artistic Administration Sarah Billinghurst. I had been working at

another opera company, and, of course, I was thrilled to be asked to interview at the august institution of San Francisco Opera. I remember I flew out on a very late-night flight from Chicago where I was working and had an interview the next morning. [I] got back, I think, in time to be there for the end of the performance in Chicago. It was a whirlwind 24-hour trip. I was offered a job of assisting on several operas and given the opportunity to direct the student matinee performances of *La Traviata*. My first season—I remember it very distinctly—was *Ariadne [auf Naxos]*, *Ernani*, *Samson [et Dalila]*, and *Traviata* ... I'll never forget it.

The thrilling thing as a young director was I got to work with a lot of great directors, but I also got to direct the student performances of *La Traviata*. That was at a time [when] we did not use supertitles. I went to the then-General Director Terry McEwen—and I believe Kip [you were] in the office as well—and I said, "Why can't we have supertitles for all these kids who are here, not knowing what the heck is going on in an opera?" And so it was the first time that we did it.

We wrote them with the then-Production Stage Manager, the late Jerry Sherk, and they were an incredible success. Then Terry McEwen said, "Can we use these

more?" And I said, "Why aren't we doing [them for] the *Ring*?" At that time everybody said, "Oh, no, that's a terrible idea. We can't have those for the *Ring*." So I remember he put on sale *one* cycle with titles, and that sold out before any of the others. So then they became a permanent part of the Opera, and I continued writing them with Jerry, and then, of course as it grew and grew and grew it became its own department and all of those things.

So that was really my first season, which was truly exciting and memorable, and not just for the work I got to do but the singers that one got to experience there.

KC: There were quite a lot of big stars in those days.

FZ: The cast of *Ermani*, I remember, was [soprano] Montserrat Caballé, [baritone] Sherrill Milnes, [bass] Paul Plishka, and [mezzo-soprano] Dolora Zajick was the maid. (laughter) I'll never forget that first year, the young artists included the likes of Dolora and [soprano] Ruth Ann Swenson and [soprano] Debbie Voigt shortly thereafter. It was really an amazing class of the pretty newly founded Adler Fellows.

KC: Supertitles, I wanna talk a little bit more about that, because I don't think people realize the idea of what it involved in those days. Nowadays, of course, it's all electronic, and you change things in an instant if you need to. In those days it was old-fashioned slides that you had to photograph with a camera and ... get it developed, make a slide, and put it in a carousel. It was not an easy process!

FZ: It was a very time-consuming process, which is why we had to have them pretty much done by the piano dress [rehearsal] and then we would make changes so that by the opening we would have the carousel of slides. ... I do remember a terrible experience I had. I was a notorious collector of parking tickets near the Opera House, arriving often a few minutes before I needed to be there, and I had the supertitle slides in my car for ... *The Elixir of Love*. I had all the slides in my car and I rushed in to do something, and my car was towed—and it was opening night! I'll never forget running to the car retrieval place somewhere over in East San Francisco, getting my car, and getting the slides there by the downbeat!

That was really the sort of rudimentary days, but it was so important for changing sales, and motivating the *Ring* cycle—which, of course, would sell well anyway, but the fact that it sold out one cycle immediately because of supertitles, and then they ended up adding them to the

other ones! They were a revolution to opera; the same way that, for example, now just using projections the way we use them so often as a scenic element. They really transformed more than anything, I think, the general public's understanding of the opera.

KC: I think it made a difference in what was, to some people, kind of a ceremonial experience. They didn't really know what was being talked about or said, and they just kind of followed it along, [much like] listening to a mass in Latin ... (laughs) Suddenly now you were deeply engaged in what was actually happening.

FZ: Absolutely. You know, as a director, you always either help write the supertitles now, or you certainly read them because they are often the way that the audience is initially receiving what you're doing. They're part of what we do, and I think an important part of having created more audiences and audience appreciation for what we do.

KC: I'd like to go back a little bit to the early stages of your becoming a stage director. I know you worked with [stage director] Nikolaus Lehnhoff on the *Ring* here.

FZ: I was not actually his assistant on that *Ring* cycle. I wrote the supertitles for the whole cycle (with Jerry), and so I was in many, many meetings with Lehnhoff because he was highly skeptical. He really didn't like the idea of them—and then he was won over. It was great [working in this way] because I was in a very different perspective than assisting. I was able to watch another director put together the *Ring* cycle, which is a director's dream, and I was fortunate, of course, to do it 25 years later in Washington and in San Francisco. It was important watching how Lehnhoff worked. I think Lehnhoff's greatest skills were often really this incredibly precise fashion of staging. He was a highly prepared director in terms of his homework and what he did before.

That is the thing when you are starting out: If you're able to assist people, whether you think they're good or bad, you're going to learn something because just being in a theater is how you learn.

KC: Francesca Zambello, thank you so much for spending time with us as we look backward at the last 100 years at San Francisco Opera and forward to the next.

FZ: Thank you very much, Kip. Always a joy to be with you and friends at San Francisco Opera. 🍷



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Lauren Abrams, Jennifer Bennes,
Wayne Olds, Debbie "Vola" Ruben

CARPENTRY DEPARTMENT

Michael Accurso (32),
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Dominic Casazza (19), *Assitant Key Flyman*
Gabriel Castellani (12), *Automation Key*
Michael Chapman (10), *Key*
Dennis Criswell
Paul Delatorre (23), *Key*
Greg Harsha (23), *Key*
Geoffrey R. Heron (16)
Geoffrey W. Heron (28), *Key*
Philip Heron, (20),
Automation and Rigging Foreman
Ed Joe, *Warehouse Foreman*
Nick Kukielka
Michael Martino
Alex Meyer (28)
Ethan Ng
Harry Niedzwetzki (30)
John O'Donnell, *Key Flyman*
Enrique Pronio
Michael Ramirez
Ty Russell
Bartholomew Ryan
James Ryan
Kenneth Ryan (40)
Michael Ryan
Eila Saarni
Gregory Shaff (34), *Key*
Cyrus Sindicich
Sean Walden (11)
Randy Walsh (20), *Assistant Key*
Collin Whitfield
Sammy Wong

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Scott Barringer (22), *Key*
Christy Carter
James Eldredge (18), *Shop Mechanic*
Hilary Engelman
Andy Falkner
Oris Fry
Patricia Hewett (15), *Assistant Key*
Myron Seth Isaacs (22), *Key*
Mark Kotschnig (20), *Key*
John Matlock, *Assistant Key*
Beth Ozarow (26), *Out of House Key*
Noah Peacock
Tara Pellack
Dawn Roth-Golden
Gretchen Scharfenberg
Sarah Shores (15), *Shop Mechanic*
Morgan Womble-Dahl

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Eugene Ahn, *Gel Room*
Juan Aldana (18)
Rebecca Bernal
John Boatwright (35),
House Head Electrician
Ariel Bott, *Assistant Key Stage Left*

Erik Docktor (15), *Projection Programmer*
Amy Domjan, *Layout Electrician*
Stephen Echerd (19)
Will Grunig (20)
Robert Haycock, *Key Stage Right*
Ana Gabriela Hernandez-McKig
Geoff Heron (13), *Pyro Technician*
Bernard Honigman (23),
Key Light Board Operator
Karen Jine
Brendan Kierans, *Electric Shop Foreman*
Sophie Landau
Sonia Martinez
Maria Mendoza (34), *Projection Coordinator*
Glenn Quilici, *Assistant Key Stage Right*
Kevin Quintero
Matthew Reynolds
William Rodriguez
Kirt Siders, *Data Administrator*
Andrew Sproule (23), *Key Stage Left*
Jax Steager,
Assistant Key Light Board Operator

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Kevin McKereghan
Ryan Napoli
Tod Nixon, *Key* (24)
Billy Schmidt

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Liz Pasha
Diana Young

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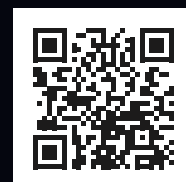
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Concertmaster



Laura Albers
Associate
Concertmaster



Heidi Wilcox
Acting Associate
Concertmaster



Jennifer Cho
Acting Assistant
Concertmaster



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



Wenyi Shih
First Violin
Regular Substitute



Robin Hansen
First Violin
Regular Substitute



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



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Principal
Viola



Joy Fellows
Acting Associate
Principal, Viola



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Viola



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Viola



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Viola



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Regular Substitute



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Acting Principal
Cello



Peter Myers
Acting Assistant
Principal, Cello



Nora Pirquet
Acting Assistant
Principal, Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Victoria Ehrlich
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello



Eric Sung
Cello
Regular Substitute



Joseph Lescher
Principal
Bass

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Jonathan Lancelle
Associate Principal
Bass



Steven D'Amico
Assistant Principal
Bass



Shinji Eshima
Bass



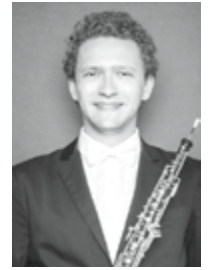
Julie McKenzie
Principal
Flute



Stephanie McNab
Flute & Piccolo



Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



Gabriel Young
Acting Principal
Oboe



**Jose Gonzalez
Granero**
Principal Clarinet



Joanne Burke Eisler
Assistant Principal
Clarinet



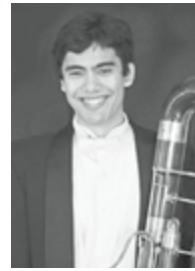
Anthony Striplen
Clarinet &
Bass Clarinet



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



Michael Severance
Bassoon &
Contrabassoon



Kevin Rivard
Principal
Horn



Keith Green
Horn



Brian McCarty
Associate Principal
Horn



Adam Luftman
Principal
Trumpet



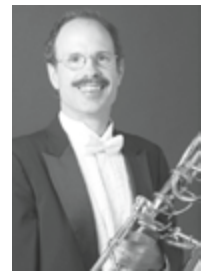
John Pearson
Trumpet



Scott Macomber
Trumpet
Regular Substitute



Samuel Schlosser
Principal Trombone



David Ridge
Principal
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman
Tuba/Cimbasso



John Burgardt
Timpani



Richard Kvistad
Principal Percussion &
Associate Timpani



Patricia Niemi
Acting Principal
Percussion



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian

Most photos by John Martin.

Not pictured: Emily Liu (Viola), Yi Zhou (Viola), Mark Votapek (Cello), Evan Hillis (Bass), Michelle Caimotto (Flute), Benjamin Brogadir (Oboe), Alex DiThomas (Oboe), Shawn Jones (Bassoon), Matthew Boyles (Clarinet), Junghwan Lee (Clarinet), Meredith Brown (Horn), Caitlyn Smith-Franklin (Horn), Logan Bryck (Horn), Jeffrey Budin (Trombone), Victor Advienko (Percussion), Annabelle Taubl (Harp), Kevin Myers (Assistant Orchestra Manager and Librarian)

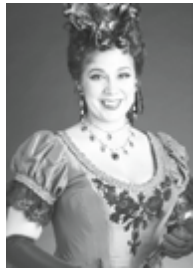
San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



Nadima Avakian
Soprano



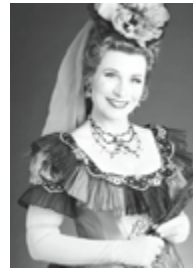
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Sara Colburn
Soprano



Clare Demer
Soprano



Claire Kelm
Soprano



Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Soprano



Liesl McPherrin
Soprano



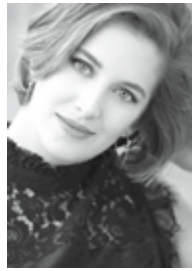
Angela Eden Moser
Soprano



Rachelle Perry
Soprano



Carole Schaffer
Soprano



Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano



Elizabeth Baker
Mezzo-Soprano



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



Silvie Jensen
Mezzo-Soprano



Courtney Miller
Mezzo-Soprano



Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



Sally Porter Munro
Mezzo-Soprano
Leave of Absence



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



Laurel Cameron Porter
Mezzo-Soprano



Nicole Takesono
Mezzo-Soprano



C. Michael Belle
Tenor



Alan Cochran
Tenor



Patrick Hagen
Tenor



Daniel Harper
Tenor



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Michael Jankosky
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Fernando Ruiz
Tenor



Sigmund Seigel
Tenor
Leave of Absence



Jonathan Smucker
Tenor



Andrew Truett
Tenor



William Lee Bryan
Baritone



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



Andrew Thomas Pardini
Baritone



Jere Torkelsen
Baritone



Wilford Kelly
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass



Valery Portnov
Bass

Not pictured: Whitney Steele, Mezzo-Soprano

Most photos by John Martin.

Carole Schaffer by Pamela Dale and Jonathan Smucker by Lisa Keating.

San Francisco Opera Corps Dancers



Jamielyn Duggan



Brett Conway



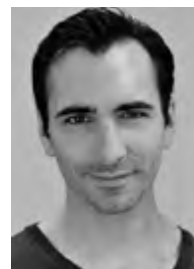
Blanche Hampton



Bryan Ketron



Rachel Speidel Little



Christopher Nachtrab



Jekyns Pelaez



Chiharu Shibata

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San Francisco Opera was built by a grassroots campaign of innovative opera lovers back in 1922. So much has changed since then, but this stage as a place where we tell our community's stories and share profound emotional experiences together is more needed than ever.



War Memorial Opera House under construction in 1931



PHOTO: ERIC FRAZIER

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Nadja Michael as Emilia Marty in Janáček's *The Makropulos Case*. / CORY WEAVER

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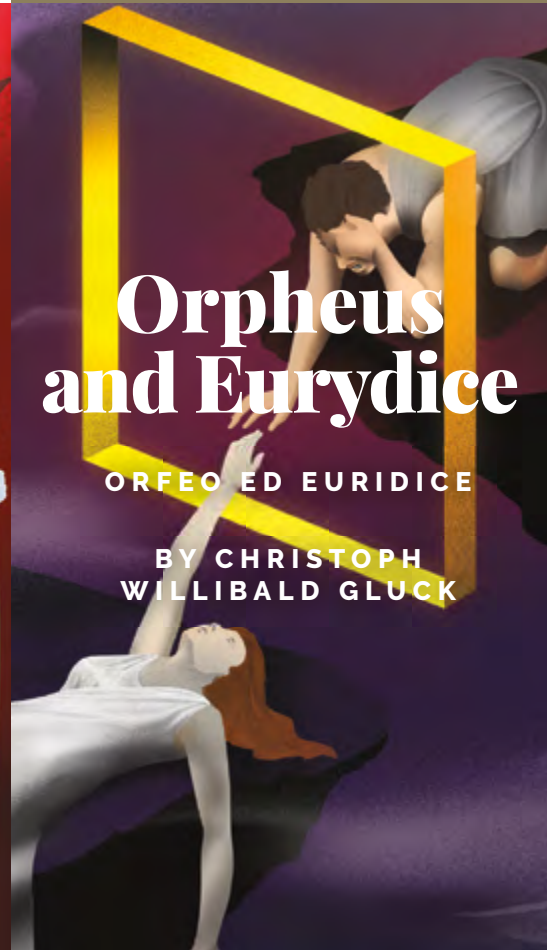
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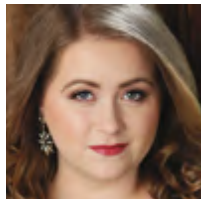
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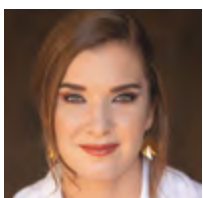
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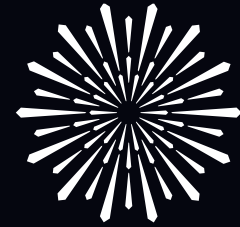
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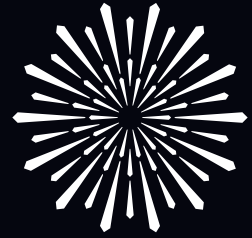
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Defining the Future

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

On October 25, 2017, John Adams and I had lunch together at Hayes Street Grill. It was about a month before we were to premiere his latest opera, *Girls of the Golden West*, and, despite how busy we were with rehearsals, I had to ask him a pressing question: would he write a new opera to open our Centennial Season?

Five years out from the centennial, we were just beginning to put together the framework for this most important of seasons, and we knew for certain that we wanted to begin with a new opera. While our centennial would need to honor the past, we wanted to send a clear message that the centennial was, even more so, the beginning of a new chapter.

To be able to even ask John Adams to write an opera is an honor, irrespective of the answer! John has championed new directions in opera for the last 35 years, ever since *Nixon in China* opened the Wortham Center in Houston under the general directorship of my mentor, David Gockley. John has been on the forefront of crafting an ever-evolving American musical language that holds up a mirror to society writ large. He helps us see ourselves with all our foibles and triumphs. His operas have energized our stage in San Francisco more than any other living composer. And, based in Berkeley, he is a neighbor, a member of the community, a friend. Opening our second century with a new opera by John made sense on every level. I asked my question with trepidation ...

John not only embraced the idea, he soon had a direction. He had spent that year reading every play by Shakespeare, and *Girls of the Golden West* included two soliloquies from the Scottish play (Shakespeare was routinely staged by the gold miners). John's setting of Shakespeare suggested that a collaboration with the Bard could yield extraordinary results. The incision, perception, and clarity of John's text setting allows Shakespeare to leap off the page in very contemporary and comprehensible ways. And, when he selected *Antony and Cleopatra*, with its empire-sized passion and intensity, it was clear that something red hot could emerge from this. And it has!



Matthew Shilcock with John Adams after the composer was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal, 2017.

DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Over the course of the pandemic, I've had the privilege to visit with John at his home in Berkeley and sit outside with him, listening to each scene unfold. His work with our director Elkhanah Pulitzer and dramaturg Lucia Scheckner has created a tight, energized libretto that cuts to the core of this intercontinental power triangle. John's musical score pulls us into both the vastness and vulnerability of this story with an emotional veracity that is so intense that it leaves us listeners out of breath.

Just a few months ago, the Nonesuch record label released a 40-disc commemorative set of recordings of John's work, celebrating his 75th birthday. It is a beautiful collection, reproducing original album covers and smartly leaving room in the box for things still to come! As I held the set in my hands recently, I felt the enormity of what we are embarking upon here. Yes, John is the composer next door, but he is also the composer that the world of classical music looks to to define what comes next.

We get to hear that first, here in San Francisco! 🎧

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