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# Rigoletto

BY GIUSEPPE VERDI

# Van Cleef & Arpels

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Vol. 103, No. 1 • 2025–26 Season • September 2025

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## AT A GLANCE AND SYNOPSIS

Get *Rigoletto* details quickly on pages 6 and 30.

## FEATURES

32

### THE SUPREME TEST

BY ROGER PINES

Writer Roger Pines reveals why the title role in Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* is one of the most demanding and rewarding for a baritone.

38

### A RIGOLETTO FOR TODAY

BY ROGER PINES

Mongolian baritone Amartuvshin Enkhbat discusses Verdi's jester, a role he has performed more than 100 times in productions around the world.

45

### DEAD MAN WALKING AT 25

Participants in the San Francisco Opera world premiere of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking* look back on the opera's genesis and ongoing legacy.

70

### POSTLUDE: JOURNEYING TO THE EXTREMES OF HUMAN EMOTION

BY MATTHEW SHILVOCK

## DEPARTMENTS

- 8 Welcome Message from the Board
- 10 San Francisco Opera Association
- 12 Your Guide to San Francisco Opera
- 14 San Francisco Opera Donors
- 31 Cast
- 40 Artist Profiles
- 52 Adler Fellows
- 54 Opera News

- 56 Administration
- 58 Artist Roster and Chorus
- 59 Orchestra, Dancers,  
and Supernumeraries
- 60 Backstage Personnel
- 66 San Francisco Opera Guild
- 68 Merola Opera Program

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## AT A GLANCE

# Rigoletto

MUSIC BY **GIUSEPPE VERDI** • LIBRETTTO BY **FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE**

**Structure:** 3 acts, with one intermission after Act I

**Running time:** 2 hours, 35 minutes

**Language:** Sung in Italian with English supertitles

**Key Characters:**

- *Rigoletto*, court jester to the Duke of Mantua
- *Gilda*, Rigoletto's daughter who loves the duke
- *Duke of Mantua*, a capricious womanizer who disguises himself as the student Gualtier Maldè
- *Sparafucile*, a hired assassin

Giuseppe Verdi's 1851 opera centers around Rigoletto, a jester who hurls insults at court for the amusement of the duke. At home, Rigoletto is a loving, protective father to a daughter he keeps hidden from the world. When a victim of Rigoletto's

cruelty curses him, the private life he has worked to keep secret begins to unravel with tragic consequences. The fast-paced action of Verdi's brilliant score, filled with turbulent drama and memorable tunes, made the opera a breakout hit. *Rigoletto* marks the beginning of Verdi's "middle period," when the composer produced a series of classics in rapid succession, including *Il Trovatore* (1853), *La Traviata* (1853), and *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859).

**Listen for:** In the first few minutes of the opera, the duke sings "Questa o quella," a catchy ode to the allure of women. In the last act, he sings one of opera's most famous melodies, "La donna è mobile," again reflecting his caddish ideas about women. What do these two earworm arias tell us about the duke's evolution (or lack thereof) throughout the opera?

---

# Dead Man Walking

MUSIC BY **JAKE HEGGIE** • LIBRETTTO BY **TERRENCE McNALLY**

**Structure:** 2 acts, with one intermission

**Running time:** 2 hours, 52 minutes

**Language:** Sung in English with English supertitles

**Key Characters:**

- *Sister Helen Prejean*, a nun and spiritual advisor to the condemned Joseph De Rocher
- *Joseph De Rocher*, a convicted killer on death row
- *Mrs. Patrick De Rocher*, Joseph's mother

*Dead Man Walking* is based on the 1993 best-selling memoir of Sister Helen Prejean chronicling her experiences as spiritual advisor to a death row inmate. When the condemned man refuses to acknowledge his guilt or take responsibility for his crimes, Sister Helen journeys through pain, conflict, and grief to help Joseph find his way to the truth and the redemptive

power of love. Adapted into an Oscar-winning film in 1995 starring Susan Sarandon and Sean Penn, Sister Helen's story also inspired Bay Area composer Jake Heggie and legendary playwright Terrence McNally to create their first opera which premiered at San Francisco Opera in 2000. Filled with motifs that reveal insights into the characters along with haunting uses of silence, Heggie's incisive, lyrical score conveys the strong emotional world of this true story. The opera has been performed on five continents and in more than 80 productions, making it the most performed new opera of the last 25 years.

**Did you know?** The two pop songs heard on the car radio in the opening scene ("Watching You" and "A Kiss in the Dark") were composed by Jake Heggie for the opera. They are provided, along with orchestra parts, when an opera company produces *Dead Man Walking*.





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DIRECTED BY  
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## WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

**Welcome to the 103rd Season of San Francisco Opera!** We begin a particularly creative year as we embark on a season celebrating new productions and new works, as well as some of the greatest classics in the repertoire.

It is hard to believe how much has transpired since our centennial. That celebratory moment ushered in a thrilling new chapter for the Opera, one that has seen extraordinary artistry at the highest levels of excellence; an increase in the numbers of subscribers, donors, and new audiences; audiences getting younger and coming back more frequently; and a deep commitment to telling stories of meaning and impact. Although the financial model of the arts remains very tenuous, the hunger and energy for opera is strong and growing, and we head into this new season with a great sense of possibility.

Our season begins with *Rigoletto* under the baton of Music Director Eun Sun Kim. Eun Sun illuminates each opera she conducts with such vision and nuance that, even if you've seen a work many times, it can feel as though you're discovering it anew. *Rigoletto* is a searing exploration of human emotions, and with a spectacular cast and Giorgio de Chirico-inspired production, the stage is set for some very exciting performances.

We then return to a very special work for San Francisco Opera: *Dead Man Walking* by Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally. In 2000, this company raised the curtain for the very first time on a new opera that would become the most performed contemporary opera and expand the possibilities of storytelling on the opera stage. We are thrilled to bring back this extraordinary work that explores the boundaries of compassion and forgiveness.

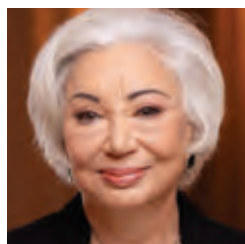
Later this fall we unveil a brand-new production of Wagner's final epic, *Parsifal*—one of the greatest accomplishments of human creativity. And then the world premiere of Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's highly anticipated *The Monkey King*. Both operas are selling fast, and we hope that you'll come and experience both these expressions of Bay Area creativity at its finest.

Thank you for celebrating with us the incredible impact possible when all the art forms join together on the opera stage. Here's to a great season ahead!

With gratitude,



**Barbara A. Wolfe**  
Chair of the Board  
San Francisco Opera Association



**Jack Calhoun**  
President  
San Francisco Opera Association





## Paris Opera Ballet *Red Carpet*

A North American Premiere by Hofesh Shechter  
Costumes by CHANEL

The stunning dancers of the Paris Opera Ballet take on Hofesh Shechter's explosive choreography in *Red Carpet*—an eagerly awaited North American premiere. *Red Carpet* is danced to live music and is touring to only two US cities, with just this single West Coast engagement! "Every dance looked fabulous...amorous sensuality and irresistible virtuosity" (*Los Angeles Times*).

Oct 2–4 | ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY



## Anne Sofie von Otter, *mezzo-soprano* Kristian Bezuidenhout, *fortepiano*

The magisterial mezzo-soprano and acclaimed keyboardist visit for a performance of Schubert's timeless *Schwanengesang* song collection, which explores complex emotional terrain, from love and despair to sorrow and serenity.

Oct 5 | HERTZ HALL, BERKELEY



## Philharmonia Orchestra Santtu-Matias Rouvali, *principal conductor* Víkingur Ólafsson, *piano*

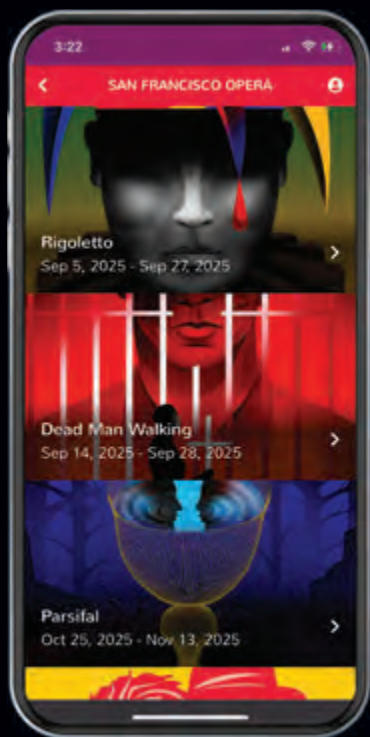
The stellar London-based orchestra returns to Berkeley with Finnish maestro Santtu-Matias Rouvali in two programs featuring 2025–26 season Artist in Residence and incredible pianist Víkingur Ólafsson! Get ready to hear a sublime collection of works, from Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major to an exciting new commission.

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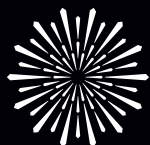
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# Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

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

## LARGE-PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSES

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

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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.

## OPERA GLASSES

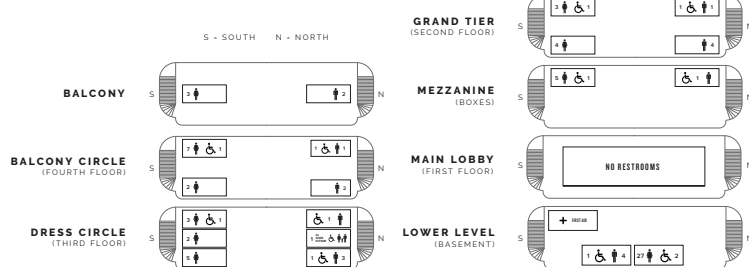
See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

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

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



## IMPROVING YOUR SAFETY

### Meet Your Civic Center Ambassadors!

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



## WALKING GROUPS

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

## RIDESHARE

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

## TAXI SERVICE

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

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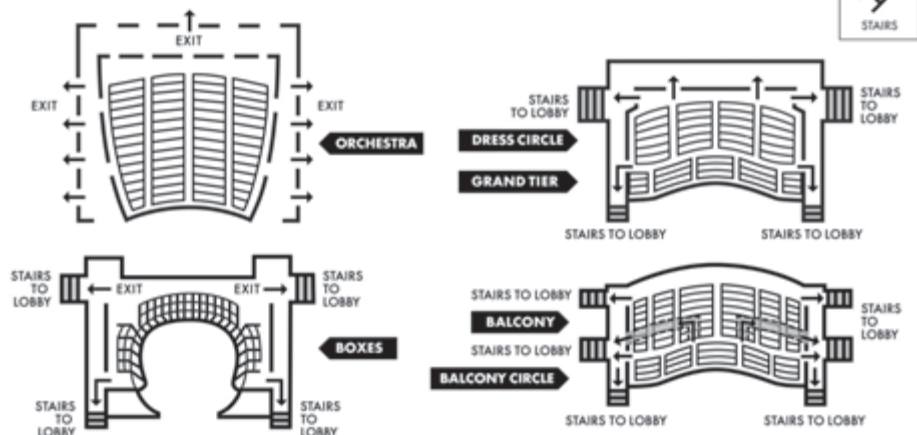
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## SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE EXIT DIAGRAM



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

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

# Marieke & Jeff Rothschild



NOAH BERGER

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



# John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



TERRENCE MCCARTHY

San Francisco Opera shines as a beacon of innovation, both on and off the stage, driven by the visionary leadership of John and Cynthia Gunn. Their unwavering dedication to creative and cultural initiatives ensures that San Francisco Opera remains one of the world's premier stages. Their philanthropic leadership to the Opera includes a historic contribution in 2008, believed at that time to be the most significant gift ever made by individuals to an American opera company.

A Bay Area native, John's love for opera began in high school through his friendship with Ronald Adler, son of the former General Director of San Francisco Opera Kurt Herbert Adler. John would attend dress rehearsals with Ronald, sitting in the General Director's box. After graduating from Stanford, John began a distinguished career at investment company, Dodge & Cox. There, his belief in long-term investing, empowering management style, and down-to-earth sensibility became benchmarks in the field. John joined the Opera Board in 2002, becoming Chair in 2008, a position he held for sixteen years, during which he made an extraordinary impact on the Company's creative vitality and organizational

stability. In 2024, he assumed the role of Chair Emeritus.

Cynthia Gunn, also an alum of Stanford, began her career as editor and director of the highly regarded *Portable Stanford* series, in which she edited nearly thirty volumes by some of the university's most brilliant minds. Cynthia's philanthropic leadership in the Bay Area includes serving as a Trustee of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, as well as a number of other boards spanning philanthropy, health, education, and the arts.

John and Cynthia's dedication to the Opera reflects their shared belief that a great city deserves a premier opera company that leads the art form and takes bold risks to advance society. Their philanthropic leadership has enabled some of the most significant artistic projects on the San Francisco stage for over two decades, ensuring vital investments in the Company's infrastructure, including the automation and rigging system, as well as the Opera's media suite.

San Francisco Opera is privileged to have the leadership of John and Cynthia, a partnership that began with a high school visit to dress rehearsals and that has blossomed into one of the most defining philanthropic partnerships in American cultural history.

# Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions

Production Sponsor, *Dead Man Walking*



Phyllis C. Wattis and Jake Heggie, 2000

San Francisco Opera has long stood at the vanguard of artistic innovation, continuously pushing the boundaries of creative expression. Few individuals have shaped that identity as profoundly as Phyllis C. Wattis. She had the visionary conviction that opera must engage audiences in unexpected and groundbreaking ways.

Mrs. Wattis supported creators who dared to reimagine the possibilities of art. She funded some of the most important productions staged here, and her legacy continues through The Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions, supporting in perpetuity works that advance opera in form and subject. Because of Mrs. Wattis, San Francisco Opera continues to commission and present works that address the complexity of our time with artistic rigor and emotional depth.

Mrs. Wattis brought the same energy to every institution she touched, serving as a trustee of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and the San Francisco Symphony, in addition to San Francisco Opera.

When *Dead Man Walking* was proposed as a subject for an opera, it was Mrs. Wattis who boldly championed its commissioning. Her support helped bring to life other

notable productions, including operas by Tippett, Henze, Berg and Janáček, and world premieres including, during her lifetime, *The Dangerous Liaisons* (1994) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1998), and then through the enduring legacy of her endowment fund, newer works like *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Innocence*.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock reflects, “Although I never had the privilege of knowing Mrs. Wattis, I feel the enduring legacy of her impact through the deep connection of her family, and through the creative propulsion that she set in motion here. Her endowed funds support not only new productions but also the Opera Center, new audiences, and our general operations. Mrs. Wattis gave us the courage to forge bold new paths, to embrace a dynamic artistic vision, and to ensure the cultural vitality of this great city.”

Mrs. Wattis embraced San Francisco Opera as a living institution that must constantly evolve to reflect the world it serves. She passed away in 2002 at the age of 97, but her vision remains at the heart of the Company. San Francisco Opera is honored to carry forward Mrs. Wattis’ vision and presents this 25th-anniversary production of *Dead Man Walking* in profound gratitude for her belief in the vital importance of art that pushes boundaries.

# Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem



**J**an and Maria both developed a love for opera at a young age, despite growing up half a world apart. Jan Shrem, following a successful career in publishing across Japan and Europe, went on to establish Clos Pegase Winery in California's Napa Valley, where he cultivated a world-class collection of modern and contemporary art. Maria Manetti Shrem built an international legacy in fashion entrepreneurship, playing a key role in bringing Gucci and Fendi into U.S. department and specialty stores. Together, they have dedicated their focus and generosity to philanthropy, supporting education, the performing and visual arts, and medical causes.

Though their journeys took them across the globe, their shared passion eventually led them to San Francisco Opera—and to each other. As dedicated Company Sponsors for over a decade, Jan and Maria established four generous funds:

- The Conductors Fund: Ensuring the continued presence of esteemed conductors on the podium.
- The Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund: Supporting performances by today's most compelling artists in the Italian repertoire.
- The Emerging Stars Fund: Showcasing promising young talents on the San Francisco Opera stage throughout the season.

- The Luminaries Concert Fund: Bringing legendary artists to the stage for special events and performances.

In December 2022, Maria was honored with The Spirit of the Opera award in recognition of her unwavering dedication to San Francisco Opera, her leadership in advancing its success, and her commitment to the art form. In 2023, she received the prestigious UC Davis Medal, an honorary degree, for her profound impact on the arts and her dedication to fostering education and exploration.

Maria made history in April 2024 by establishing eight endowed funds in perpetuity at the UC Davis College of Letters and Science—the most significant gift in its history. In January 2025, her transformative philanthropy inaugurated the Maria Manetti Shrem Art District / Arts Renaissance. Her generosity will benefit over 35,000 students annually, supporting top faculty, emerging talents, and world-renowned artists.

Through her visionary leadership, Maria continues to shape the cultural landscape and enrich lives worldwide.

In September 2024, we mourned the peaceful passing of Jan Shrem at 94, who was honored with a memorial short film at the Manetti Shrem Museum in January 2025. We celebrate his extraordinary legacy and stand in deep sympathy with Maria during this time of loss.



# Donor Spotlight



## **Diane B. Wilsey (Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor)**

Dede Wilsey, a longtime San Francisco Opera board member, patron, and Opera Ball opening weekend 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 consecutive year, she is excited to celebrate the start of our season with the opening performance of *Rigoletto*. She is also supporting the celebratory floral arrangements that grace the War Memorial Opera House on September 5, and the free, annual *Opera in the Park* concert at Robin Williams

Meadow on September 7, and the opening production of Verdi’s *Rigoletto* under the baton of Eun Sun Kim. Dede’s leadership support was critical in the creation of the Diane B. 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 of San Francisco since 1996 and serves on the boards of the San Francisco Opera, Ballet, and the War Memorial Performing Arts Center and is a lifetime trustee of UCSF.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

## **Jerome and Thao Dodson (Production Sponsor, *Rigoletto* and *Dead Man Walking*)**

“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

*Guillaume Tell*, Thao, already an opera lover, suggested to Jerry that they go.

*Tell* was praised for its striking 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, then President of the San Francisco Opera Association. Eager to continue support, the Dodsons see this as a perfect time to revitalize and energize the Company within the San Francisco community. The initial fire ignited by *William Tell* continues to burn brightly.



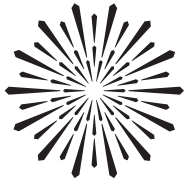
TERESA CONCEPCION

## **Barbara Ward (Production Sponsor, *Rigoletto*)**

Barbara Ward has served on the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors since 1969 and is the longest current serving member. A dedicated patron of San Francisco Opera for over sixty years, she is also a member of the Producers Circle and the Bel Canto Society; supported the creation of the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera in which the Barbara Moller Ward Lobby in honor of David Gockley is located; and has sponsored several Adler Fellows throughout the years, including Nadine Sierra, Hadleigh Adams, and Aria Umezawa. In 1969 at the request of Kurt Herbert Adler for wider support, Barbara founded the Marin Chapter of San Francisco Opera Action which presented previews of upcoming opera performances. Opera Action was ultimately absorbed into the San Francisco Opera Guild, where the tradition of opera previews carries on today. Barbara continues to share the joy

of opera with her community, including arranging group performances to the Opera House for her fellow Tamalpais residents. Barbara is also an active and long-time supporter of several civic and charitable organizations in Marin County.

# Donor Spotlight



**SAN FRANCISCO  
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## **San Francisco Opera Guild (Production Sponsor, *Rigoletto*)**

Now celebrating its 84th 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 over 64,000 students participate in award-winning programs including Sing a Story, Opera à la Carte, Book to Bravo!, Voices for Social Justice, Songs of the Season, and Student Dress Rehearsals through their schools. Young artists seeking more in-depth involvement join the youth training programs Summer Conservatory, Madrigals, and Opera Scouts for ages 7–18, and the youngest audiences enjoy special family programming like *Lucinda y las Flores de la Nochebuena*, playing each holiday season. 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 *Rigoletto*. Giving Voice to Potential since 1939.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

## **Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund (Production Sponsor, *Rigoletto*)**

Company sponsors since 2002, the Littlefield name became especially familiar to opera fans in 2006 when Jeannik Littlefield made her historic \$35 million commitment to San Francisco Opera. Mrs. Littlefield held a subscription for more than 40 years until her passing in 2013. Her daughter, Denise Sobel, continues her family's wonderful legacy of support of San Francisco Opera. The Littlefield Family received the San Francisco Opera Guild's 2021 Crescendo Award, alongside the announcement of Sobel's leadership support of San Francisco Opera's Department of Diversity, Equity, and Community. The Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Endowment Fund provides a permanent and unrestricted source of income for the Company.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

## **Denise Littlefield Sobel (Production Sponsor, *Dead Man Walking*)**

Denise Littlefield Sobel is a philanthropist with a longstanding commitment to the visual and performing arts. She is at the forefront of several initiatives to promote diversity within the arts, including at San Francisco Opera. Denise serves on numerous diversity committees for other nonprofit organizations. When the Company commissioned its first opera in Spanish, *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, Denise made Spanish supertitles available for the first time. She also sponsored San Francisco Opera's very first *Pride Concert*. Denise supports a variety of cultural institutions around the world, including the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, where she currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the first woman to do so. In 2019, the French government presented Denise with the country's highest civilian honor, naming her a Chevalier of the Légion

d'honneur in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to French culture. In 2023, she was also appointed Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters.

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# Donor Spotlight



## **Dianne and Tad Taube (Production Sponsor, *Rigoletto* and *Dead Man Walking*)**

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

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

Company's reach and influence through media, providing lead funding for the groundbreaking Taube Media Suite and supporting the renowned *Opera at the Ballpark* simulcasts, which have been instrumental in transforming the Company's impact in the wider community.

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

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

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



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

## **Bernard & Barbro Osher (Production Sponsor, *Dead Man Walking*)**

A native of Maine, Bernard Osher became involved with San Francisco Opera as a subscriber over 50 years ago, shortly after moving here from New York. He and his wife, Barbro, a native of Sweden, have supported every aspect of the Company's work, from artist appearances to production facilities to audience building programs. Established in 1977, The Bernard Osher Foundation has funded virtually every major arts organization in the area, including youth programs. Higher education initiatives include scholarships for community college students in California and Maine and for baccalaureate students at universities in every state and the District of Columbia; Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, serving adults on 125 campuses nationwide; and Osher Centers for Integrative Health at 10 of the nation's leading medical schools and at the Karolinska Institute in

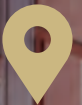
Stockholm, Sweden. Bernard is a longstanding member of the Opera's Board of Directors, serving on the Chairman's Council. Barbro served for many years as Consul General of Sweden for California and serves as Chairman of the Board of the Osher Foundation. Together they recently established the Osher Audience of the Future Fund, which gives San Francisco Opera an incredible resource to connect art and audiences together in new ways, ensuring that the Osher Theatre (the War Memorial auditorium) remains a vibrant, energized, and full-to-the-rafters building in which to experience transformational opera. This year, Bernard and Barbro were inducted into the OPERA America Hall of Fame, recognizing individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the opera field.



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# Our Donor Family

The collective support of San Francisco Opera's generous donor family keeps globally recognized opera on the stage and brings community programs to many around the Bay Area. Each year, support from individuals and institutional funders accounts for over 80% of the revenue needed to create transformative opera.

Listed gifts were received between **August 1, 2024 and August 1, 2025**. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of our donor listings. If we have misspelled or omitted a name, please accept our apology and notify us at **(415) 565-3212** or **membership@sfopera.com** so that we may update our records accordingly.

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# Rigoletto

OPERA IN THREE ACTS BY GIUSEPPE VERDI

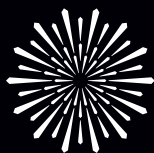
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San Francisco Opera Production

**SEPTEMBER 5, 10, 13, 16, 19, 21, 24, 27, 2025**



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA



# Rigoletto

## ACT I

The Duke of Mantua surveys his court for an amorous assignation and selects Countess Ceprano. She is flattered but nervous; her husband is present. Marullo enters with news for his fellow courtiers: Rigoletto, the jester, has a mistress in town. The duke and Rigoletto discuss the choices for getting rid of Count Ceprano: prison, exile, or beheading. Ceprano and the courtiers are outraged and swear vengeance on Rigoletto. Count Monterone, an old nobleman, denounces the duke and his dissolute court. Rigoletto mocks the old man and his dishonored daughter, and Monterone curses both Rigoletto and the duke for laughing at a father's grief. Rigoletto suddenly fears for the safety of his own daughter, whom he has kept carefully hidden from the court.

Later that evening, Rigoletto is accosted by Sparafucile, who offers his services as an assassin. Rigoletto spurns his offer but reflects that Sparafucile is his alter ego: one kills with a sword, the other with words.

Rigoletto returns home and greets his daughter, Gilda, declaring that she means the world to him. She reciprocates his feelings but questions why he has kept her concealed. He fears the courtiers and warns the nurse to guard Gilda carefully. Hearing a noise in the street, he goes out to investigate. The duke, disguised as a student, enters and is astonished to discover the young woman he has seen in church is Rigoletto's daughter. He and Gilda declare their love. After he leaves, Gilda rhapsodizes on the name of the "student," Gualtier Maldè, while outside the courtiers gather to kidnap the woman they believe to be Rigoletto's mistress. Rigoletto returns to find the courtiers near his house, but they fool him into thinking they have come to abduct Countess Ceprano who lives next door. Too late, Rigoletto discovers that Gilda has been abducted.

## ACT II

The duke, unaware of what has occurred, laments to find Gilda's house deserted. The courtiers describe how they kidnapped Rigoletto's mistress, and the duke leaves to go

find her. When Rigoletto enters, he rages at his tormentors but is soon reduced to begging them for pity. When Gilda rushes out of the duke's chambers, Rigoletto orders the courtiers to leave him alone with his daughter. She explains how she met the duke, whom she had taken to be a student, at church. Rigoletto comforts her. Monterone, on the way to his beheading, laments that no one has yet struck down his daughter's seducer. Rigoletto promises to do so. Gilda begs mercy for the duke.

## ACT III

Rigoletto has brought Gilda to Sparafucile's inn to show her the duke's true nature. The duke flirts with Sparafucile's sister, Maddalena. Gilda laments his faithlessness, but she still loves him. Rigoletto sends her home and hires Sparafucile to kill the duke. Maddalena urges her brother to spare him, and he agrees, provided another victim can be found as a substitute. Gilda, after overhearing the conversation, resolves to save the duke and in the midst of a storm, knocks on the door of the inn. Rigoletto returns to collect his victim and is given a body. Hearing the duke's voice in the distance, he quickly uncovers the body and finds the dying Gilda. Monterone's curse has been fulfilled.

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**First performance:** Venice, La Fenice; March 11, 1851

**First performance in the U.S.:** New York, Academy of Music; February 19, 1855

**First San Francisco Opera performance:** October 8, 1923

*Rigoletto* has been performed by San Francisco Opera in 34 previous seasons. For complete information on all past casts, visit [archive.sfopera.com](http://archive.sfopera.com)

**Personnel:** 13 principals, 36 choristers, 4 dancers, 7 supernumeraries; **60 total**

**Orchestra:** 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 5 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, 1 cimbasso, 1 timpani, 2 percussion, 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **62 total**

**Backstage:** piccolo, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, trombone, string bass, bass drum, tube chimes

Conductor  
**Eun Sun Kim**

Director  
**Jose Maria Condemí**

Set Designer  
**Michael Yeargan**

Costume Designer  
**Constance Hoffman**

Original Lighting Designer  
**Mark McCullough**

Revival Lighting Designer  
**Justin A. Partier**

Chorus Director  
**John Keene**

Choreographer  
**Colm Seery**

Assistant Conductor  
**Robert Mollicone**

Prompter  
**Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad**

Musical Preparation  
**Nelson Calzi**  
**Bryndon Hassman**  
**Matthew Piatt**  
**Fabrizio Corona**

Diction  
**Nelson Calzi**  
**Fabrizio Corona**

Supertitles  
**Philip Kuttner**

Assistant Director  
**Roy Rallo**

Stage Manager  
**Collette Berg**

Assistant Stage Managers  
**Megan Coutts**  
**Jayne O'Hara**  
**E. Reed Fisher**

Fight Director  
**Dave Maier**

Technical Supervisors  
**Lawren Gregory**  
**Erik Walstad**

Costume Supervisor  
**Jai Alltizer**

Hair and Makeup  
**Jeanna Parham**

San Francisco Opera production

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2025 • 8 PM  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 • 7:30 PM  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13 • 2 PM  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 • 7:30 PM  
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 • 7:30 PM  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21 • 2 PM  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 • 7:30 PM  
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 • 7:30 PM

# Rigoletto

Opera in three acts by **Giuseppe Verdi**  
Libretto by **Francesco Maria Piave**  
After the play *Le Roi s'amuse* by **Victor Hugo**  
(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

## CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

<i>The Duke of Mantua</i>	<b>Yongzhao Yu*</b>
<i>Matteo Borsa</i>	<b>Samuel White†</b>
<i>Countess Ceprano</i>	<b>Caroline Corrales†</b>
<i>Count Ceprano</i>	<b>Jongwon Han†</b>
<i>Rigoletto</i>	<b>Amartuvshin Enkhbat</b>
<i>Marullo</i>	<b>Olivier Zerouali†</b>
<i>Count Monterone</i>	<b>Aleksey Bogdanov</b>
<i>Sparafucile</i>	<b>Peixin Chen*</b>
<i>Gilda</i>	<b>Adela Zaharia</b>
<i>Giovanna</i>	<b>Stella Hannock</b>
<i>A page</i>	<b>Elisa Sunshine</b>
<i>An usher</i>	<b>William Lee Bryan</b>
<i>Maddalena</i>	<b>J'Nai Bridges</b>
<i>Courtiers, nobles, guards</i>	

\* San Francisco Opera debut    † Current Adler Fellow

**TIME AND PLACE:** Sixteenth-century Mantua and vicinity

### ACT I

SCENE 1: The duke's palace  
SCENE 2: A street

### —INTERMISSION—

### ACT II

A room in the duke's palace

### ACT III

Sparafucile's inn

*The performance will last approximately two hours and thirty-five minutes, with one intermission.*

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

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

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

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

# The Supreme Test

**RIGOLETTO DEMANDS EVERYTHING  
FROM A VERDI BARITONE**

BY ROGER PINES



*Renowned Italian baritone Giuseppe De Luca was San Francisco Opera's first Rigoletto in 1923, the Company's inaugural season, and reprised the role here in 1924 and 1929.*  
HERMAN MISHKIN/METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES



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**J**ust as actors long to portray Hamlet, baritones dream of singing the operas of Verdi, with all their opportunities for vocal glory. Among more than twenty possible roles, Rigoletto poses the most formidable challenge. A singer who can successfully portray Rigoletto onstage is really the king of baritones, provided he has the voice, technique, theatricality, and stamina to go the distance.

Any baritone with the potential to excel as Rigoletto should build up to it, since taking it on too soon is as misguided as a sprinter attempting a marathon. Terrific power and wide range are needed to produce the thrills an audience expects (although several high notes we usually hear from Rigoletto are actually interpolations that Verdi didn't write). Unlike many of Verdi's previous baritone roles, baritones singing Rigoletto can't get away with a "stand-and-deliver" approach. The character must be presented in extraordinary detail, and that means acting not just through physicality but through the voice itself.

Given that Verdi baritones are uncommon at any given time, how do we know when we're hearing the real thing? We all recognize vocal beauty—"velvet," to use an even

in choral music, but it took a few more centuries for him to find his way in opera. Look at Handel—no baritones! The lower-voiced male characters were all basses. It's largely the same in Mozart, with the exception of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *The Magic Flute*.

Moving to the 1810s, we find the baritone very slowly emerging in Italian opera, even if Rossini roles at that time didn't require a particularly extensive vocal or dramatic range. Rossini created something more grand for the voice type in his final opera, *Guillaume Tell* (1829), in which the famous sharpshooter of the title was, at long last, a full-blown baritone protagonist, with his sizeable, velvety sound enhanced by expressive eloquence. Taking their cue from *Guillaume Tell*, Rossini's successors—like Bellini and especially Donizetti—asked baritones for a bigger, broader sound.

So the stage was set for Verdi with his third opera, *Nabucco* (1842). Its larger-than-life title role gave audiences their first taste of the voice we recognize today as the Verdi baritone. With *Nabucco* and other baritone roles over the next decade, Verdi was composing in a fairly unsubtle style. *Macbeth* (1847) is the most demanding of those roles, but

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## **“Rigoletto must be presented in extraordinary detail, and that means acting not just through physicality but through the voice itself.”**

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more specific descriptor—when we hear it, and a true Verdi baritone's voice boasts that velvet in abundance. But there also must be strength in the sound to cut through a large orchestra, yet without distorting the voice to do it.

So while the Verdi baritone needs that power, he also needs finesse to produce such deeply expressive phrasing that he instantly reaches the listener's heart. And when he moves from a fervent aria or duet right into what's known as a *cabaletta*—fast-moving, aggressive music (the hair-raising music in the Act II finale of *Rigoletto*, for example)—he needs *huge* energy. His rhythms must be absolutely exact, but he also should give the impression, vocally speaking, that he's throwing caution to the wind!

Have you ever wondered where the word “baritone” originated? We owe it to the ancient Greeks (*barytonos* can be roughly translated as “deep-sounding” or “heavy-toned”). Fifteenth-century composers used the baritone

Rigoletto (1851) is on a different plane altogether, given the vocalism and artistry required.

As far as the role's physicality is concerned, most productions in the past couple of decades have made things significantly easier for the singer by moving away from the hunchback that audiences had been seeing onstage for 150 years. The “other-ness” of Rigoletto as a human being now comes from the inside out, rather than from external physical characteristics. That de-emphasis on visible deformity, which had made the role terribly demanding for the singer, has allowed him to concentrate to a greater extent on acting through voice and text to bring the character to life in performance.

A great Rigoletto's tasks begin with complete mastery of the score. Luckily, Verdi has done a lot of the work, providing vital expressive markings to be observed in virtually every bar, almost as if cajoling the baritone into achieving expressive variety.

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**“In the  
Gilda/Rigoletto duets,  
‘chemistry’ can  
really make  
the difference.”**

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Zeljko Lučić as Rigoletto with Aleksandra Kurzak as Gilda, 2012. / CORY WEAVER

Expressive variety—what does that really mean? Well, look at the greatest actors, especially in Shakespeare: for example, Laurence Olivier, whom we can enjoy on film as Henry V, Hamlet, Richard III, and Othello. Olivier cared profoundly about the vocal side of his characters, and in those four roles, he played on his voice like an instrument. Whether the character was loving, insinuating, mysterious, or violent, every possible color in the voice was utilized.

All of that can apply to Rigoletto, except that, unlike Olivier (who could create his own tempos and rhythms in delivering any text), the Verdi baritone has less interpretive flexibility, since he's tied to the specifications of the score. For example, he doesn't have the freedom to add a huge pause if inspired to do so, since the music doesn't allow him to stop for that purpose.. Within those parameters, however, he can achieve wondrous vocal acting.

The opening scene shows Rigoletto, the court jester, in action, and the artist must transform his usual rich, velvety tone to project a nasty sarcasm through the voice. When he's mocking Count Monterone, Verdi asks him to sing “con caricatura,” even throwing in two quick but incisive trills to drive home the point. Toward the end of the scene, Monterone curses Rigoletto, whose voice now needs the maximum in sheer terror.

Greater challenges await in the second scene of Act I. Rigoletto's first line requires a long *crescendo/decrescendo* (increase/decrease in volume) on the opening phrase, “Quel vecchio maledivami” (“That old man cursed me”). Here we're instantly aware of vocal technique working to enhance characterization. It's tricky to execute that phrase satisfactorily, let alone to color it with the fear that continues to haunt Rigoletto. The rest of the scene can show the extent of the baritone's gifts as a singing actor, the voice reflecting very different emotional responses: there's the almost uneasy fascination when conversing with the hired assassin, Sparafucile; the agonized monologue, “Pari siamo,” which can penetrate deeply into the heart of this tortured man through a line-by-line response to the text; and, above all, the first of three duets with Gilda, showing Rigoletto not as a jester but as a father. There, in sharp contrast to what we've just heard, Verdi provides an opportunity for streams of glowing sound during the soulful passage in which Rigoletto recalls his dead wife. That portion of the duet exemplifies the tendency for Rigoletto's music to “sit” consistently higher in the voice than any other Verdi baritone role preceding it.

In the Gilda/Rigoletto duets, “chemistry” can really make the difference in depicting this relationship onstage. The baritone may be the protagonist, but he must respond to his partner vocally, musically, and dramatically. Verdi



composed quite a few soprano/baritone duets, but none of the operas contain *three* of them, and perhaps only the long scene for the heroine and her father in *Luisa Miller* (1849) requires such a deep connection between the artists. Vocally the baritone and soprano in *Rigoletto* must blend well, since one test of a successful Rigoletto is his sensitivity to the voice of his Gilda.

Rigoletto is onstage for most of Act II, perhaps the most demanding single act for a Verdi baritone and requiring enormous stamina. Here again the jester directs his sarcasm at the courtiers, but unlike the first scene, he delivers his barbs half-heartedly. The voice must reveal that Rigoletto is tired and emotionally scarred. Moments later, the full power of the Verdi baritone bursts forth when Rigoletto denounces the courtiers in his aria, “Cortigiani, vil razza dannata” (“Courtiers, you vile, damned race”). A great Rigoletto, however, can turn from the aggressiveness—the *violence*—of the aria’s first half to the intimately scaled, devastatingly moving second half, where Rigoletto futilely begs the courtiers for pity. He sings the rest of the act with Gilda, and again, the contrast is extreme; Rigoletto moves from an attempt at comfort (after his daughter admits to being seduced and abandoned) to the duet’s hair-raising conclusion, which blazes with his desperate desire for revenge.

By the time he reaches Act III, urgency is coloring every phrase out of Rigoletto’s mouth, but much of the time it emerges through hushed conversation, whether with Gilda or Sparafucile. Here the singer can restrain the natural grandeur of his voice, projecting instead a quiet but deadly seriousness. In the brief monologue, where he’s anticipating his moment of triumph, the singing builds gradually in intensity, but then, just at the moment when he’s giving his full power, there’s the shock of hearing the duke’s voice in the distance. “Qual voce!” (“That voice!”), Rigoletto gasps, leading to his discovery of the mortally wounded Gilda, the most painfully touching of their duets, and his final outburst—“È morta! Ah, la maledizione!” (“She’s dead! Ah, the curse!”)

Rigoletto is a role like no other in Verdi’s output, and the supreme test for a singer. Those who rise to its vocal, musical, and dramatic challenges might be recognized as that essential and all-too-rare asset in opera—the true Verdi baritone. 🌟

*Roger Pines is a contributing writer to Opera magazine (U.K.), programs of opera companies internationally, and major recording labels. A faculty member of Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music, he has also been a panelist on the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts’ “Opera Quiz” since 2006.*

**“Rigoletto is  
a role like no other  
in the Verdi output  
and the supreme test  
for a singer.”**



Quinn Kelsey as Rigoletto and Nino Machaidze as Gilda, 2017. / CORY WEAVER



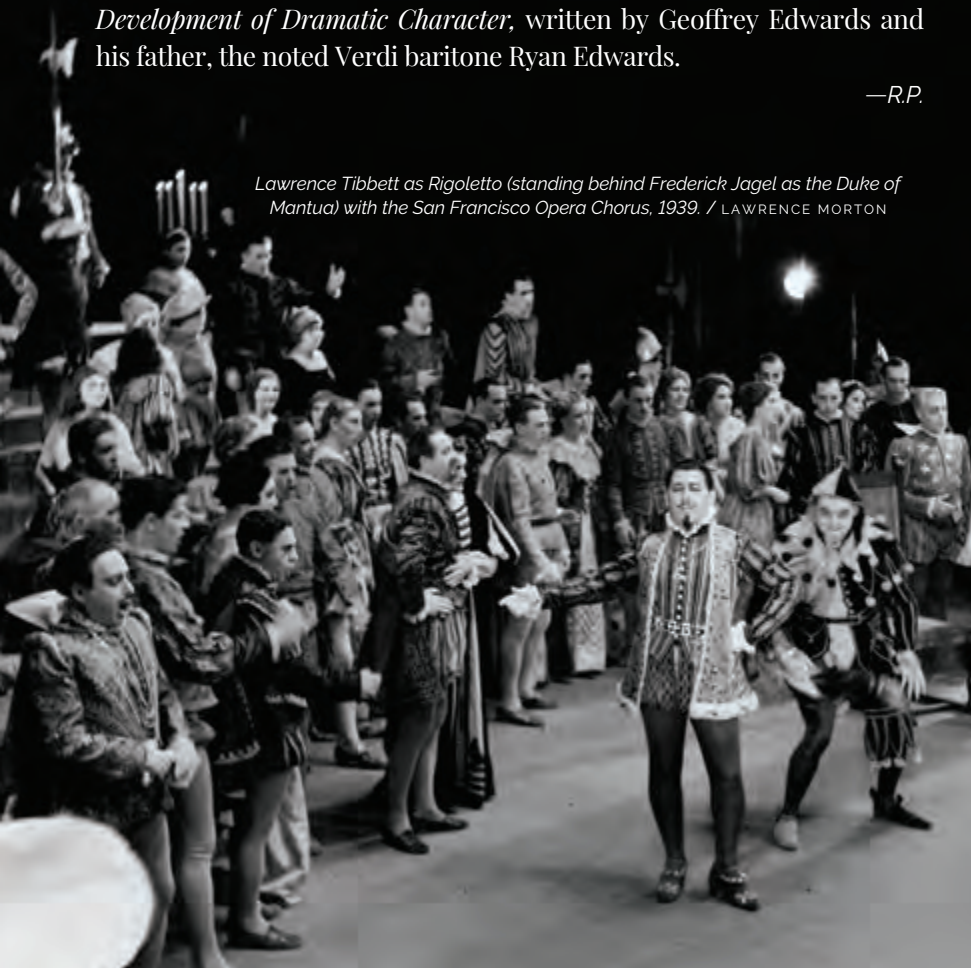
# MORE GREAT VERDI BARITONES

What about the great Verdi baritone roles post-*Rigoletto*? They give us desperate jealousy (Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*), fatherly concern (Germont in *La Traviata*), and incomparable nobility (title role of *Simon Boccanegra*). Then there are the Shakespeare-based characters: the despicable villain (Iago in *Otello*), and, in *Falstaff*, both the cuckolded husband (Ford) and the faded but still vital seducer (title role). With much glorious music and a profoundly moving characterization, it's Boccanegra who gets most baritones' vote as the Verdi role—besides *Rigoletto*—that they crave an opportunity to perform. Simon isn't as vocally demanding as *Rigoletto*, but he needs exceptional, in-depth emotional communication.

If you want to learn more, start with YouTube, where you can hear every great Verdi baritone since the early twentieth century. It's thrilling to sample their contrasting approaches to these roles, whether it's Italians (for starters, try Riccardo Stracciari, Ettore Bastianini, Piero Cappuccilli, and Renato Bruson) or Americans (there's a "royal line" from Lawrence Tibbett, Richard Bonelli, and Leonard Warren to Robert Merrill, Cornell MacNeil, and Sherrill Milnes). In their different ways, they'll all give a complete view of how these roles sound when the singer is truly in command. And if you really want to read about Verdi baritone roles from someone who's been there, head to a library or a website selling out-of-print books for *The Verdi Baritone: Studies in the Development of Dramatic Character*, written by Geoffrey Edwards and his father, the noted Verdi baritone Ryan Edwards.

—R.P.

Lawrence Tibbett as Rigoletto (standing behind Frederick Jagel as the Duke of Mantua) with the San Francisco Opera Chorus, 1939. / LAWRENCE MORTON



Ettore Bastianini as Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore*, 1962.  
CAROLYN MASON JONES



Renato Bruson as the title role in *Simon Boccanegra*, 1980.  
RON SCHERL



Robert Merrill as Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, 1957.  
ROBERT LACKENBACH





Sherrill Milnes made his Company debut as the title role in *Rigoletto* in 1973 (seen here with Izabella Nawe as *Gilda*). / RON SCHERL



Bryn Terfel as the title role in Verdi's final opera, *Falstaff*, 2013. / CORY WEAVER



Leo Nucci as *Germont* in *La Traviata*, 1983. / RON SCHERL



Leonard Warren as the title role in *Simon Boccanegra* (center) with Roberto Turrini as *Gabriele Adorno* and Renata Tebaldi as *Amelia*, 1956. / ROBERT LACKENBACH



Lawrence Tibbett as *Ford* in *Falstaff*, 1927. / HERMAN MISHKIN/METROPOLITAN OPERA ARCHIVES



Piero Cappuccilli as the title role in *Nabucco*, 1987. / RON SCHERL



# A Rigoletto for Today

**AMARTUVSHIN ENKHBAT  
DISCUSSES HIS PORTRAYAL  
OF VERDI'S JESTER**

BY ROGER PINES

*Amartuvshin Enkbat made his 2024 Company debut as Renato in Verdi's Un Ballo in Maschera. / CORY WEAVER*

From the moment a DVD from the Verona Arena introduced the young Amartuvshin Enkhbat to *Rigoletto*, he longed to sing the title role. That desire grew even stronger when, as a university student in his native Mongolia, he had a voice teacher who assigned him “Cortigiani, vil razza dannata,” Rigoletto’s formidable Act II aria.

Having first sung the complete role at the astonishingly early age of 25, Enkhbat is now established worldwide as one of his generation’s premier interpreters of Rigoletto. When San Francisco Opera’s current production concludes, he will have sung the role more than 120 times.

Singing Rigoletto takes enormous vocal stamina, given that it’s unquestionably “one of the most technically challenging roles for baritones,” says Enkhbat. “I can usually sing a *Rigoletto* performance without getting too fatigued, and I believe this is because I started singing this role when I was very young and full of energy.” The traditions embodied by important Rigolettos of the past—especially the great Italian baritones—are not lost on Enkhbat: “When I first worked on the role, I was listening to Ettore Bastianini. His singing was just so mesmerizing, and I couldn’t not listen to it over and over! And of course, where do I start with the legendary Leo Nucci? I’ve learned a lot from him, just by being in his presence.” The singer also cites his good fortune in being directed in this opera by another celebrated Rigoletto: “the amazing Rolando Panerai.”

Enkhbat continuously studies the singing of his greatest predecessors (“One reason I think they were great is because they were singing in a healthy way”). He refuses to force his voice to make his singing expressive: “My singing is my singing, and if I must alter it to ‘fit’ the role better, then maybe that role isn’t for me.”

Like all outstanding Verdi baritones, Enkhbat relishes the composer’s many thrilling possibilities for exciting top notes, although some of the expected ones for Rigoletto are interpolations not written by Verdi (nonetheless, “audiences come to performances to hear those notes”). Depending on his conductor’s wishes, Enkhbat may choose to include various optional high notes while adhering

elsewhere to the printed score. For a production at La Scala, “the conductor asked the cast to sing their parts as written, but they largely ignored the request. I followed my colleagues, and that led to some disagreements!”

In any *Rigoletto* production, the dramatic side of the title role is a challenge, given that the character certainly has a nasty side. Still, there is tremendous humanity in Rigoletto: “Yes, we do feel sorry for him in almost every act,” Enkhbat asserts. On the other hand, “there is a saying in Mongolian that I think kind of sums up Rigoletto, and it’s hard to translate it into English, but it’s close to the saying, ‘You have made your bed, now lie in it.’”

Enkhbat structures his characterization of Rigoletto with great care and sensitivity. For example, “the entire first act is like behind-the-scenes court life, and I try to show how Rigoletto must act to survive in such chaos. I believe being the court jester is probably the only way for someone like Rigoletto to exist in that world, and he’s terrified of the thought of his pure, innocent daughter getting dragged into this horrific scene.”

Looking at Rigoletto’s conversation with the assassin Sparafucile, Enkhbat is intrigued by the eeriness of the music, created in no small part by the mere fact of two low-voiced men singing together. Of course, Enkhbat quips, “murder for hire will never be cheerful, I’m guessing!” This scene reveals a previously unseen side of Rigoletto,

but with the monologue that follows, “Rigoletto shows his true colors—no mask, no pretending—because he’s alone. Here he shows his hatred, his disgust, and his fear regarding the court life.”

There’s another reason why Enkhbat connects so vividly—and, in the end, so poignantly—with this character: “Rigoletto is a father of a young girl, and I am nearing that age where I could have a daughter of Gilda’s age.” As a singer whose repertoire throughout his career has included so many characters much older than himself, Enkhbat seems grateful that most contemporary productions dispense with the longstanding tradition of depicting Rigoletto as an old man: “I have the chance to turn him into a middle-aged man, which is a lot closer to my actual age!”



Legendary Italian baritone Leo Nucci and Amartuvshin Enkhbat.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF MR. ENKHBAT

# Artist Profiles

\* San Francisco Opera Debut    ♪ Role Debut    † Current Adler Fellow    ◇ Adler Fellowship Graduate    + Merola Opera Program Graduate



## EUN SUN KIM

(Seoul, South Korea)

**Caroline H. Hume Music Director of  
San Francisco Opera**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Tristan und Isolde*; *Idomeneo*; *Il Trovatore*; *Lohengrin*; *Dialogues of the*

*Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Fidelio*; *The Magic Flute*; *Tosca*; *Madama Butterfly*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eun Sun Kim: A Journey into Lohengrin* film

**Recent and Upcoming:** *Parsifal* (San Francisco Opera); Beethoven and Falla concert (San Francisco); *Elektra* (San Francisco); *Carmen* (Madrid's Teatro Real, Zurich Opera); *Madama Butterfly* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Berlin State Opera); *La Bohème* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris Opera); Verdi Requiem (Dutch National Opera); *Hänsel und Gretel* (Munich; concerts with Dresden Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, National Brass Ensemble  
Instagram: @eskconductor



## AMARTUVSHIN ENKHBAT

Baritone

(Sukhbaatar aimag Khalzan, Mongolia)

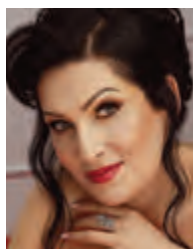
**Rigoletto**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Opera in the Park*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Scarpia in *Tosca*

(Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera); Don Carlo di Vargas in *La Forza del Destino* (Milan; Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); Amonasro in *Aida* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Verona); Carlo Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* (Lyon, Genoa, London); Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata* (Berlin, Japan, Metropolitan Opera); title role of *Rigoletto* (Vienna, Hamburg, Trieste, London, Parma); title role of *Nabucco* (Vienna, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Tonio in *Pagliacci* (Milan); title role of *Macbeth* (Munich)

**Read more about Amartuvshin Enkhbat on page 38.**



## ADELA ZAHARIA

Soprano

(Arad, Romania)

**Gilda**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*; soloist in *100th Anniversary Concert*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Vienna State Opera); Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Paris Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, Vienna); title role of *La Traviata* (Madrid's Teatro Real, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Dutch National Opera, Semperoper Dresden); Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Madrid, LA Opera); Konstanze in *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (Hamburg State Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Berlin State Opera); Musetta in *La Bohème* (Metropolitan Opera); Pamina in *The Magic Flute* (Komische Oper Berlin); Mahler's Fourth Symphony (Tonkünstler Orchester Vienna); title role of

## MANY THANKS TO

Jennifer M. Bienaimé and Joshua Fiedler, supporting Amartuvshin Enkhbat;  
Dr. Susan Kroll & Mr. Mark R. Kroll, supporting Adela Zaharia;  
John<sup>§</sup> & Bonnie Demergasso and Hon. Barry Goode, supporting J'Nai Bridges

<sup>§</sup> deceased



## ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

*Semiramide* (Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu)

Instagram: @adelazaharia.soprano

Facebook: @Adela Zaharia – Soprano



### YONGZHAO YU\*

Tenor

(Shandong, China)

#### The Duke of Mantua

**Recent and Upcoming:** The Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* (English National Opera, Vancouver Opera); Messenger in *Aida* (Metropolitan Opera); Rodolfo in *La Bohème* (Metropolitan Opera); Alfredo in *La Traviata* (Palm Beach Opera, Irish National Opera); Cavaradossi in *Tosca* (Glimmerglass Festival, Pacific Opera Victoria); Lt. B.F. Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (Houston Grand Opera); Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (New Orleans Opera); Flavio in *Norma* (Metropolitan Opera, Houston)



### J'NAI BRIDGES

Mezzo-Soprano

(Tacoma, Washington)

#### Maddalena

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Title role of *Carmen*; Josefa Segovia in John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West*; Bersi in *Andrea Chénier*; *In Song*: J'Nai Bridges film

**Recent and Upcoming:** Maddalena in *Rigoletto* (Metropolitan Opera); Didon in *Les Troyens* (Seattle Opera); title role of *Carmen* (Vienna State Opera); Erika in *Vanessa* (National Symphony Orchestra); recital (Kaufman Music Center); Verdi Requiem (Dessoff Choirs at Trinity Church); Peter Lieberman's *Neruda Songs* (Lincoln Center); Mary in John Adams' *El Niño* (Metropolitan Opera); Adolphus Hailstork's *A Knee on the Neck* (National Philharmonic)

Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording (*Akhmat*)

Website: jnaibridgesmezzo.com

Instagram: @jnaibmezzo



### PEIXIN CHEN\*

Bass

(Houston, Texas)

#### Sparafucile

**Recent and Upcoming:** Supreme Lord Laozi in Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King* (San Francisco Opera); Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* (Canadian Opera Company, Madrid's

Teatro Real, LA Opera); Timur in *Turandot* (Metropolitan Opera, Atlanta Opera, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera); Prokofiev's *The Gambler* (Salzburg Festival); *La Bohème* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Don Carlos* (Chicago); *Don Giovanni* (LA Opera); *Das Rheingold* (Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic); *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* (Aix-en-Provence); *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Houston); *Norma* (Houston); *Aida* (Houston)

Instagram: @pexinchen



### ALEKSEY BOGDANOV+

Baritone

(San Francisco, California)

#### Count Monterone

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Noble in *Lohengrin*; *Opera in the Park*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Escamillo in *Carmen* (San Diego Opera); Donner in *Das Rheingold* (Pacific Symphony); The One-Eyed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Metropolitan Opera); Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* (Palm Beach Opera); Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress* (Glimmerglass Festival); Ethel Smyth's Mass in D (Cathedral Choral Society); Rachmaninoff's *Spring Cantata* (Clarion Choir); Crespel/Luther in *Les Contes des Hoffmann* (Barcelona's Gran Theatre del Liceu); Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West* (Royal Swedish Opera); Scarpia in *Tosca* (Taiwan's Kaohsiung Philharmonic Cultural & Arts Foundation, Palm Beach Opera, Austin Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Arizona Opera); title role of *Rigoletto* (Nashville Opera, Central City Opera); Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* (Tulsa Opera); Amonasro in *Aida* (Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra); Sebastiano in Eugen d'Albert's *Tiefland* (Sarasota Opera); Kovalyov in Shostakovich's *The Nose* (Chicago Opera Theater); Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* (Maryland Lyric Opera); Lt. Horstmayer in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* (Washington National Opera); Shchelkalov in *Boris Godunov* (Metropolitan Opera); Verdi Requiem (San Diego Symphony, Colorado Symphony) Merola Opera Program: 2009  
Instagram: @alekseygram



### OLIVIER ZEROUALI†+

Baritone

(Middletown, Delaware)

#### Marullo

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Trojan #2 in *Idomeneo*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Motorcycle Cop in Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking*

## ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

(San Francisco Opera); Silvio in a scene from *Pagliacci* (Merola Opera Program); *Song As Drama* recital (Merola); Malatesta in a scene from *Don Pasquale* (Merola Grand Finale); Robert in *Iolanta* (Yale Opera Theatre); Betto in *Gianni Schicchi* (Yale); Brother in Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Yale); Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* (Glimmerglass Festival); workshops of Iivia Shortt's *The Museum of the Lost and Found* and Ashley Au's *Inertia* (Highlands Opera Studio)  
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2025  
Merola Opera Program: 2024



### SAMUEL WHITE.†+

Tenor

(Columbia, South Carolina)

#### Matteo Borsa

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** High

Priest of Neptune and Trojan #1 in

*Idomeneo*; Rodolfo in *Bohème Out of the Box*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Howard Boucher in Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking* (San Francisco Opera); First Knight of the Grail in *Parsifal* (San Francisco); Canio in *Pagliacci* (Wexford Festival Opera); Matthew Gurney in Tobias Picker's *Emmeline* (Manhattan School of Music); Bacchus in the final scene of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Schwabacher Summer Concert); title role in an excerpt from *Werther* (Merola Grand Finale); scenes from *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Boris Godunov* (Santa Fe Opera)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2025

Merola Opera Program: 2024



### JONGWON HAN.†

Bass-Baritone

(Seoul, South Korea)

#### Count Ceprano

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:**

Schaunard and Colline in *Bohème Out of the Box*; The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*; Voice

of the Watchmen in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Voice of the Oracle in *Idomeneo*; Tom in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Schaunard in *La Bohème* (Atlanta Opera); Colline in *La Bohème* (Opera Naples); Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte* (Naples); Handel's *Messiah* (Dayton Opera); The Bonze in *Madama Butterfly* (Palm Beach Opera)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program:

2023, 2024, 2025



### STELLA HANNOCK.†

Mezzo-Soprano

(Port Macquarie, Australia)

#### Giovanna

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:**

Designer #2 in Mason Bates and Mark

Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito*

(San Francisco Conservatory of Music); the Child in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (SFCM); Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare* (SFCM)

Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



### CAROLINE CORRALES.†+

Soprano

(St. Louis, Missouri)

#### Countess Ceprano

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:**

Moirá in Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Mimi in

*Bohème Out of the Box*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Kitty Hart in Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking* (San Francisco Opera); Sixth Flower Maiden in *Parsifal* (San Francisco); Mimi in *La Bohème* (Opera Naples); Female Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola Opera Program); scenes as Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* and Ellen Orford in *Peter Grimes* (Merola); Ma Zegner in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* (Boston University Opera Institute); Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* (Boston)  
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2024, 2025  
Merola Opera Program: 2023



### ELISA SUNSHINE.††+

Soprano

(San Clemente, California)

#### A Page

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Shepherd Boy in *Tosca*; Annina in *La Traviata*; Sister Anne of the

Cross in *Dialogues des Carmélites*

**Recent and Upcoming:** First Esquire and First Flower Maiden in *Parsifal* (San Francisco Opera); Iris in *Semele* (Atlanta Opera); Juliette in *Die Tote Stadt* (Boston Symphony Orchestra); Lucy in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* (Seattle Opera); Annia in *La Traviata* (Santa Fe Opera); Handel's *Messiah* (Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra); Second Fairy in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (San Francisco Symphony); Selena in Jake Heggie's *If I Were You* (Merola Opera Program)

## ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2020, 2021, 2022

Merola Opera Program: 2019

Instagram: @elisasunshinesoprano

Facebook: @Elisa Sunshine



### **WILLIAM LEE BRYAN**

Baritone

(Saint Paul, Minnesota)

#### **Usher**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Officer in *The Barber of Seville*; Sergeant in *Manon Lescaut*; various roles in *Billy Budd*; A

Captain/Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*; Messenger in *La Traviata*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Member of San Francisco Opera

Regular Chorus

Facebook: @williamleebryan

Theater); *Porgy and Bess* (English National Opera, Metropolitan Opera); *Rigoletto* (Metropolitan Opera); *Roméo et Juliette* (Metropolitan Opera)



### **CONSTANCE HOFFMAN**

(Oakland, California)

#### **Costume Designer**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Rigoletto*; Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*; *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Così fan tutte*; *Don Giovanni*; John Adams' *Antony*

and *Cleopatra*

**Recent and Upcoming:** *La Bohème* (Santa Fe Opera); Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* (Metropolitan Opera, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); *Tannhäuser* (Houston Grand Opera); *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); *Grimm Tales* (Ballet Austin); Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* (Opera Slovenske Narodne Divadlo); *Rigoletto* (LA Opera); *Don Carlos* (Washington National Opera); David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly* (New York's Cort Theatre)

Arts Professor and Area Head of Costume Design at the Tisch School of the Arts

## Creative Team



### **JOSE MARIA CONDEMI**

(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

#### **Director**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Carmen*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Madama Butterfly*; *Faust*; *Tosca*; *Così fan tutte*; Nolan Gasser's *The Secret Garden*; *Bohème Out of the Box*

**Recent and Upcoming:** *Madama Butterfly* (San Diego Opera); *Salome* (San Diego); *Tosca* (Cincinnati Opera); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Cincinnati); Robert Xavier Rodríguez's *Frida* (Detroit Opera, Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera); *Alcina* (Trentino Music Festival)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2001, 2002

Merola Opera Program: 1999, 2000



### **MICHAEL YEARGAN**

(Dallas, Texas)

#### **Set Designer**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Wagner's *Ring cycle*; *Rigoletto*; *Aida*; *Luisa Miller*; *La Bohème*; *Simon Boccanegra*; *Madama Butterfly*; Jake Heggie and Terrence

McNally's *Dead Man Walking*; *Carmen*; *I Puritani*; *The Merry Widow*; André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*

**Recent and Upcoming:** *My Fair Lady* (Lincoln Center



### **JUSTIN A. PARTIER**

(New York, New York)

#### **Revival Lighting Designer**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Carmen*; *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci*; Verdi *Requiem*; *Fidelio*; *Bohème Out of the Box* (2023); *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; 100th

Anniversary Concert; *Pride Concert*

**Recent and Upcoming:** *To My Girls* (New Conservatory Theatre Center); *Carmen* (Washington National Opera); *Così fan tutte* (Dallas Opera); *Origins of Love* (national tour); *How to be a Rock Critic* (national tour); *(Be)Longing* (national tour); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Schloss Werdenberg Buchs SG Switzerland); *All the Rage* (The Barrow Group); *The New Will Appear* (59 E59 Theater); *Driving Miss Daisy* (Mile Square Theater); *Fascinating Rhythm* (Transcendence Theater Company); *Shall We Dance* (Transcendence Theater Company); *Big Top Dreamers* (Transcendence Theater Company); *Rich Girl* (Florida Studio Theater); *COLORED* (Kyle Marshall Choreography); *The Book of Mountains and Seas* (NCTCSF); *PrEP Play, or Blue Parachute* (NCTCSF); *Getting There* (NCTCSF)

Instagram: @justinlights

Website: justinpartierlighting.com





**COLM SEERY**

(Dublin, Ireland)

**Choreographer**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:**

Movement Director of John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*, Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*

Choreographer of *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, *Il Trovatore*, *Partenope*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*  
Revival Choreographer of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Andrea Chénier*, Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*

Dance Master of *Don Giovanni*, *Eugene Onegin*, *La Traviata*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Lohengrin*, Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Choreographer of *Idomeneo* (Berlin State Opera); Britten's *Gloriana* (Madrid's Teatro Real);

*Ariodante* (Vienna State Opera, Israeli Opera)

Associate Choreographer of *Andrea Chénier* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera)

Revival Choreographer of *La Traviata* (Barcelona's Gran Theatre del Liceu); *Manon* (Dallas Opera, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colon); *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Glyndebourne); *Rinaldo* (Glyndebourne)



**JOHN KEENE**

(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

**Chorus Director**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Don*

*Giovanni*; Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi; John Adams'

*Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eugene Onegin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Orpheus and Eurydice*; *Madama Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *100th Anniversary Concert*; *Il Trovatore*; Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; *Lohengrin*; Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *The Elixir of Love*; *The Magic Flute*; Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; *Tristan und Isolde*; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; *Carmen*; *La Bohème*; *Idomeneo*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*; Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; *Elektra*

Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and San Francisco Conservatory of Music Voice Concerto Competition judge  
Instagram: @keenejohn



**DAVE MAIER**

(El Cerrito, California)

**Fight Director**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** *Il*

*Trovatore*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Carmen*; *Tosca*; the *Ring* cycle; *Pagliacci*; *Rigoletto*; *Romeo and Juliet*; Billy

Budd

**Recent and Upcoming:** *Zorro* (Opera San José); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Marin Shakespeare Company); *Romeo/Juliet* (Marin Shakespeare Company); *Private Lives* (A.C.T.); *Fat Ham* (SF Playhouse); *Ironbound* (Oakland Theater Project)

# Dead Man Walking at 25

AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE OPERA'S CREATION,  
WORLD PREMIERE IN SAN FRANCISCO, AND LEGACY

**T**he following are samples from a series of interviews conducted by San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna with participants in the 2000 world premiere of *Dead Man Walking*. To hear audio samples from the interviews, read full transcripts, and view archival resources relating to the world premiere by San Francisco Opera, go to [sfopera.com/digital](https://sfopera.com/digital).

**Jake Heggie:** It was because of Lotfi [Mansouri, general director of San Francisco Opera 1988–2001]. I have to give all the credit to him ... Lotfi was willing to take chances. He was a true impresario. He had vision, he had passion, and he had imagination about what could happen.

**Elena Park:** Flicka [Frederica van Stade], Renée Fleming, Carol Vaness, Jenny Larmore ... all of these artists started to request that Jake write for them ... “Do you have any songs for me?” People would show up in the PR department, and we’d think they had a question but they’d say, “Just here to talk to Jake!” [Lotfi] was very savvy, and, you know, he was picking up that singers of great stature

## DRAMATIS PERSONAE

(and their *Dead Man Walking* roles 25 years ago)

**Jake Heggie**, former San Francisco Opera public relations associate and composer of *Dead Man Walking*

**Elena Park**, San Francisco Opera public relations manager

**Catherine Cook**, mezzo-soprano who performed *Sister Helen Prejean* in the workshop (1999) and *Jade Boucher* at the premiere (2000)

**Frederica von Stade**, mezzo-soprano who performed *Mrs. Patrick De Rocher*

**Kip Cranna**, San Francisco Opera music administrator

**Megan Kellogg**, San Francisco Girls Chorus member

**Lori Harrison**, prop master who visited Angola Prison for research

**John Del Bono**, stagehand who helped build the production



Sister Helen Prejean and Susan Graham at the premiere.  
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ARCHIVES



Jake Heggie (composer), Terrence McNally (librettist), Joe Mantello (director), and Kip Cranna (artistic administrator). / SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ARCHIVES

and talent were recognizing in Jake that there was something extraordinary. [Conductor] Patrick Summers, I think, also recognized the talent. Lotfi observed all of this and seized upon this idea ... and followed up really quickly to have a serious conversation about it.

**JH:** I won a competition through G. Schirmer, and I remember there was a party one night, and Lotfi said to me, “So, Jake, you’re writing all these songs for all these singers. They’re taking them all over the world and performing them, and they seem to love them. Have you ever thought about writing an opera?” I kind of looked at him, “No, not really (laughs). I haven’t because it’s so overwhelming and massive.” He says, “Well, I think you’re a theater composer. I think we should talk.”

The next day, I’m at work and thinking, you know, he was just making party conversation ... and my phone rings ... So I go over with my pad, ready to write the next press release or whatever. He says, “Put the pad down. Let’s talk about your opera. So, we have a slot in the 2000 season on the mainstage. I want to send you to New York. I’ve been trying to get Terrence McNally to agree to write a libretto, and I want to see if you guys hit it off and if you’d be a good pair.” And I’m looking around, like, *who are you talking to?* (laughs) He opened this door, and I thought, what have I got to lose? I am jumping through that door!

Lotfi was all in and made contact with Sister Helen. My phone rang one day, I pick it up, and she goes, “This is Sister Helen Prejean. I’d like to speak to Jake Heggie ... I understand you want to make an opera out of *Dead Man*

*Walking*. You know what I said to that, Jake? I said, ‘Of course we’re gonna make an opera out of *Dead Man Walking*!’ But, Jake, I don’t know boo-scat about opera, so you’re gonna have to educate me ... Now, Jake, I know you’re going to have to change things. You’re going to have to rewrite. You’re going to have to add things, take away. You know, it’s for the stage. It’s not the book. The only thing I ask is that it stay a story of redemption.” And I said, “Absolutely, a hundred percent.” And then we were off and running.

**Catherine Cook:** It truly was groundbreaking because there weren’t many operas being written about social justice issues, and Sister Helen’s story ... I’d read the book, I’d seen the movie. It was just such a fabulous story. Up until then I don’t think many people were really being that bold to write an opera about capital punishment.

**Frederica von Stade:** I was just lucky and over the moon to be asked to do *Dead Man Walking*. Jake loves the human voice, so I knew everything would be great, working with him. It’s such a fascinating and vitally important subject to explore, and what better way to explore this subject than through music and through storytelling, so that people come alive and are part of a very important life instance that we all need to know about. It came up that he was going to partner with Terrence McNally, and that I think they had another story in mind first, and then it came around to *Dead Man Walking*. Jake asked me to sing Sister Helen [Prejean] at first. And I just felt I was senior enough



at that point that there were just too many wonderful younger singers, and I said, “I really, really with all my heart want to be in it—please let me be in it—but I just don’t think I’m right for Sister Helen.” And there was marvelous Susie Graham, and Jake asked me to take my choice: one of the parents of the kids who were murdered, or the mother of the convict, and I chose that part. Exploring this woman through Jake’s eyes and through Terrence’s eyes was this amazing gift to me. It made me look at my own motherhood in a whole different way and realize how much of your child’s life you can’t predict and can’t control ... and you hate that, and you hate it about yourself that you can’t make the world pure and good for them.

**JH:** We had the first act done by November of that year, and then we did the second act, and then we had a workshop in August of ’99 and we needed to make some changes, and then I had to orchestrate. So, it happened—boom, boom, boom!

**Kip Cranna:** We workshopped it in the summer of 1999, and that was a fascinating process. Quite a few of the singers who were in that workshop would ultimately

create the roles that would be premiered the following year. Even with a piano workshop where people are basically learning their roles ... it was obvious that this was going to be a piece of some significance.

**CC:** [I found the music to be] a little bit [hard to learn]. There’s always an unexpected turn here and there. Rhythmically, you might struggle for a little bit, but once you know it, it’s like, *Oh! This can’t be written any other way.* It makes so much sense how [Jake] sets text, and how he can sort of build an arc of a scene in the drama. He knows the voice, and not all composers have that gift.

**Lori Harrison:** [I took] a trip to the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola ... visiting death row and visiting their execution chamber, of which I took many pictures, including of the real execution table that they used. We recreated it down to the inch, every strap, every piece of metal. John Del Bono was our master welder at the time, so he pretty much built that table.

**John Del Bono:** My biggest recollection of *Dead Man Walking* was this amazing amount of research that [Prop Master] Lori Harrison had done. She came armed with a



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Susan Graham as Sister Helen Prejean looks on as John Packard (Joseph De Rocher) is taken to his execution by guards John Del Bono and Stephen O'Reilly. / KEN FRIEDMAN



portfolio of photos and drawings and measurements of the actual death chamber in Angola, and its lethal injection table. She was absolutely dead set that we were going to prop this show exactly as it needed to be done. *Dead Man Walking* was when I first realized I was in the arts, and that we were here to put the best we can in front of the audience.

**JH:** Terrence gave me the greatest gift. That libretto is a work of genius. Being a theater guy, he wanted to establish everything in theater terms, to make sure we're not trying to put the book on the stage; we're not trying to put the movie on the stage; this is for the opera house.

That's why he wanted to stage the crime, so that we see who did it, we see what he did, we know who's guilty. The purpose of the opera is not to prove whether he's guilty. We have total clarity. This is very different from the journey that Sister Helen was on. She *didn't* know. We see it as the audience. We are witnesses.

**KP:** It was pretty clear by the second scene that something fairly special was going on. We begin with this brutal murder, and it's pretty intense. It's a tough scene to watch. Then—bam!—we're hit with the really upbeat scene where Sister Helen is teaching her little hymn to the kids in the school that the nuns run, and this turns into almost a Broadway number. It was clear that this

was kind of a dramatic masterstroke, to break that tension with something so engaging.

**JH:** There was such a feeling of support through the whole thing. It was remarkable to feel that love and support from all those singers, from all my colleagues who were marveling that this thing was happening.

**Megan Kellogg:** I was in the San Francisco Girls Chorus, level three or four, so more advanced. I remember it feeling like a very intimate experience, performing with such a small group of kids, because we could hear our own voices, you know, onstage and offstage. Running onstage, you couldn't see the audience because the lights were so bright, but you could feel the vastness of the Opera House. So, it was incredibly exciting.

**CC:** One thing that I feel the opera does so well is it really helps us see inside of these characters, of what it would be like if your son was accused, and what it would be like if your child was the victim. I get choked up thinking about it right now. I found out that the person that I was playing [Jade Boucher] did not believe in the death penalty ... and that really changed the way I played the character, because obviously you're grieving and you have anger about what's happened, but she didn't want Joe to die.

**LH:** The [execution] machine was designed by Michael Yeargan, and it had little glass syringes that were visible on it ... My notes very clearly show that there are three solutions, and the timing of those injections ... that was explained to me when I was there.

This all happens in complete silence. There's no music. Some critics pointed that out to Jake, asking him if he was unable to write music for this, and he responded that he didn't think we needed any "death music," that we'd heard enough already, and so it's quite a scene unfolding in silence.

I know that in the moments leading up to that silence, there is an exceptionally moving piece of music. I believe it was the Lord's Prayer that was being sung in many-part harmony. When I first saw that, in the rehearsal hall from afar, in street clothes, and [with] a piano, just going through that the first time, I was crying.

**JDB:** This is one of my seminal operatic moments: We were told that we were going to do a full run-through ... and they wanted "the chair." I had been warned that myself and [stagehand] Steve O'Reilly were going to be in





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costume and we were actually going to be the ones manipulating the chair for the show. Now, I'm pure theater technician. I've never acted ... I was a little nervous about the fact that I had to go out and do that, but it was the table I built and I knew I was the right person to manipulate it. And then it was time for us to go and grab [John Packard as Joseph], and take him to the chair. I grabbed his arm and I was really surprised that he resisted me ... And so, instinctively, I grabbed him harder, which surprised *me* (laughs)! We're walking him up to the chair, we're ... strapping him in, and he's trembling, and I'm like, *Oh, this is intense*. I find myself trembling, also. We get him strapped in, and then we get to the point where Steve and I are supposed to step back, and he [Joseph] sings an aria, then Sister Prejean sings ... I looked up, and everyone ... was bawling. I have never experienced anything like that in my life, and it's still probably the most powerful emotional experience of my opera career. I really didn't see that coming, and I was blown away. It changed my whole perspective of this company, and what we're doing, and why it's important.

**KC:** One of my distinct memories—and there are photographs of this—is that after the prisoner is strapped to this table, with his arms out straight to the sides, he's lifted upright, sort of like he's on a cross.

**LH:** It is actually done that way. That table did move into exactly that position. They roll it in front of a big plate glass window. The other side of the plate glass window are chairs. The family of the victim is invited to sit on that side. There's a curtain that they open up and it's mic-ed, and he's allowed to give his final words ... The family can actually witness that execution and he has a chance to make whatever amends he can at that point.

The opera company got a letter from a very angry patron, who felt that they were turning this criminal into a Christ-like figure by upping the table and having him hanging there with his arms extended. I had to ... carefully craft a response. I talked about how I went to the penitentiary and took photographs and measurements, and that that was exactly the table, and that this was exactly what they did.

**KP:** There's always a tremendous excitement about opening nights of a new piece ... It's always unpredictable and a bit of a guessing game of what's going to happen.

**JH:** The audience is the last character to show up, and you don't know what you have until then ... You just don't

know until it's completely on its feet, it's staged, costumed, the orchestra is there, and it's opening night. There's people there with all kinds of differing opinions about whether they think it's actually going to work or not, but there was great curiosity and energy about it. And I knew that it was very powerful and that it was very effective. I had no idea what the real response would be, because, of course, I was unproven as an opera composer.

Sister Helen came up to me and said, "Jake, this is a big night. Your job tonight is just to stay present in the moment. Don't think about what led up. Don't think about what's gonna happen next. Stay in the moment." And I did.

**CC:** I knew it was going to be a huge success. There were protestors outside of the Opera House on both sides [of the death penalty issue]. It got people talking, and it was really a huge moment, I feel, in opera history. I don't say that lightly. Things changed after *Dead Man Walking*, and people started taking more risks ... It changed people's lives. It changed my life.

**JH:** Sister Helen was so happy and so grateful. She said, "Tonight, 3,000 people witnessed an execution ... this thing that happens in the middle of the night, that they try to keep secret and out of everyone's eyes. You saw a human being. You didn't see an archetype; you saw a human being be executed, one that said, 'I love you,' and those were his last words."

**FVS:** [The opera] was very controversial at the time, and that needs to be said. But I thought it was going to be an enormous success, a controversial success, maybe, but a success, because of the truth of it. It's a true story, and it's a story that you don't usually confront in opera—or you don't think you do, but where do you go for murder and intrigue and sorrow and grief and jumping off turrets, but the opera house? And at first, you know, I thought, well, starting with a murder and ending with an execution isn't a great recipe for a great evening in the opera (laughs), but that's not the only mission of opera. The opera is to tell a story, and this is a story, a human love story between Sister Helen and Joe, and Mrs. De Rocher and Sister Helen, and the children and the parents. It's an exploration that has a very wide ring around it. Like you throw a rock in the lake and it makes a very satisfying plop, and then all the rings go out ... Every time I've done this piece that has been my experience. The ring encompasses a lot of people.

**JH:** By the end, when there's that silence of the execution and the pause after, and then Sister Helen steps forward and sings *a capella* [unaccompanied] the tune that she sang at the beginning—the hymn—you could feel in the house ... an active, fraught silence. What could be more powerful than an activated stillness and silence? But it went on so long, and ... I was a wreck. Then when those lights went off, that place just exploded, and I knew it was really special.

**MK:** I was a freshman in high school, and if I hadn't done *Dead Man Walking* I honestly don't know where I would be, because it ignited a passion for opera that had not been there.

**KP:** Shortly after our premiere, a consortium was formed of seven different opera companies, with a new production in mind that was directed by Leonard Foglia, and that's the production that we're essentially doing this season, with some modifications, here in San Francisco. It's been done in many, many places now, and I've seen quite a few. What's been fascinating is seeing the variety of artists that have taken on these roles. It was hard not to think of the original performance as sort of definitive, particularly Frederica von Stade as Mrs. De Rocher, the mother of the convict. Her scene where she pleads for her son's life before the Parole Board is indelibly etched in my mind.

**CC:** I'm so happy that the opera has been done so much, because it's one of the best, really, that we have. It has been performed by so many different artists all over the world, and that is a true testament to how amazing this piece is and how it connects with people. 🌟



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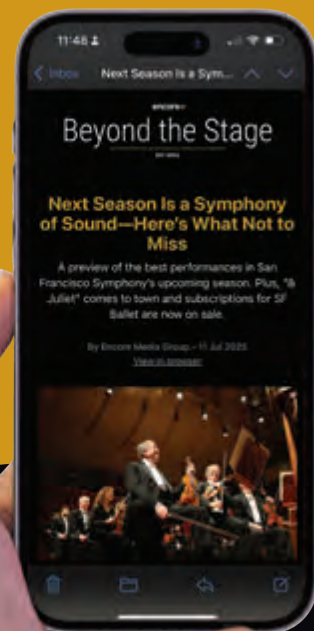
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The poster features a photograph of a group of children in elaborate costumes, including fairy wings and historical-style dresses, performing on a stage with a forest backdrop.

## Finally, an email to look forward to on a Friday afternoon.

Subscribe to our newsletter for the best news and events from the Bay Area's performing arts scene, every Friday.

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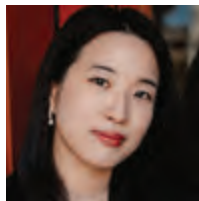
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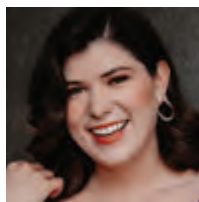
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# San Francisco Opera News

## *The Monkey King is Coming*



The Monkey King costume designs by Anita Yavich for the gods Erlang and his brothers.

San Francisco Opera recently announced the formation of The Monkey King Committee. This distinguished and diverse array of influential leaders spanning business, nonprofit, tech and cultural sectors have come together in support of one of the most anticipated world premieres of recent years, composer Huang Ruo and librettist David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King* (猴王悟空), which opens November 14. The Committee is led by San Francisco Opera Board of Directors members and Committee Co-Chairs Jerome Dodson, Doreen Woo Ho and Soo Venkatesan. The Committee's Honorary Chairs are Jensen and Lori Huang.

"*The Monkey King* is a timeless epic that celebrates courage, transformation, and the spirit of adventure," said Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of NVIDIA. "This reimagining of the classic *Journey to the West*—brought to

life on the San Francisco Opera stage—is a breathtaking fusion of Chinese legend and American craftsmanship and artistry coming together for an incredible display."

"I am excited to lead this Committee to promote and fundraise for this innovative and unique opera that brings the best of the best of Chinese classics to the operatic stage," said Committee Co-Chair Doreen Woo Ho. "To me this opera also represents a huge opportunity to build a people-to-people cultural bridge between the U.S. and China as Monkey King, who is such a beloved figure, resonates across so many Asian communities here and in Asia."

To learn how you can support the world premiere of *The Monkey King*, please contact Donor Services at [donorservices@sfopera.com](mailto:donorservices@sfopera.com) or (415) 565-3212 or visit [sfopera.com/monkey-king-circle](http://sfopera.com/monkey-king-circle).

### FOCUS ON PARSIFAL

In anticipation of San Francisco Opera's new production of *Parsifal* (opening October 25), The Wagner Society of Northern California will present two lectures designed to bring you deeper into Richard Wagner's masterpiece. Writer, musician and former Zen Buddhist monk Paul Schofield presents "The Redeemer Reborn: *Parsifal* as the Fifth Opera of Wagner's Ring" on Saturday, October 18 at 1 p.m. as a Zoom webinar. Then, on November 1 at 1 p.m., Stanford University Professor Emeritus of Music Thomas Grey presents "Outside/Inside: Sacred Spaces in *Parsifal*" at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco. For more information, visit [wagnersf.org](http://wagnersf.org).



San Francisco Opera's  
1964 production of *Parsifal*  
with Giorgio Tozzi as Gurnemanz,  
Sandor Konya as Parsifal,  
and Irene Dalis as Kundry.  
PETE PETERS



# The Monkey King Circle

Join *The Monkey King* Giving Circle, and be a part of an extraordinary journey! In fall 2025, San Francisco Opera premieres a new opera by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang, inspired by the timeless tale: *Journey to the West*. Your support will help bring this iconic story to life on stage, filled with mythical adventures, rich cultural history, and stunning music. As a member, you'll receive exclusive benefits that will transport you behind the scenes of this groundbreaking production.



**MONKEY NATION** \$60  
(Followers of the Monkey King)  
• Commemorative pin  
• Digital recognition  
• Soloist annual giving benefits



**BUDDHA/SUBHUTI** \$300  
(Enlightened teacher and Guide)  
*Previous level benefits plus:*  
• Recognition in the program book  
• Invitation for two to a special event at the Asian Art Museum  
• All Supporting annual giving benefits



**GUANYIN** \$1,200  
(Deity of compassion and mercy)  
*Previous level benefits plus:*  
• Invitation for two to the final dress rehearsal and pre-opera talk with the artistic team  
• Special gift at the final dress rehearsal  
• All Leading annual giving benefits



**JADE EMPEROR** \$6,000  
(Ruler of the Celestial Realm)  
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• Invitation for two to an Opening Night Celebration Dinner – **AT CAPACITY\***  
• All Medallion annual giving benefits

(Non-deductible value \$410)



**MONKEY KING/SUN WUKONG** \$12,000  
(Legendary hero)  
*Previous level benefits plus:*  
• Two tickets to the Opening Night performance – **AT CAPACITY\***  
• Invitation for two to the Opening Night Cast Party  
• All Bronze annual giving benefits

(Non-deductible value \$682)

\*Please contact [events@sfopera.com](mailto:events@sfopera.com) if you would like to be placed on a waitlist.

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Armanino LLP, *Independent Public Accountants*

UCSF doctors:

Dr. George Rutherford

Dr. Robert Harrison

Dr. Sanziana Roman

Asero Insurance Services, *Insurance Brokers*

Cory Weaver, *Official Photographer*

Yamaha is the Official Piano of San Francisco Opera

Pianos supplied by Piedmont Piano

# 2025-26 Artists

## PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Raymond Aceto  
Georgiana Adams+†  
*Javier Arrey*  
Jamie Barton  
Tanja Ariane Baumgartner\*  
Aleksy Bogdanov+  
J'Nai Bridges  
William Lee Bryan  
Charmaine Butcher\*■  
*Cheryl Cain*  
Danielle Cheiken\*  
*Kelly Chase*■  
Peixin Chen\*  
*Shuqi Cong*■  
*Catherine Cook*+  
Logan Cook\*  
Caroline Corrales+†  
Chris Costanz\*  
Zachary Cowan\*  
*Brandon DiPaola*  
Amartuvshin Enkhbat  
*Anders Froehlich*  
John Fulton  
*Carla Gallardo*  
Rod Gilfry  
Kevin Gino  
Susan Graham+  
*Thomas Hall*  
Jongwon Han†  
*Yuntong Han*  
Stella Hannock  
*Harlan Hays*  
Connor Herrmann  
Jackson Horton\*  
Mary Hoskins+†  
Christopher Jackson  
*Silvie Jensen*  
Brandon Jovanovich  
Joo Won Kang+  
*Wilford Kelly*  
Samuel Kidd+†  
Konu Kim  
Thomas Kinch+†  
*Bojan Knezevic*+  
Anna Kosiarek\*  
Laura Krumm+  
*Eric Levintow*  
*Joseph Lim*

Daniela Mack+  
*Sophia Maekawa*  
Jana McIntyre\*+  
Ryan McKinny  
Liesl McPherrin  
*Niko Min*  
*Amber Monroe*+  
*David Adam Moore*  
Sally Mouzon  
Brian Mulligan  
*Christopher Nachtrab*  
Nikolas Nackley  
*Sarah Nadreau*  
*Antonio Nagore*  
William O'Neill  
Christopher Oglesby+  
*Andrew Pardini*  
Jusung Gabriel Park\*  
*Yulan Piao*  
Chester Pidduck  
*Laurel Porter*  
Nikola Printz+  
*Ben Reisinger*  
Brittany Renee  
*Kindra Scharich*  
Chad Shelton  
Philip Skinner+  
Olivia Smith+†  
Jonathan Smucker  
David Soar  
Whitney Steele  
Falk Struckmann  
Elisa Sunshine+  
*Jesslyn Thomas*  
Ryan Torres\*  
Marcos Vedovetto■  
*Sebastian Villalobos*  
Kang Wang\*  
Samuel White+†  
Hongni Wu  
*Wei Wu*  
*WooYoung Yoon*+  
Kwangchul Youn  
Yongzhao Yu\*  
Adela Zaharia  
Olivier Zerouali+†  
Huiwang Zhang\*■  
Mei Gui Zhang+

## CONDUCTORS

Eun Sun Kim  
Carolyn Kuan\*  
Benjamin Manis  
Patrick Summers+

## PRODUCTION

Keith Warner

## STAGE DIRECTORS

Katrina Bachus\*  
José Maria Condemi+  
Leonard Foglia  
Matthew Ozawa  
Diane Paulus\*  
Roy Rallo  
Basil Twist\*

## CHOREOGRAPHERS

Rena Butler  
Jamie Guan\*  
Ann Yee\*

## KEY:

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

# Chorus

**John Keene**, *Chorus Director*  
**Fabrizio Corona**, *Associate Chorus Master*

## REGULAR CHORUS

William Lee BryanΩ	Silvie JensenΩ	Liesl McPherrinΩ
Anders Froehlich	Sally MouzonΩ	Angela Eden Moser
John FultonΩ	Sarah Nadreau	Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Harlan Hays	Erin Neff	Jesslyn Thomas
Nikolas NackleyΩ	Laurel Porter	C. Michael BelleΩ
Andrew Thomas PardiniΩ	Whitney SteeleΩ	Alan Cochran
Wilford Kelly	Jacque Wilson	Kevin GinoΩ
Bojan Knezevic+ William O'NeillΩ	Nadima Avakian	Christopher Jackson
William Pickersgill	Kathleen Bayler	Michael JankoskyΩ
Samuel Rabinowitz	Cheryl Cain	Eric Levintow
Buffy Baggot	Danielle CheikenΩ	Antonio Nagore
Janet Campbell	Hannah Cho+	Philip Pickens
Edith Dowd	Sara Colburn	Chester PidduckΩ
Stella HannockΩ	Crystal Kim	Jonathan Smucker
	Josephine Lee	Andrew Truett

## EXTRA CHORUS

Callum Alden	Leandra Ramm
Spencer Dodd	Dewey Reikofski
Elliott JG Encarnación	Clifton Romig
Luis González	Chung-Wai Soong
Matt Hidalgo	Lee Steward
David Kekuewa	Paul Thompson
Michael Jesse Kuo	Taylor Thompson
Yitao Lin	Carmello Tringali
Benjamin Liupaogo	Troy Turriate
Joachim Luis	Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst
Justin Marsh	Lawrence Venza
Michael Orlinsky	Nicholas Volkert
Alexander John Perkins	Daniel Yoder
Valery Portnov	

√ Chorus member on leave of absence  
Ω Solo Role

## SAN FRANCISCO GIRLS CHORUS

**Valérie Sainte-Agathe**, *Artistic Director*

Avery Brandstetter •	Samsara Druzak	Paloma Siliezar
Elena Carvajal	Jessie Li	Ellie Wong
Sofia Rose DeLuca	Gitanjali Menon	

## SAN FRANCISCO BOYS CHORUS

**Ian Robertson**, *Artistic Director* • **Todd Jolly**, *Intermediate Chorus Director*

Landon Chai	Giovanni Mendoza	Jacob Rainow
Logan Cook	Niko Min	Dayton Thomas
Solah Malik	West Pinckaers	

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American Federation of Musicians, Local 6  
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The Art Directors Guild & Scenic, Title and Graphic Artists Local 800

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





# Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

## FIRST VIOLIN

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

## SECOND VIOLIN

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

## VIOLA

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

## CELLO

Sunny Yang, *Principal*  
Thalia Moore, *Associate Principal*Σ  
Peter Myers, *Assistant Principal*  
Nora Pirquet↓  
Emil Miland  
Jung-Hsuan Ko  
Ruth Lane  
Saul Richmond-Rakerd↑

## BASS

Joseph Lescher, *Principal*  
Jonathan Lancelle,  
*Associate Principal*  
William Wasson,  
*Acting Assistant Principal*  
Shinji Eshima  
Sean O'Hara↑

## FLUTE

Julie McKenzie, *Principal*↓  
Stephanie McNab, *Acting Principal*  
Susan KangΣ↑  
Michelle Caimotto↑

## PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab  
Susan Kang↑

## OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*  
Gabriel Young, *Associate Principal*Σ  
Benjamin Brogadir  
Rachel Ahn↑

## ENGLISH HORN

Benjamin Brogadir

## CLARINET

José González Granero, *Principal*  
Rebecca Tobin KrissmanΣ↑  
Junghwan Lee↑

## BASS CLARINET

Junghwan Lee↑

## BASSOON

Rufus Olivier, *Principal*  
Daniel MacNeillΣ  
Shawn Jones↑

## CONTRABASSOON

Shawn Jones↑

## FRENCH HORN

Kevin Rivard, *Principal*  
Phillip Palmore  
Brian McCarty, *Associate Principal*  
Logan BryckΣ  
Anthony Delivanis↑

## TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*  
Scott Macomber↑  
John Pearson

## TROMBONE

Michael Cox, *Acting Principal*  
Samuel Wamhoff↑  
David Ridge

## BASS TROMBONE

David Ridge, *Principal*

## TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman, *Principal*

## TIMPANI

John Burgardt, *Principal*

## PERCUSSION

Patricia Niemi, *Principal*  
Victor AvdienkoΣ

## HARP

Eleanor Kirk, *Acting Principal*

## ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS

Bryndon Hassman, *Piano*

## LIBRARIAN

Carrie Weick

↓ Leave of absence

Σ Principal for one or more

Summer season operas

↑ Season Substitute

# Corps Dancers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

Brett Conway↔  
Esther de Monteflores  
Jamielyn Duggan↔  
Alexandra FitzGibbon▯  
Blanche Hampton↔  
Emily Hansel  
Bryan Ketron↓  
Livanna Maislen  
Coral Martin▯  
Micah Moch▯  
Christopher Nachtrab↔  
Jessica Nguyen

Fred C Riley III  
Chiharu Shibata↔  
Gabrielle Sprauve  
Marcos Vedovetto↔■  
Sid Zhang

↔ Tenured  
↓ Tenured Dancer  
on Leave of Absence  
▯ Resident Corps  
■ Solo Role

# Supernumeraries

## *Rigoletto*

Mark Burstein • Richard Casse • Misha Derkavski  
Michael Pinell • Ross Uchimura

## *Dead Man Walking*

Susan August • Roman Chavez • Tiffany Cheng  
Stacey Chien • Maria Dulmage • Karsten Guthridge  
Maia Harris • Lori Head • Dieter Hellmoldt  
Sandi Ippolito • Bernadette Janet • Pierre Jones  
David Knapp • Andrew Korniej • Alan LoFaso  
Holly MacCormick • Josh Marron • Evelyn Martinez  
Julio Martinez • Michael Pinell • Mason Roberts  
Anthony Sabedra • Fernando Sanchez-Riera • Derrick Scott  
Lee Taubeneck • Kimberly Thompson • Ross Uchimura  
Laurel Winzler • Sarah Yune • Frank Zepeda

# Backstage Personnel

## COSTUME SHOP

Jai Alltizer (25), *Costume Shop Manager*  
Galen Till (21),

*Senior Production Supervisor*  
Manuel Gutierrez (26),  
*Production Coordinator*  
Robyn Marsh, *Costume Supervisor*  
Sally Thomas (25), *Head Tailor*  
Amy Ashton-Keller (31), *Head Draper*  
Nika Cassaro, Emma Lehman (10),  
Santiago Suanes (15), *Drapers*  
Paula Wheeler (33), *Senior Milliner*  
Amy Van Every (41),  
*Senior Dyer/Painter*  
Karen Lewis, *Dyer/Painter*  
Jersey McDermott (26),

*Senior Craftsperson/Shoe Specialist*  
Edward Fonseca (14), Ralph Hoy,  
Kelly Koehn, Kaitlyn Patrick,  
Christina Weiland, *Craftpersons*  
Kristen Tracy (17), *Assistant Cutter*  
Julia Colvard, Taylor Newell, Niko Suits,  
*First Hand*  
Victoria Mortimer, *Costume Assistant*  
Teddy Rose Baker, Sophia Gallegos,  
*Shoppers*

## COSTUME TECHNICIANS

Miriam Acosta, Cassandra Carpenter,  
Simone Brooks, Karla Fix,  
Hoa Fong (26), Jaya Grace Goheen,  
Ashley Grambow, Kathy Griffith,  
Gillian Haratani (13), Aki Hasegawa,  
Meg Horan, Arianna B. Jones,  
Megan Luby, Sara Morimoto (12),  
Mikael Nohai, Jane Smith,  
Hannah Velichko, Alexae Visel,  
Sarah Ellen Wilson, Robert Whitehurst

## WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

### CORE CREW

Nicolas Chacon,  
Linda Edwards (27)  
Edward Fonseca (14)  
Lorraine Lewis (13)  
Phil Perry (28)  
Leona Schrader-Dee  
Don Smith (29)  
Scott Stewart (25)  
Kirsten Tucker (22)  
Amber Vo

### DRESSERS

Paula Barish,  
Kathleen Blake (13), Ash Cable,  
Corrida Carr, Kathleen Crowley,  
Megan Gulla, Aki Hasegawa,  
Claudia Holaday (46), Ralph Hoy,  
Michael Kruzich, Jeffery Larsen,  
Emma Mueller, Rachell Nichols,  
Mark Saladino

## WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP DEPARTMENT

### SENIOR WIG ARTISTS

Erin Hennessy (12)  
Maur Sela (10)

### WIG ARTISTS

Calli Carvajal  
Lindsay Saier

### SHOW CALL FOREPERSONS

Sarah Coy  
Christina Martin (12)  
Lindsay Saier

### PRINCIPAL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Vanessa Blanchard Lee,  
Calli Carvajal, Sarah Coy,  
Karalynne Fiebig (12),  
Denise Gutierrez (42),  
Chri Holmgren-Greene,  
Toby Mayer (34), Christina Martin (12),  
Gloria Mueller, Naki Mugambi,  
Leilani Norman, Y. Sharon Peng,  
Lisa Patnoe (34), Lindsay Saier,  
Tim Santry (34)

### SHOW CALL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Shana Astrachan,  
Vanessa Blanchard Lee,  
Kristen Campbell, Calli Carvajal,  
Sarah Coy, Marisela Garcia,  
Denise Gutierrez (42),  
Erin Hennessy (12),  
Chri Holmgren-Greene,  
Raegina Joyner, Amber Lauder milk,  
Christina Martin (12),  
Toby Mayer (34), Gloria Mueller,  
Naki Mugambi, Robert Mrazik (19),  
Leilani Norman, Lisa Patnoe (34),  
Y. Sharon Peng, Jordan Plath,  
Lindsay Saier, Maur Sela, Sophia Smith,  
Kimberly Virgen

### SCENE SHOP

Jay Cazel  
Jack Davis  
Dennis Forry  
Christian Martinez  
Dylan Maxson  
Loren Patterson  
Michael Ramirez  
Victor Sanchez (28)

### SCENIC ART DEPARTMENT

Lauren Abrams, Jennifer Bennes,  
Melissa Ficociello, Katie Wertz,  
Sara Wilhelmi

## CARPENTRY DEPARTMENT

Jesse Austin  
Alberto Beltran  
Lucy Briggs  
Gabriel Castellani (15),  
*Automation Key*  
Michael Chapman (13), *Key*  
Jack Davis  
Paul Delatorre (26), *Key*  
Jacob Elliott  
Hunter Erbach  
Tony Garcia  
Karla Hargrave  
Geoffrey R. Heron (19)  
Geoffrey W. Heron (31), *Key*  
Philip Heron (23),  
*Automation and Rigging Foreperson*  
Ed Joe (21), *Warehouse Foreperson*

Rahgen Hill  
Nick Kukielka  
Michael Martino  
Anna McGriff  
Alex Meyer  
Ben Miller  
Harry Niedzwetzki (33)  
Jesse Nugent  
John O'Donnell (37), *Key Flyperson*  
Enrique Pronio  
Michael Ramirez  
James Ryan  
Michael Ryan  
Eila Saarni, *Key*  
Gregory Shaff (37), *Key*  
Harper Shipley, *Assistant Key*  
Cyrus Sindich  
Derek Snediker  
Sean Walden (14), *Assistant Key*  
Randy Walsh (23), *Key*  
Sammy Wong

## PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Scott J. Barringer (25), *Key*  
Amy Boussard  
Christy Carter  
Jay Cazel  
James Eldredge (21), *Shop Mechanic*  
Oris Fry  
Tim Heaney  
Jane Henderson  
Patricia Hewett (18), *Assistant Key*  
Myron Seth Isaacs (25), *Key*  
Mark Kotschnig (23), *Key*  
John Matlock, *Assistant Key*  
Baylie Olson  
Beth Ozarow (29), *Out of House Key*  
Sarah Shores (18), *Shop Mechanic*  
Mae Toone  
Morgan Womble-Dahl

## ELECTRICS DEPARTMENT

Eugene Ahn (12), *Gel Room*  
Samir Arora, *Key Projectionist*  
John Boatwright (38),  
*House Head Electrician*  
Ariel Bott, *Assistant Key Stage Left*  
Danielle Colburn  
Henry Cotter  
Erik Docktor (18), *Projection Programmer*  
Amy Domjan, *Layout Electrician*  
Mark Gilmore, *Projection Programmer*  
Will Grunig (23)  
Robert Haycock, *Key Stage Right*  
Geoffrey W. Heron (16), *Pyro Technician*  
Bernard Honigman (26),  
*Key Light Board Operator*  
Karen Jine  
Brendan Kierans (12),  
*Electric Shop Foreperson*  
Sophie Landau  
Maria Mendoza (37), *Projection Coordinator*  
Lloyd Murphy, *Key Projectionist*  
Baylie Olsen  
Jonathan Philpott-Kenny  
Glenn Quilici, *Assistant Key Stage Right*  
Kevin Quintero  
Matthew Reynolds  
William Rodriguez  
Kirt Siders, *Data Administrator*  
Andrew Sproule (26), *Key Stage Left*  
Jax Steager,  
*Assistant Key Light Board Operator*

## AUDIO DEPARTMENT

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

## MEDIA DEPARTMENT

Claude Bauschinger, *Video Editor*  
Tom Banducci  
Ray Gilberti  
Doug Hunt  
Mitch Kell  
Michael Santy  
Brian Shimetz  
Uwe Willenbacher (17), *Audio Editor*

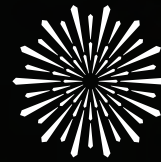
## STUDIO TEACHERS

Donnell Barnes, Carolyn Crimley,  
Rhona Gordon, Lua Hadar, Martha Harris,  
Stacy Heniser, Jamie Keller,  
Karen Kindig, Laila Vatanka

## WRANGLERS

Marion Agranovsky, Alexandra Armstead,  
Gwyneth Hadfield, Kate Juliana,  
Jonah Malamud, Haley May,  
Eleanor Murphy-Weise

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



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SCAN TO GIVE



Photo: San Francisco Opera's 2025 production of *Idomeneo* by Cory Weaver.



# San Francisco Opera Orchestra



**Kay Stern**  
Concertmaster



**Maya Cohon**  
Associate  
Concertmaster



**Heidi Wilcox**  
Assistant  
Concertmaster



**Jennifer Cho**  
First Violin



**Dawn Harms**  
First Violin



**Mariya Borozina**  
First Violin



**Naoko Nakajima**  
First Violin



**Barbara Riccardi**  
First Violin



**Dian Zhang**  
First Violin



**Leonid Igudesman**  
First Violin



**Jennifer Hsieh**  
First Violin



**Asuka Annie Yano**  
First Violin



**Jeremy Preston**  
Principal  
Second Violin



**Martha Simonds**  
Associate Principal  
Second Violin



**Beni Shinohara**  
Assistant Principal  
Second Violin



**Leslie Ludena**  
Second Violin



**Ka-Yeon Lee**  
Second Violin



**Aya Kiyonaga**  
Second Violin



**Craig Reiss**  
Second Violin



**Carla Maria Rodrigues**  
Principal  
Viola



**Joy Fellows**  
Associate Principal  
Viola



**Stephen Goist**  
Acting Assistant  
Principal Viola



**Natalia Vershilova**  
Viola



**Lindan Burns**  
Viola



**Emily Liu**  
Viola↑



**Elizabeth Prior**  
Viola↑



**Thalia Moore**  
Associate Principal  
Cello



**Peter Myers**  
Assistant Principal  
Cello



**Nora Pirquet**  
Acting Assistant  
Principal Cello



**Emil Miland**  
Cello



**Jung-Hsuan Ko**  
Cello



**Ruth Lane**  
Cello



**Joseph Lescher**  
Principal  
Bass



**Jonathan Lancelle**  
Associate Principal  
Bass



**Shinji Eshima**  
Bass

↑ Season Substitute

## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



**William Wasson**  
Bass



**Julie McKenzie**  
Principal  
Flute



**Stephanie McNab**  
Acting Principal  
Flute & Piccolo



**Susan Kang**  
Flute↑



**Mingjia Liu**  
Principal  
Oboe



**Gabriel Young**  
Associate Principal  
Oboe



**Benjamin Brogadir**  
English Horn



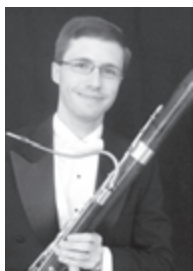
**José González  
Granero**  
Principal Clarinet



**Junghwan Lee**  
Bass Clarinet↑



**Rufus Olivier**  
Principal  
Bassoon



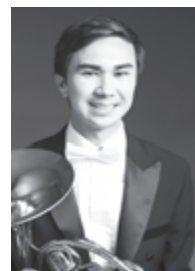
**Daniel MacNeill**  
Bassoon



**Shawn Jones**  
Bassoon/  
Contrabassoon↑



**Kevin Rivard**  
Principal  
Horn



**Phillip Palmore**  
Horn



**Brian McCarty**  
Associate Principal  
Horn



**Logan Bryck**  
Utility Horn



**Adam Luftman**  
Principal  
Trumpet



**Scott Macomber**  
Trumpet↑



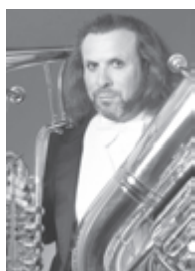
**John Pearson**  
Trumpet



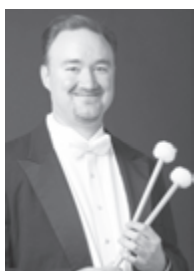
**Michael Cox**  
Acting Principal  
Trombone



**David Ridge**  
Principal  
Bass Trombone



**Zachariah Spellman**  
Tuba



**John Burgardt**  
Timpani



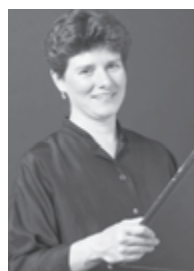
**Patricia Niemi**  
Acting Principal  
Percussion



**Victor Avdienko**  
Percussion↑



**Tracy Davis**  
Orchestra Manager



**Carrie Weick**  
Librarian

*Not pictured:*

*Heeguen Song (Second Violin)↑*

*Jungin Yang (Principal Cello)*

*Sean O'Hara (Bass)↑*

*Michelle Caimotto (Flute)↑*

*Rebecca Tobin Krissman (Clarinet)↑*

*Anthony Delivanis (Horn)↑*

*Samuel Wamhoff (Trombone)↑*

*Eleanor Kirk (Principal Harp)*

*Kevin Myers (Orchestra Operations Manager)*

↑ Season Substitute



# San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



**Nadima Avakian**  
Soprano



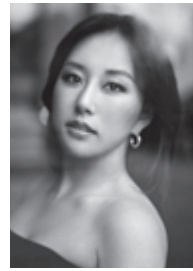
**Kathleen Bayler**  
Soprano



**Cheryl Cain**  
Soprano



**Danielle Cheiken**  
Soprano



**Hannah Cho**  
Soprano



**Sara Colburn**  
Soprano



**Crystal Kim**  
Soprano



**Josephine Lee**  
Soprano



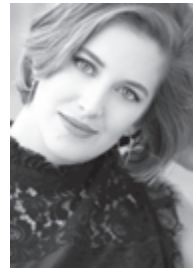
**Liesl McPherrin**  
Soprano



**Angela Eden Moser**  
Soprano



**Elisabeth Rom Lucio**  
Soprano



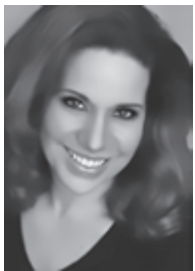
**Jesslyn Thomas**  
Soprano



**Buffy Baggott**  
Mezzo-Soprano



**Janet Campbell**  
Mezzo-Soprano



**Edith Dowd**  
Mezzo-Soprano



**Stella Hannock**  
Mezzo-Soprano



**Silvie Jensen**  
Mezzo-Soprano



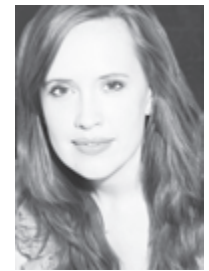
**Sally Mouzon**  
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Jamielyn Duggan



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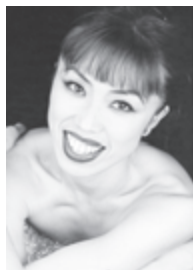
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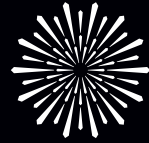
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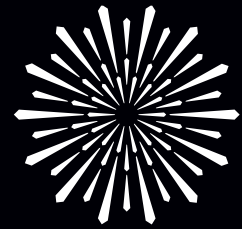
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<sup>5</sup> deceased ★North Star Circle

# Journeying to the Extremes of Human Emotion

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

*"Don't say a word. Let me look at you. See, I'm smiling at you. Smiling and remembering a little boy. My Joe. ... Yes. That's what I'm rememb'ring. I still see him in you, that little boy. I always will. No goodbyes now. Look. I'm still smiling."*

These are the words sung by Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, mother to a convicted killer as she says her final farewell to her son before his execution in *Dead Man Walking*. Saying goodbye to a child about to be executed is a situation that hopefully none of us will ever be in, but it stands as an expression of humanity at its most raw, its most vulnerable, its most painful. Whatever one's beliefs about capital punishment, this is a moment of a person tested to the limits, transcending the political, moral or even spiritual. This is a mother saying a last goodbye to her son. A parent having to do the unthinkable.

This reminds me of the visceral, harrowing moments in *Innocence* on our stage in 2024. There we entered into the impossible emotional toll of the parents of a young man who had killed ten students and a teacher. Like the anguish of Mrs. Patrick De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking*, the emotions of these parents are almost impossible to represent. They are too complex, too encumbered with moral dilemma, too fraught with pain. How do we examine compassion for the parents of a killer, let alone the killer themselves?

The opera house is one of the few places where we can explore extreme examples of humans tested to the limit: a "virtual reality" exploration of emotion in ways that can feel intensely real.

It may seem that it is only with recent operatic subjects like *Dead Man Walking* or *Innocence* that we can examine this complex, anguished side of humanity. Certainly, these are subjects that push boundaries in particularly acute ways. But this spotlight on the painful knot of human emotion has been a defining aspect of opera since its inception. In music of prior centuries that is now seen as beautiful and harmonious, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the grit, the bite, the pain that was there for audiences of its time, and that can still be found today.

Rigoletto's massive monologue, "Cortigiani," in the second act of the opera is a powerful example. It is the expression of a man ostracized by the world, without agency, forced to beg his 'superiors' for the return of the one thing in the world that brings him joy: his only daughter, knowing that she is being abused behind doors that he is not able to enter. It is a monologue that begins full of rage but that morphs into a pained entreaty of a parent at the absolute brink of desperation. Like Mrs. Patrick De Rocher, we see a parent in a completely unthinkable situation, one filled with moral complexity (Rigoletto has made enemies of all those he now entreats), but that ultimately comes down to the primal roar of pain of a parent knowing that their child is being hurt.

Opera allows us behind these extraordinarily private doors of human emotion, and lets us experience, in a space of psychological safety, a little of what it is like to be thrust into the darkest pains of human existence. That is one of the reasons we come back time and time again. In the theater we can put on the mask of tragedy for a few hours, and emerge in a deepened state of empathy for the extremes of what humans must, at times, endure.

The last time we produced *Rigoletto* in 2017, I was joined by a family with three young children, aged 8-12. They asked me before the performance to explain the opera. I quickly found myself tongue-tied, trying to explain to young children what an assassin was; trying to explain the duke's attitude to women. The adult nature of the story became painfully clear! But then I watched these three children watching the opera. They were transfixed and understood it completely. They grappled with these complex, adult emotions at a primal, emotive level and, in that, left with a deeper understanding of the world they were growing into.

The opera stage has the capacity to engender empathy, even in the most harrowing of realities. And, in that, it allows us to explore the farthest reaches of our humanity. 🌱

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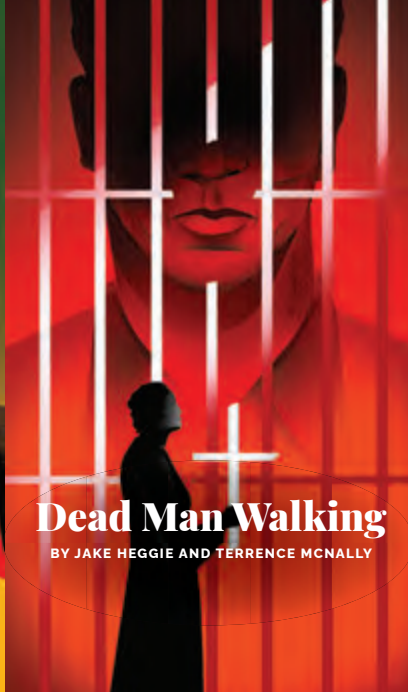
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## Rigoletto

BY GIUSEPPE VERDI



## Dead Man Walking

BY JAKE HEGGIE AND TERRENCE McNALLY



## Parsifal

BY RICHARD WAGNER



## The Monkey King

猴王悟空

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