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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2025



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Beethoven 5 & Falla

Van Cleef & Arpels

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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Vol. 103, No. 4 • 2025–26 Season • November 2025

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Parsifal

MUSIC AND LIBRETTTO BY RICHARD WAGNER

Structure: 3 acts, with two intermissions

Running time: 4 hours, 50 minutes

Language: Sung in German with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Parsifal*, a naive youth who stumbles upon the Knights of the Grail and begins a journey of enlightenment
- *Kundry*, a mysterious woman who both seduces the knights in service to Klingsor and helps the knights by bringing relief to Amfortas
- *Amfortas*, the Grail king who suffers from a wound that can only be healed by redemption
- *Gurnemanz*, a wise, elder knight, determined to uphold the traditions of the Grail
- *Klingsor*, a former knight who erred and turned to the dark side, now set on destroying the knights

Richard Wagner's final work, *Parsifal* (1882), occupied the composer for nearly 37 years, thereby benefiting from the many

creative breakthroughs he made while working on *Tristan und Isolde* (1859) and his ambitious, four-opera *The Ring of the Nibelung* (1876). Inspired by his readings of medieval Germanic epics, Wagner melded Arthurian legends with a Christian narrative and Buddhist philosophy to create a deeply contemplative theatrical experience. The score marks the apex of the composer's paradigm-shaping craft, with its soundscape of textures and melodic themes that intensify the emotional resonance of this story about finding enlightenment through compassion.

Did you know?

Wagner composed *Parsifal* for the unique acoustic environment of his theater in the small Bavarian town of Bayreuth; performances were not permitted elsewhere. On Christmas Eve 1903, 21 years after the premiere of *Parsifal*, impresario Heinrich Conried controversially presented it at the Metropolitan Opera. Following the unsanctioned American premiere, a national tour, including performances in San Francisco in 1905, created a Parsifalmania that fascinated the nation for several seasons. Wagner's enigmatic and nearly 5-hour masterpiece was, for a time, a viral, popular culture phenomenon.

Beethoven 5 & Falla Concert

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Born: December 16, 1770. Bonn, Germany

Died: March 26, 1827. Vienna, Austria

Symphony No. 5 in C minor, Op. 67 (1808)

Premiere: December 22, 1808

Duration: Approximately 35 minutes

Instrumentation: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings

MANUEL DE FALLA

Born: November 23, 1876. Cádiz, Spain

Died: November 14, 1946. Alta Gracia, Argentina

Siete Canciones Populares Españolas
(Seven Popular Spanish Songs) (1914)

Premiere: January 14, 1915, featuring singer Luisa Vela with Falla at the piano at the Ateneo in Madrid, Spain.

Duration: Approximately 14 minutes

Instrumentation: 2 flutes, oboe, english horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, timpani, harp, strings

El Sombrero de Tres Picos (The Three-Cornered Hat), Suite No. 2 (1919)

Premiere: (Ballet): July 22, 1919, under the French title *Le Tricorne* at the Alhambra Theatre, London, UK.

Duration: Approximately 12 minutes

Instrumentation: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, english horn, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, 5 percussion, piano, celeste, harp, strings

Did you know?

Manuel de Falla derived most of the material for his Suite No. 2 from the three primary movements or dances of his 1919 ballet, *El Sombrero de Tres Picos (The Three-Cornered Hat)*: Neighbor's Dance (Seguidillas), Miller's Dance (Farruca), and the Final Dance (Jota). Missing from the Suite's second movement is Falla's original quote of the famous four-note "fate" theme from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. In tonight's performance, Music Director Eun Sun Kim adds to the second movement of the Suite music from Falla's original ballet score so that audiences can hear this musical homage to Beethoven's masterwork.

Skip the Line, and Enjoy!

Avoid lines
during
intermission.
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at any
concession
location
before the
performance.



2025–26 Season

Chicago Symphony Orchestra Riccardo Muti, *conductor*

One night only! Revered conductor Riccardo Muti and his beloved Chicago Symphony Orchestra reconvene in Berkeley for a program of orchestral gems by Brahms, Stravinsky, and Ravel.

Jan 17
ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY

Samantha Hankey, *mezzo-soprano* Myra Huang, *piano*

Known for her compelling stage presence and lustrous tone, American mezzo-soprano Samantha Hankey makes her Cal Performances' debut with a program of lieder and popular favorites, including Robert Schumann's beloved *Dichterliebe* cycle and songs by Poulenc, Satie, Kurt Weill, and Cole Porter.

Jan 18
HERTZ HALL, BERKELEY



Joyce DiDonato, *mezzo-soprano* Time for Three *Emily – No Prisoner Be*

The superstar mezzo-soprano's latest program, an all-star collaboration with Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Kevin Puts and Grammy-winning chamber ensemble Time for Three, is a series of intimate songs based on the deeply touching poetry of Emily Dickinson.

Feb 7
ZELLERBACH HALL, BERKELEY



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WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to San Francisco Opera! This fall we raise the curtain on one of the most important works in the repertoire: *Parsifal*. Wagner had such reverence for his final dramatic work that he didn't call it an opera but rather a sacred festival stage play. Conceived over nearly forty years and written for Wagner's purpose-designed opera house in Bayreuth, *Parsifal* was the culmination of a lifetime of exploration in which Wagner reimagined the possibilities of the stage and reformulated the very language of music. *Parsifal* has not been in San Francisco since 2000, and its presentation this year marks an important undertaking for the Company.

Our general director, Matthew Shilvock, has talked about being on a quest to find the right *Parsifal* for this moment. *Parsifal* is a once-in-a-generation event, and it is a work of such spiritual potential. The Company wanted to find a production that would resonate in a deep and lasting way. After scouring the world and not finding the right production for this house, we determined to conceive a new production for you, the San Francisco Opera audience. It has been exciting to see how the stars have aligned: a new production, generously supported by a number of extraordinary donors; our music director, Eun Sun Kim, whose Wagnerian journey here has been reverberating so beautifully over the past few years; a director deeply committed to connecting eastern and western traditions, Matthew Ozawa (*Barber Drive In*, *Fidelio*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*); and a cast of some of the finest Wagnerians in the world today.

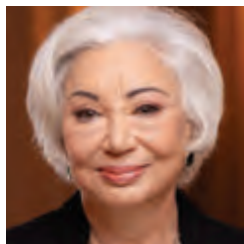
There are very few companies in America that produce Wagner on a regular basis and even fewer able to create a brand-new production of Wagner's epic final work. We are fortunate here in San Francisco to have both the creative talents and the generous donor support to bring to life such a monumental piece. We are so proud of the caliber of artistry evident in this theater and so grateful to you for your support of creativity at the highest levels of excellence.

This theater is a space where we come together in shared exploration of who we are and how we find our way through the world. *Parsifal* is one of the most profound lenses through which we can explore those questions. Thank you for being here and for taking this journey together.

With gratitude,



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



Jack Calhoun
President
San Francisco Opera Association



San Francisco Opera Association

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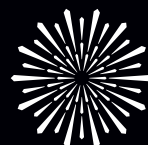
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Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

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*Check sfopera.com/dine to confirm opening times for your performance date.

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

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

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

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

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

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

LARGE-PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSES

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

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

LIVE TITLES: TEXT-TO-VOICE SUPERTITLES

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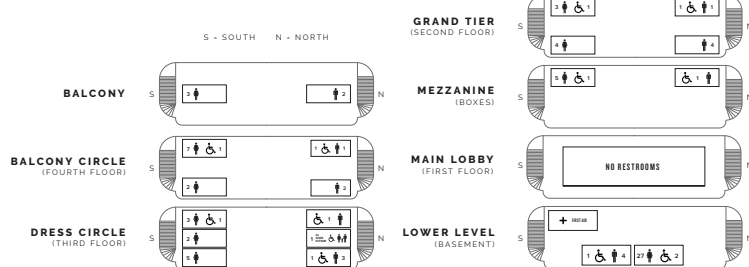
See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

LOST AND FOUND

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

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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.

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

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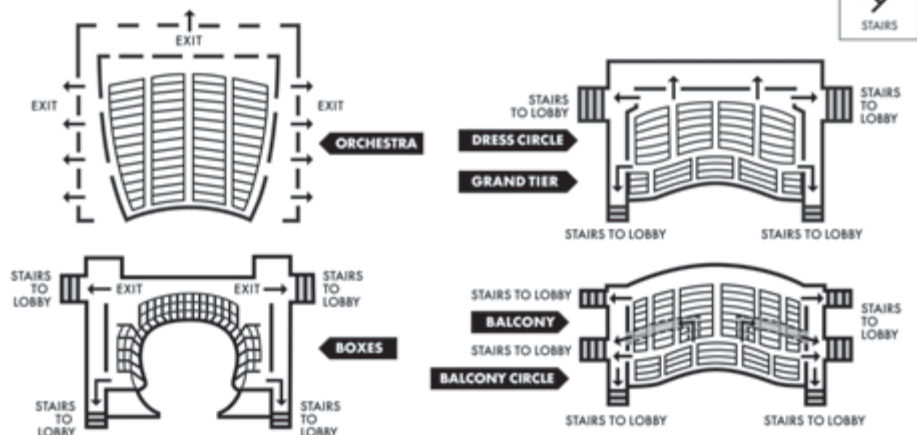
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SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE EXIT DIAGRAM



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

Production Sponsors, *Parsifal*



NOAH BERGER

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

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

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

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

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

The Rothschilds’ commitment to San Francisco Opera comes at a critical moment 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.”

Barbara A. Wolfe

Production Sponsor, *Parsifal*



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

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

John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn

Production Sponsors, *Parsifal*



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 world-class 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.

Donor Spotlight



Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem (Production Sponsor, *Beethoven 5 & Falla*)

Jan and Maria Manetti Shrem each cultivated an appreciation for opera from a young age, even though they grew up continents apart. Before establishing Clos Pegase Winery in Napa Valley, Jan Shrem worked in Japanese and European publishing. Maria Manetti Shrem achieved international recognition in the fashion industry, notably introducing luxury brands such as Gucci and Fendi to American retailers.

Their individual journeys eventually converged in San Francisco, where opera further intertwined their lives. After marrying in 2012, their shared passion for the arts led them to be committed Company Sponsors of San Francisco Opera for more than ten years. Jan and Maria have established four significant philanthropic funds: the Conductors Fund, supporting notable conductors in the orchestra pit; the Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund, which brings distinguished artists in Italian repertoire to local stages; the Emerging Stars Fund, dedicated to rising talent; and the Luminaries Concert Fund, which makes special concerts featuring legendary performers possible. Additionally, the Manetti Shrem couple had focused on philanthropic causes that advance education, the performing and visual arts, and medicine.

San Francisco Opera recognized Maria with The Spirit of the Opera Award in December 2022, and she received the 2023 UC Davis Medal for her outstanding commitments to the arts and education, where she made history with the largest donation ever to protect the arts and humanities in perpetuity by creating an Art District in January 2025. Jan Shrem, revered for his generosity and vision, passed away in September 2024 at the age of 94. Jan is remembered for his philanthropic spirit, and Maria carries the torch into San Francisco Opera's future.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jerome & Thao Dodson (Concert Sponsor, *Beethoven 5 & Falla*)

"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.

Donor Spotlight



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Louise Gund (Production Sponsor, *Parsifal*)

Louise Gund is an accomplished theater producer with a wide range of artistic talents. She has produced 12 Broadway plays and musicals, winning a Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for “All the Way,” and receiving three additional Tony Award nominations. A subscriber to San Francisco Opera since 2010, Louise has served on the Opera’s Board of Directors since 2013. She has also served on the boards of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Cal Performances, Earthjustice, and the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra. In addition to her major support of these organizations, she is an environmental activist and a staunch advocate on behalf of women’s and children’s issues. She was awarded the San Francisco Opera Spirit of the Opera Award in 2019 for devoted service to the Company and

was the inspiration behind the Opera’s Producers Circle. In the Fall of 2023, Louise had the vision to found the Opera’s Sixth Opera Fund and she will ensure the Company continues to produce at least six operas each year. Louise is passionate about enabling creativity to flourish, telling stories of meaning, and ensuring a vibrant future for the arts.



CREDIT

Dr. William & Mrs. Bridget Coughran Jr. (Production Sponsors, *Parsifal*)

Dr. William and Mrs. Bridget Coughran Jr. have been supporters of San Francisco Opera for a number of years, following their time in the New York metro area where they attended performances at the Metropolitan Opera. William has dedicated decades to the technology industry and, for the Opera, he serves on the board and held the position of treasurer during the challenging COVID period. They share a particular passion for Germanic composers such as Mozart and Wagner, believing that the profound emotion conveyed by opera offers a vital connection to our individual humanity.

Bel Canto Legacy Society Donor Spotlight

We are grateful to those who remember San Francisco Opera through a legacy gift. This crucial support strengthens and ensures the future of the Opera. We are delighted to welcome those who set up a legacy gift as important members of our Bel Canto Legacy Society. For most gift types, there is no minimum amount. Please consider joining this extraordinary group. When you step forward, others are encouraged to do the same. To learn more, please contact legacygiving@sfoopera.com.

We recognize with deep appreciation the following Bel Canto Legacy Society members whose recent legacy gifts made a profound impact on the Company this season.



Gladyne Mitchell, *in honor of Mitchel L. & Emma K. Mitchell* (Endowment)

San Francisco Opera proudly honors Gladyne K. Mitchell, whose spirited advocacy and philanthropic legacy has elevated our company and enriched the cultural life of the city.

Gladyne believed deeply in giving during her lifetime. Known for her unwavering devotion to the Opera, Gladyne's lifetime contributions empowered our productions to reach new heights, underwriting ambitious performances and championing initiatives to engage diverse audiences. Her leadership as a benefactor ensured the financial stability that allowed innovation and artistic excellence to thrive on our stage year after year.

Gladyne was inspired early by her parents, Mitchel L. and Emma K. Mitchell. Their passion for music and civic engagement shaped Gladyne's commitment to supporting world-class performances and educational outreach. Gladyne passed away in December 2024. Her remarkable legacy gift was made in her parents' memory. They established a tradition of generosity that Gladyne continued at the highest level.



Helen Rae "Misty" Tyree

Misty Tyree lived her life with elegance, drive, and generosity. She and her husband Lee moved to San Francisco in 1981 and embraced the city's cultural life as their own. Misty became a devoted patron of San Francisco Opera, first subscribing in the late 1990s and returning as a subscriber in 2018. In 2020, she joined the Bel Canto Legacy Society, affirming her belief in sustaining the art form for the future.

Misty's world was wide. She built careers in teaching, publishing, and sales, and she gave her time and leadership to countless organizations, from preservation foundations and women's groups to cultural clubs and neighborhood associations. She was also a passionate traveler who reached a hundred countries, bringing home fresh perspective with each trip.

Her generosity extended to the institutions and people she loved most. In her passing, she left San Francisco Opera a remarkable estate gift that reflects both her vision and her deep affection for the Company. Misty's gift ensures that opera will continue to thrive in the city she called home for more than forty years.

The Endowment Fund

San Francisco honors those whose Endowment contributions, received through September 25, 2025, have generously provided the Company with the financial stability and assurance to be the most exciting force in opera today and in the future.

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The Act II setting of Klingsor's enchanted garden in San Francisco Opera's first production of Parsifal, which premiered on October 27, 1950. / STROHMEYER



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Beethoven 5 & Falla

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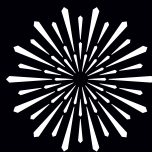
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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Beethoven 5 & Falla

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 2025 AT 7:30 PM

EUN SUN KIM, CONDUCTOR

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA • KAY STERN, CONCERTMASTER

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PROGRAM

MANUEL DE FALLA

Siete Canciones Populares Españolas (Seven Popular Spanish Songs)

- I. El paño moruno
- II. Seguidilla murciana
- III. Asturiana
- IV. Jota
- V. Nana
- VI. Canción
- VII. Polo

El Sombrero de Tres Picos (The Three-Cornered Hat), Suite No. 2

- I. Danza de los vecinos (Seguidillas)
- II. Danza del molinero (Farruca)
- III. Danza Final (Jota)

—INTERMISSION—

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

Symphony No. 5 in C Minor, Op. 67

- I. Allegro con brio
- II. Andante con moto
- III. Allegro
- IV. Allegro—Presto

Musical Preparation: **Matthew Piatt** • *Lighting Designer:* **Justin A. Partier**

Assistant Director: **Morgan Robinson** • *Stage Manager:* **Jonathan S. Campbell**

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The performance will last approximately one hour and thirty minutes, including 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.

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.

Texts and Translations

SIETE CANCIONES POPULARES ESPAÑOLAS

Traditional (Spanish)

I. El paño moruno

Al paño fino, en la tienda,
una mancha le cayó.

Por menos precio se vende,
porque perdió su valor.
¡Ay!

II. Seguidilla murciana

Cualquiera que el tejado
tenga de vidrio,
no debe tirar piedras
al del vecino.
Arrieros semos;
¡puede que en el camino,
nos encontremos!

Por tu mucha inconstancia,

yo te comparo
con peseta que corre
de mano en mano;
Que al fin se borra,
y créyendola falsa
nadie la toma!

III. Asturiana

Por ver si me consolaba,
arriméme a un pino verde,
Por verme llorar, lloraba.
Y el pino como era verde,
por verme llorar, lloraba!

IV. Jota

Dicen que no nos queremos,
porque no nos ven hablar.
A tu corazón y al mío
se lo pueden preguntar.

Ya me despido de tí,
de tu casa y tu ventana.
Y aunque no quiera tu madre,
Adiós, niña, hasta mañana.

SEVEN POPULAR SONGS

Translations by Martha Rodríguez-Salazar

The Moorish cloth

On the fine cloth in the store
a stain has fallen.

It sells for a lower price,
for it has lost its value.
Ay!

Seguidilla from Murcia

Anyone whose roof
is made of glass
shouldn't throw stones
at a neighbor's roof.
We are muleteers;
it may be that on the road
we'll meet!

For your great inconstancy

I compare you
to a coin that passes
from hand to hand,
till in the end it wears away,
and, thought to be counterfeit,
no one accepts it!

Asturian song

To see if it might console me,
I drew myself close to a green pine.
Seeing me weep, it wept.
And the pine, since it was green,
seeing me weep, it wept.

Jota

They say we don't love each other
because they don't see us speak.
Let them ask
your heart and mine.

Now I bid farewell to you,
to your house and to your window.
And though your mother disapproves,
farewell, girl, until tomorrow.

V. Nana

Duérmete, niño, duerme,
 duerme, mi alma,
 duérmete, lucerito, de la mañana.
 Nanita, nana.
 duérmete, lucerito de la mañana.

VI. Canción

Por traidores, tus ojos,
 voy a enterrarlos
 No sabes lo que cuesta
 "Del aire"
 Niña, el mirarlos.
 "Madre, á la orilla"

Dicen que no me quieres,
 ya me has querido.
 Váyase lo ganado,
 "Del aire"
 Por lo perdido,
 "Madre, á la orilla"

VII. Polo

¡Ay!
 Guardo una pena en mi pecho
 que a nadie se la diré.

¡Malhaya el amor,
 malhaya y quien me
 lo dió a entender!
 ¡Ay!

Lullaby

Sleep, little one, sleep,
 sleep, my soul,
 sleep, little morning star.
 Little lullaby,
 sleep, little morning star.

Song

Since your eyes are treacherous,
 I'm going to bury them.
 You don't know how hard it is
 'of the air'
 to gaze into them, girl.
 'Mother, at the shoreline'

They say you don't love me,
 but once you did.
 Let go of what's been gained,
 'of the air'
 for what's been lost,
 'Mother, at the shoreline'

Polo

Ay!
 I keep a sorrow in my heart
 that I will tell no one.

Cursed be love,
 and cursed be the one
 who made me understand it!
 Ay!

There's Joy to Be Found

BEETHOVEN'S MASTERWORK IS REALLY AS GREAT IT FEELS

BY JEANETTE YU

Ludwig van Beethoven's astonishing Symphony No. 5 in C minor is arguably the most recognizable piece in Western classical music. It might also just be his most joyous and life-affirming creative statement. No matter how familiar we are with this epic masterwork, with each listen we bring more of ourselves—our trials and tribulations, our hopes and fears—into how we experience the Fifth's great optimism. We are renewed by our repeated exposure to this work that charges towards the unalloyed triumph of consonance and resolution above all, as embodied by its brilliant and sunny C-major conclusion.

Thanks to an entrance that falls off the beat, Beethoven's famous four-note opening theme comes pre-charged with energy to burn. It is more an anticipation than a fully-fledged musical statement: an upbeat that points elsewhere instead of the status quo. Instead of materializing from a stable downbeat, it throws our emotions just off center: *[intake of breath] da-da-da → daaaaa*. It is as if Beethoven is saying, Wake up, world! There's joy to be found.

Those four notes—often likened to fate knocking on the door—are written in the key of C minor, and go on to encompass the main theme, though they pulse (hundreds of times) in the background throughout the entire Allegro con brio (Fast, with spirit) movement. They eventually evolve into a horn fanfare that announces the second main melody. This infectious music travels around the orchestra with passages that are equal parts driven fury and skittish excitement, thus driving the first movement to its conclusion without fully resolving its initial open-ended prompt.

The music continues to seek resolution in the second movement Andante con moto (Slower, with motion), where we are met with two contrasting themes side-by-side. The first emerges from the low voices as violas and cellos sing a thoroughly lovely, spacious melody, sharing it with the winds. Then a second subject in bright and heroic C major bellows brightly from the brass—for it is a glimpse of joy. Beethoven alternates between these two themes and plays them off each other, adding variation

and adventuring into different corners of each as the movement proceeds.

Making the most of the evocative timbre (the distinctive quality of sound between instruments) of the low string voices, Beethoven has them start the third movement Scherzo: Allegro (A joke, dance, with spirit: Fast). An intriguing sinuous C minor theme recalls the dark tone of the very beginning of the symphony. We explore a few rounds of playful scherzo episodes that utilize different textures—among them, dispersed *pizzicato* (plucking of the strings), sustained notes that suspend us in time and transition us to new melodies and considerations, and a perpetual timpani line that pulses like a beating heart after a hard sprint. As that pulse calms and all seems ready to return contently to the scherzo character, we experience one of the greatest and most original moments in music: Instead of reversing to the original theme, Beethoven pushes forward—and he pushes *hard*. Fragments of the scherzo quietly flit by every which way, as if we are fast-forwarding through a recap of the music so far.

Then the music makes a sudden turn. It erupts into an all-encompassing Allegro (Fast) finale: a marvelous, bigger than life, utterly affirming march in C major. Joy! With sunlight dramatically breaking through clouds of minor melodic modes and offbeat, syncopated passages, we awaken to Beethoven's great symphony unleashing its joyousness upon us. A long coda section and an extended final cadence usher us to where we sought to be, surrounded by a pure sound world of C major. To sit in this epic space is a superlative experience: Whether expected or not, in this moment of our lives, all that pent-up energy—the music's and ours—transforms into an atmosphere of spectacular joy, one that is really as great as it feels. 🌟

Jeanette Yu is a creative and editorial consultant, and former concert cellist. A storytelling, culture, and social thought specialist, she is Editorial Consultant for San Francisco Opera; Editor and Designer at Chamber Music SF; Graphic Designer for Masterworks Chorale; and Creative and Innovation Lead at Amateur Music Network.

The Greatest Musical Journeys

CAROLINE H. HUME MUSIC DIRECTOR EUN SUN KIM CONNECTS US TO
THE PERFECTION OF *PARSIFAL*, BEETHOVEN'S VISIONARY FIFTH SYMPHONY,
AND THE VOICES OF THE ORCHESTRA

BY JEFFERY S. MCMILLAN



Eun Sun Kim conducting the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, 2024. / CORY WEAVER

When Eun Sun Kim became San Francisco Opera's fourth music director in 2021, one of her first initiatives was a renewed engagement each season with the major works of both Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner. These annual encounters with some of the greatest works in the repertoire have been nothing short of revelatory. Add to that her interpretations of operas by Mozart and Beethoven's symphonic music, and San Francisco Opera is in the midst of an exciting artistic moment. Last month, Maestro Kim's Verdian exploration featured a powerful cast for *Rigoletto*, which continued an arc begun with her all-Verdi concert in 2022 and on through the new production of *La Traviata*, a vigorous *Il Trovatore*, and an acclaimed *Un Ballo in Maschera*. On the Wagner side, the journey so far has included *Lohengrin* in 2023 (preparations for which were captured in the NorCal Emmy-nominated documentary *Eun Sun Kim: A Journey into Lohengrin*) and last season's monumental *Tristan und Isolde*. With cycles of Wagner's four-part *Ring of the Nibelung* promised for the

near future, Kim is eager to bring San Francisco Opera into the world of a work that is close to her heart: Wagner's final masterpiece, *Parsifal*.

"When I took this job, I read about the history of this Opera House and all of the artists and conductors from the early days," she said. "I saw there was a great tradition. I asked when *Parsifal* was last done and learned it was in 2000, so this year marks 25 years. For sure, some in the Orchestra have performed the opera before, but for most it will be new for them. It was the same when we performed *Fidelio* in 2021." Kim says that she particularly enjoys "getting to dust off these great pieces with the Orchestra. I'm really happy about that."

"As for the Wagner journey, I think it is going well. It is very interesting for me especially to perform *Tristan* and *Parsifal* in back-to-back seasons. Many conductors consider *Tristan* their favorite. Every conductor wants to conduct *Tristan*. Artistically and musically, it gives so much of a satisfying feeling for conductors."

Kim believes *Tristan* is not alone as a work that conductors tend to covet. “*Parsifal* is another goal—a big goal—for conductors. It is Wagner’s last piece, and every note, every measure, is just perfect. I was an assistant conductor for *Parsifal* when I was very young, and whether I was assisting and learning the piece, or actively conducting, I was always so full of admiration for this score.”

“The last time I conducted *Parsifal* [Houston Grand Opera, January 2024] was before our *Tristan* here in San Francisco. I am very excited for how my own interpretation has evolved since those performances.”

When asked about that *other* journey, the Beethoven journey she initiated with *Fidelio*—Beethoven’s only opera—and continued last season with a sold-out mainstage concert of the composer’s Ninth Symphony, Kim became even more animated. On November 1, she will conduct the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in Beethoven’s famous Fifth Symphony and works by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla. “Of course we have been talking about Wagner, but I can’t deny that I have to say—loud—every time I conduct Beethoven: Okay, Beethoven *was* the greatest. And as I said during *Fidelio*, his motto was ‘*Per aspera ad astra*’—or in English, ‘To the stars through hardship.’ He was a visionary who dreamt of utopia. And I probably do too. I really understand that idea and his ability to put all those ideas into his work. It is just extraordinary.”

For the concert’s Spanish selections, Kim says that early in her career, she lived in Madrid and worked as an assistant conductor at the Teatro Real. “At the time, it was not the plan I envisioned for my life, but I learned the language and culture through my friends, and now I feel very close to Spanish culture.” She also points out that there is a musical through line between the Beethoven and Falla works. “In *Tres Picos*, the ballet not the suite, there is a musical quote from Beethoven 5 in the second movement. We’re performing Falla’s Suite, but for the second movement I swapped in part of the original ballet so we can play that quote.” Kim’s adaptation of Falla’s suite adds about three minutes of music.

Last spring, Kim unveiled a new concert format called SoundCheck at San Francisco’s Saint Joseph’s Arts Society where the audience was invited to move around while the Orchestra was playing. Where did this idea come from and what insights did she hope audiences might gain from mobile listening? “Last year, I was in London to conduct *Tosca*. While I was on a very loud street near Covent Garden talking with a friend, I heard someone call out to me from behind. When I looked, I was surprised to see that it was one

of our patrons from San Francisco. I said, ‘How did you find me?’ and they said, ‘Well, I was just walking by and I thought I heard your voice.’”

This chance encounter provided a spark. “If you can recognize a voice, you can also recognize an instrument’s voice. You don’t need a musical education or any instrumental skills. You just have to get used to the sound and the color, just like it was the voice of someone you know.” At the SoundCheck performance, Kim encouraged the audience to get close to the musicians while they were playing music by Wagner, Beethoven, and Britten. After some initial trepidation, attendees began seeking new visual and aural vantage points around the performance space. A few of the younger listeners eased into seats next to Principal Bassoon Rufus Olivier to enjoy the deep tones coming from his instrument and the woodwinds close by.

“I think that worked really well,” Kim said. “Many of my close friends are not musicians. One of them is a computer program engineer who does not know anything about classical music. After the concert, he said. ‘That bamboo—he meant bassoon—what is that? I am so impressed by the sound of that instrument.’ He didn’t even know the name of the instrument, but he was captured by it. Now, every time he comes back, he recognizes that instrumental voice, even though the pieces we play are different.” Kim believes increased familiarity with the sounds of different instruments adds immeasurably to the experience of opera. “You may recognize a singer’s voice immediately, but add to that, let’s say, an oboe solo or string accompaniment. This makes the experience even richer.” 🌟

Public Relations Director and program editor Jeffery S. McMillan is a writer on opera and jazz. He is the author of *Delightfulee: The Life and Music of Lee Morgan*.



Eun Sun Kim with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra.

CORY WEAVER

Beethoven at San Francisco Opera

San Francisco Opera's history of performing the music of Ludwig van Beethoven began in 1937 with *Fidelio*, the composer's only opera, starring Norwegian soprano Kirsten Flagstad as Leonore (pictured). The opera has been presented in 13 of the Company's 103 seasons to date.

Beethoven's one-act ballet, *The Creatures of Prometheus* (at right), was performed in 1953 as a curtain-raiser for Richard Strauss' *Elektra*.

Under Music Director Eun Sun Kim's baton, the music of Beethoven has surged back into San Francisco Opera's repertoire with a new production of *Fidelio* in 2021, a sold-out performance of the Ninth Symphony in 2024, and this season's performance of the iconic Fifth.



FRIDAY NIGHT, SEPTEMBER 25, at 8:15

† *The Creatures of Prometheus*

Ballet in one act by Ludwig van Beethoven
Libretto by Salvatore Viganò, adapted by James Graham-Lush
Choreography by William Christensen

THE CAST

Prometheus	GORDON PAXMAN
Fire	VIRGINIA JOHNSON
Zeus	RONALD FEINBERG
Woman	NANCY JOHNSON
Man	RAY BARALLOBRE
Athena	PATRICIA JOHNSTON
Apollo	JOHN MALLOZZI
His Court	LORENE BATCHELOR, GLORIA CANCELLA, SHIRLEY CARSON, FIONA FUERSTNER, JOAN HARSHBARGER, LOUISE LAWLER, JOY PERRY, SHARON SHORE, DIANA WITT, RUSSELL SAGE, GLEN CHADWICK
Terpsichore	BENE ARNOLD
Aphrodite	SALLY BAILEY
Her Court	NANCY DEMMLER, MATILDA ABBE, NINA HOLMAN, ADEA PAUSCH, MURIEL SHAPIRO
Melpomene	CHRISTINE BERING
A Queen	SHARON SHORE
A King	RUSSELL SAGE
Thalia	CONNIE COLER
Bacchus	CONRAD LUDLOW
Bacchantes	NANCY DEMMLER, VIRGINIA JOHNSON, GLENDA EMPEY, CAROL HILDEBRAND, BILLIE WYNN
Sileni	CARLOS CARVAJAL, RON ROSS
Stones	PATRICIA ELLIOTT, BARBARA JOHNSTON, DAGMAR MADSDEN, BELVA SMITH

CONDUCTOR
GLAUCO CURIEL

Settings designed by Armando Agnini and painted by Eugene Dunkel

FOLLOWED BY "ELEKTRA"
Cast on Page 29

Wednesday Evening Performance of "Creatures of Prometheus," September 30
THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL SEASON 29

MORTON



Elza van den Heever as Leonore (at left) with members of the San Francisco Opera Chorus in *Fidelio*, 2021
CORY WEAVER



Russell Thomas as Florestan in Fidelio, 2021. / CORY WEAVER



Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, 2024. CORY WEAVER

Curtain call for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on October 26, 2024, featuring Eun Sun Kim with soloists Kwangchul Youn, Russell Thomas Annika Schlicht, and Jennifer Holloway, and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. / CORY WEAVER



Eun Sun Kim and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. / MATTHEW WASHBURN





Each Song Is Its Own Little World

A CONVERSATION
WITH
DANIELA MACK

BY F. PAUL DRISCOLL

KRISTEN LOKEN

Daniela Mack is one of the opera world's most charismatic and versatile singers. In the past decade, she has delivered unforgettable performances in an astonishing range of music, from the familiar classic sounds of Handel, Mozart, Rossini, and Bizet to the contemporary challenges of twenty-first century composers John Adams, Osvaldo Golijov, Gabriela Lena Frank, David T. Little, Missy Mazzoli, and Kevin Puts. Mack's musicianship is impeccable and her stylistic command sovereign: her rich, amber-colored mezzo-soprano sounds exactly right in everything she sings.

Mack is also a deft actress of impressive range. At Opera Philadelphia, her confident, witty characterization of the enigmatic murder suspect shot through the plot thickets of Puts' *Elizabeth Cree* with the surety of an arrow. At the Metropolitan Opera, the poetic swagger of Mack's Garcia Lorcia stole the show in Golijov's *Ainadamar*. At San Francisco Opera, her home company, Mack had a triumph as the darkly passionate Frida Kahlo in Frank's otherworldly *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*.

A native of Argentina who was raised and educated in the United States, Mack has been beloved in San Francisco since her days as a member of the Merola Opera Program. Tonight she returns to the War Memorial Opera House to join Eun Sun Kim and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra for Manuel de Falla's song cycle *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas*. The Spanish composer's settings of seven traditional songs, cherished by recitalists and audiences for more than a century, will share the program with the dazzling suite from his ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

In an August telephone interview from her home in the Bay Area, Mack spoke with palpable excitement about the Falla cycle and about her particular love for singing in Spanish. Her answers to my questions were thoughtful

and generous, delivered with the unhurried warmth I admire in her singing.

Mack's imaginative, elegant mastery of text and rhythm make her an ideal interpreter of *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas*. She has a long history with Falla's cycle, beginning in her undergraduate days at Louisiana State University. "It was one of the first complete cycles that I ever learned, actually. I was assigned one of the songs—number two, the 'Seguidilla murciana'—when I was in my second semester of my freshman year in college, I think. Back then, which was in the days before YouTube, I went to the library and dug up Teresa Berganza's recording of the cycle, which I still adore.

"I was immediately enamored, not only of the pieces, but of the idea of getting to sing in Spanish. My grandmother was of Spanish descent. She never heard me sing professionally, but right before she passed away, when I was preparing these for my senior recital, I sang some of these to her. She was already sick, and I knew she wasn't going to be around long enough to hear the actual performance.

"I've done *Sietes Canciones* several times with piano, but I am very happy to do them again with orchestra, which gives them a very different texture. I am so excited that Eun Sun Kim and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra have programmed these, because as widely performed as they are, I don't know that the [San Francisco Opera] audience will know them."

Asked if she has a favorite song in the cycle, Mack hesitates. "They are all so different. Falla, brilliant composer that he was, took these very specific folk songs and folk rhythms and turned them into something magical—each song is its own little world. When my daughters allow me to sing to them in Spanish, [Falla's] lullaby 'Nana' is one of the songs I do. That's certainly one

***"When I sing in Spanish,
I present a different part of myself,
and I get to celebrate that.***

***San Francisco Opera has been very supportive ... and very,
very willing to have me embrace that in a very public way."***



Rosmira (disguised as Eurimene) in Handel's *Partenope*, 2024.
CORY WEAVER



Frida Kahlo in Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's
El último sueño de Frida y Diego, 2023. / CORY WEAVER

of my favorites. ‘Asturiana’ has always moved me very deeply—it’s such a soulful piece in its darkness and its simplicity. It’s a very visceral experience for me to listen to that one in particular—there’s such beauty in that song. And the last song, ‘Polo,’ is just amazing and so evocative of flamenco—the *cante jondo* [literally “deep song,” one of the purest, most emotional vocal styles of flamenco] influence of it is really cool. Especially now, after I have sung Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* several times, having lived in that musical headspace may inform the way I sing ‘Polo.’ I am looking forward to revisiting all of these Falla songs. To revisit any piece after a few years—after having lived more of life—is a privilege.”

Mack remains especially fond of Berganza’s interpretation of the Falla cycle, citing the Madrid-born mezzo-soprano as “my model, in many ways. For a while I couldn’t pinpoint why I liked [Berganza’s] interpretation so much. But the more I listen to her, and the more I watch her on video, which is something I couldn’t do while I was a student, I appreciate her total lack of artifice. It is just

honest, pure singing. I respond very strongly to that, and I try to do that—that’s the goal, at least. There are some pieces you don’t need to add very much to, especially when the music is so brilliantly composed, as these songs are. And Berganza was a native Spanish speaker, of course—there is something liberating about knowing the language so well and not having to add any sort of effects.

“When I was a student, and for the first several years of my career, I didn’t sing anything at all in Spanish. If I wanted to perform something in my native tongue, it would have to be presented in recital, when I had the freedom to curate a program. Back then, [Daniel Catán’s] *Florencia en el Amazonas* was the extent of my knowledge of Spanish-language opera. I knew that there were *zarzuelas* [a Spanish lyric-dramatic genre] floating around, but those never came across my desk. But singing in Spanish really awakens a different part of my soul. That sounds like a big statement, but it’s true—when you speak or sing in your native tongue, there’s a different intonation, a different connection to the text and the



Opera in the Park, 2023.
CORY WEAVER

On location in Buenos Aires for
In Song: Daniela Mack
with pianist Pablo Estigarribia.
FLORENCIA TRINCHERI



Idamante in Mozart's Idomeneo, 2025.
CORY WEAVER

music. When I sing in Spanish, I present a different part of myself, and I get to celebrate that. San Francisco Opera has been very supportive of that, and has been very, very willing to have me embrace that in a very public way.

“The audiences here in San Francisco are great. They are game to experience new things in a very cool way. A few performances I’ve done here stick out in my memory—the most recent was the final *Idomeneo* this past summer, when the house was absolutely packed. For the most part, the audience was silent until the very end, when everybody just *erupted*. The San Francisco Opera audience shows its love very vocally, which I get a kick out of—and as performers we feed off that so much. During the run of *El ultimo sueño de Frida y Diego* in San Francisco [in 2023], we had something I’ve never experienced anywhere else—so many people came to the performances in costume, with some of them in full Día de los Muertos makeup. It was like going to a Comic-Con fan convention where people cosplay in full garb! I don’t typically look out into the audience during a show, but it was impossible to ignore the color coming from the *Frida*

audience. It was so cool. It was wonderful to feel that level of engagement—the audience’s willingness to be a part of what they were seeing on stage, was a special experience.

“Another San Francisco audience moment I did not expect was when I sang [Rosmira in] Handel’s *Partenope* in 2024. That is such a great Christopher Alden production—it’s brilliant, it’s funny, it’s smart. But the audience *laughed* in a way I have not heard them laugh before. In opera, we usually get chuckles here and there from the audience, but this was different. At every moment of comedy in *Partenope*, the entire audience was with us, and that doesn’t always happen.

“People are hungry for smart productions—really meaningful productions that stir their souls. The management team here in San Francisco is so gifted at assembling groups of creatives who deliver productions that are really special. I am thankful to have been part of that for so many years.” 🌟

F. Paul Driscoll is the former editor in chief of Opera News.

Artist Profiles



EUN SUN KIM

(Seoul, South Korea)

Caroline H. Hume Music Director of San Francisco Opera

San Francisco Opera Highlights: *Rigoletto*; *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: *Elektra* (San Francisco Opera); *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



DANIELA MACK

Mezzo-Soprano

(Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Soloist

San Francisco Opera Highlights: Rosmira in *Partenope*; Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*; Idamante in *Idomeneo*; Siebel in *Faust*; Lucienne in *Die Tote Stadt*; Frida in Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *In Song: Daniela Mack*

Recent and Upcoming: Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Houston Grand Opera, Opera Omaha); Frida in Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Federico García Lorca in Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar* (Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera); Angela in Missy Mazzoli's *The Listeners* (Chicago); Orsini in *Lucrezia Borgia* (Rome's Teatro dell'Opera); Rosmira in *Partenope* (Madrid's Teatro Real); Romeo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza); Béatrice in *Béatrice et Bénédicte* (BBC Philharmonic); Handel's *Serse* (The English Concert at Carnegie Hall); Jacqueline Kennedy in David T. Little and Royce Vavrek's *JFK* (Montreal)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship: 2008, 2009

Merola Opera Program: 2007

Instagram: @dcecima



KRISTEN LOKEN

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA

The San Francisco Opera Orchestra, led by Music Director Eun Sun Kim, has achieved an acclaim matched by very few such ensembles. The Orchestra performs an annual season of international opera repertoire, in addition to concerts and educational programs. The San Francisco Opera Orchestra has been featured in numerous telecasts, livestreams, radio broadcasts, and video and audio recordings, garnering a GRAMMY nomination for its CD of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*. Commercial DVD releases featuring the Orchestra include Jerome Kern's *Show Boat*, Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick*, the Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*, Boito's *Mefistofele*, Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*. The Orchestra is represented by Local 6 of the American Federation of Musicians.



JUSTIN A. PARTIER

(New York, New York)

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*; *Rigoletto* (2025)

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)

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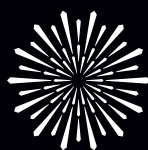
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Who Has Time for Parsifal?

BY JENNY ODELL

The Creation of the Elements: Chronos and Cybele with Zeus, Hera, and Poseidon, after Paolo Veronese (1528-1588), oil painting on canvas.

NATIONAL TRUST PHOTOGRAPHIC LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Recently, on the bus home from a film screening in Berkeley, I watched a man swiping through TikTok videos. I was fascinated with how quickly he decided whether something was worth watching—often a fraction of a second—and how often the answer was no. One of the only videos he did hold on, for a capacious six seconds, was of a wooden board being spray painted white in smooth, assured strokes. I Googled “good amount of watch time for a TikTok video” and found that Planable, a content marketing company, suggested 15 to 20 seconds as a decent watch time.¹ That wasn’t too far off from another statistic I’d seen: that the average person spends 15 to 30 seconds looking at each painting in a museum.²

In this type of environment, one might worry about the survival of something like *Parsifal*, a four-and-three-quarter-hour-long opera from the nineteenth century. If time is money and attention spans are shrinking, an opera this long seems like not only an exorbitant luxury but actually something we are no longer up to the task for. Between the productivity-minded adage that “everyone has 24 hours in a day” and the daily incursions of the attention economy, there doesn’t seem to be anything left. But what

seized before it passes. Tellingly, in Greek, *kairos* also means “weather.”³ Given this aspect of non-repeatable, non-interchangeable moments, you can maybe already see the affinity of *kairos* and live performance. Indeed, the philosopher and musician Kathleen Coessens has suggested that in attending a theater performance, you step from *chronos* into *kairos*. The performance, scheduled and marked off at a time and place, is necessarily “inserted in the *chronos*.” Once it begins, however, the production is “enclosed in its own artistic time and place and is enacted in moments of now, reaching out towards the whole act.”⁴

Anthony Tommasini, the author of a *New York Times* piece titled “How Long, in Opera, is Too Long?” would likely agree. Praising *Parsifal* for its spiritual drama, he suggests that “if you can let the transfixing music take you to this metaphysical sphere, you adjust to Wagner time, and the opera not only proves riveting but also seems the length it must be.”⁵ How convenient! But the operative word there is “if.” For those especially steeped in *chronos*, an important question remains: How do I get on Wagner time?

What this requires may not actually be effort but something like the opposite. I think of what happened when

“What happens to the supposed difficulty of *Parsifal* if we change our lens on time?”

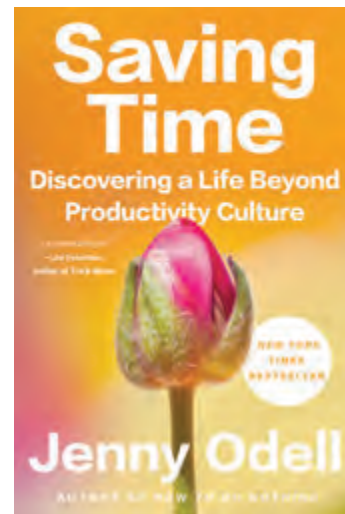
happens to the supposed difficulty of *Parsifal* if we change our lens on time? What if it’s not simply quantitatively longer than what we’re used to but actually a way of escaping the world of quantitative time altogether?

The ancient Greeks distinguished between two types of time: *chronos* and *kairos*. Of the two, *chronos* is the more familiar in everyday life: it is the linear, subdivided time of clocks, calendars, and timelines. As I wrote in my 2023 book *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*, *chronos* is where time feels most like money—the domain where we literally buy and sell time, and more broadly feel the anxiety of time scarcity, as though minutes were fungible units missing from our wallets. When we lament that we “just need more time,” it’s often the bits and pieces of *chronos* time that we wish for more of.

Kairos is something far less measured. Representing the time of change and opportunity, it has less to do with interchangeable minutes and more to do with unique moments—in particular, the type of moment that must be

I taught an observation-themed writing workshop, where I asked students to watch a video that was ten minutes long (a whopping 600 seconds) that someone had made out their window of an ordinary street intersection on a commercial corridor. The students were asked to write down everything they noticed, then share this list with their neighbor. Before showing the video, I warned them that they might go through several emotions: confusion, boredom, and finally irritation with the seeming pointlessness of it all. (Privately, I warned myself that I’d feel their impatience vicariously and want to stop the video.)

But then, I promised them, something else would happen. The attitude of the impatient, avaricious mind would wear away, and they would pass over a threshold into curiosity. And that is exactly what happened. Once the students had gotten through that wall of boredom and confusion, what had seemed an onerous “task” turned into the freedom to observe without judgement or analysis, to become absorbed in the life of the street



(*kairos* disguised as *chronos*?). To my surprise and their own, they told me that by the end, they actually didn't want the video to end. It was not just curiosity on the other side of the threshold but a kind of bliss.

The other key word in Tommasini's suggestion is "let": You must let yourself. In *Saving Time*, I draw on the German Catholic philosopher Josef Pieper's tract, "Leisure, the Basis of Culture," in which leisure means not a vacation but an attitude of mind: one that "runs at right angles" to the entire world of working, grasping, and analyzing. It represents a total reorientation of self and world, "the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation."⁶ Embodying this attitude requires us not to furrow our brows but simply to let go: Pieper compares it to the unforced character of falling asleep. Likewise, if opera, like all of theater, presents a portal to *kairos*, perhaps the way in is to loosen one's expectations, to release the grasp, and prepare oneself not so much for the consumption of "content" but for a wild encounter in *kairos*.

If this requires you to turn off part of your brain, it's interesting to consider what part. For me, the natural corollary to time-as-money is the individualized, productive self whose only modes are working or consuming, and whose only way of thinking is transactional. The person who recently tweeted "pro tip: you can basically read >100 books per day by asking chatgpt to summarize them for you"⁷ might be an extreme example, but this notion of art as something you consume, as if downloading information and screening out everything not obviously relevant, is fairly widespread. I find this to be an impoverished view not only of art but of the self, as though we were fixed units who could only be added to or subtracted from. At least in my experience, authentic encounters with art offer something quite different: neither addition nor subtraction but an unsettling of the very boundaries of the self in time and space.

As it turns out, this movement out of oneself and into something more oceanic might be especially apt to the

themes of *Parsifal*. Writing in *Theater Journal*, Sandra Corse has placed Wagner's final opera alongside *The Birth of Tragedy*, a book by his contemporary, Nietzsche, as a critique of Enlightenment rationality. Specifically, Wagner and Nietzsche were both interested in the tension between what has been called the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Whereas the Apollonian describes the realm of representation, individuation, and reified forms, the Dionysian involves a "trance-like state" in which the participant overflows her bounds, dissolving into community and into the environment. Corse reads the character of Parsifal as a saint-like figure bringing Dionysian vitality to the dried-up and brittle world of the Apollonian. And Wagner, who called *Parsifal* not an opera but a "festival play," ends it with a Good Friday festival, imagining that the "audience and players would come together, as the ancient Greeks did, in a quasi-religious ceremony that would give them a new understanding and renewed commitment to their social and communal life."

What happens to us in theater—or rather what *can* happen to us, if we are open to it—can be summed up by how Corse quotes Nietzsche:

... there are moments and as it were bright sparks of the fire of love in whose light we cease to understand the word 'I,' there lies something beyond our being which at these moments moves across into it, and we are those possessed of a heartfelt longing for the bridges between here and there.⁸

Seen in this light, an opera as long as *Parsifal* appears not as something to be endured but as a merciful cessation in what we endure on a daily basis: life as boxed-in individuals hoarding bank accounts full of minutes, never meeting, never changing, never being moved. Yes, from within *chronos*, the time that *Parsifal* asks of us may appear

unjustifiable, and yes, it is to *chronos* we must return when the opera is over. But from within the theater-walls of *kairos*, washed of minutes, hours, and the walls of the self, we might perceive the opera for what it really is: a reprieve, a gift, and an invitation. 🌱




Jenny Odell is an Oakland-based artist, writer, and educator. She is the author of The New York Times bestsellers *How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy*, *Inhabiting the Negative Space*, and *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*.


End Notes

- 1 Moser, Jeremy. "12 Tiktok Metrics You Should Track to Measure Content Performance and Improve Engagement." Planable, 22 Jan. 2025, planable.io/blog/tiktok-metrics/.
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- 3 Odell, Jenny. *Saving Time: Discovering a Life Beyond the Clock*. Random House, 2023.
- 4 Coessens, Kathleen. "Musical Performance and 'Kairos': Exploring the Time and Space of Artistic Resonance." *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2009, pp. 269–81. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20696542>. Accessed 9 Aug. 2025.
- 5 Tommasini, Anthony. "How Long, in Opera, is Too Long?" *The New York Times*, 30 Jan. 2000, p. 37.
- 6 Pieper, Josef. *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*. Ignatius, 2009.
- 7 @packyM. "pro tip: you can basically read >100 books per day by asking chatgpt to summarize them for you." X, 5 Ju. 2025, 12:24 p.m., <https://x.com/packyM/status/1941581399351288033>.
- 8 Corse, Sandra. "Parsifal: Wagner, Nietzsche, and the Modern Subject." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1994, pp. 95–110. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3208957>. Accessed 9 Aug. 2025.

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







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Elizabeth Birka-White, Courtney Labe

OPERA BALL 2025

Raising the curtain on San Francisco Opera's 103rd season, San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild co-presented *Opera Ball 2025: Palazzo* on Friday, September 5. The festive evening, which included a cocktail reception, dinner and after-party in San Francisco's City Hall along with the opening night performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the War Memorial Opera House, was a vibrant celebration of the arts and a major fundraiser for the Opera's and Guild's programs. Jennifer Bienaimé and Isabel Rhee co-chaired *Opera Ball 2025*, and the Opening Weekend was underwritten by Diane B. Wilsey for the nineteenth year in a row.



J'Nai Bridges



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Maria Manetti Shrem, Amartuvshin Enkhbat



Arlene Inch, Marc Scorca



Free Dong



Mark Barrenechea,
Sydney Leung



Paul Pelosi, Nancy Pelosi



Dianne Taube



Gretchen Hanson,
Barbara Wolfe



Betty Yu



Adela Zaharia, Eun Sun Kim



Valerie Crane Dorfman, Isabel Rhee,
Romana Bracco, Jennifer Bienaimé



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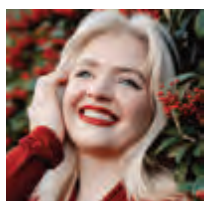
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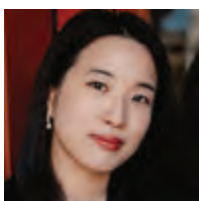
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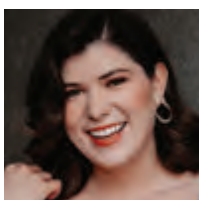
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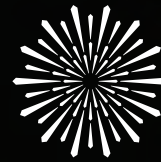
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Photo: San Francisco Opera's 2025 production of *Idomeneo* by Cory Weaver.

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Cheryl Cain
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Kelly Chase■
Peixin Chen*
Shuqi Cong■
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Logan Cook*
Caroline Corrales+†
Chris Costanz*
Zachary Cowan*
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Anders Froehlich
John Fulton
Carla Gallardo
Rod Gilfry
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Susan Graham+
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Silvie Jensen
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■ Solo Dancer
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Fabrizio Corona, Associate Chorus Master

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Harlan Hays	Hannah Cho+
Nikolas NackleyΩ	Sara Colburn
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Wilford Kelly	Josephine Lee
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Zachariah Spellman, *Principal*

TIMPANI

John Burgardt, *Principal*

PERCUSSION

Patricia Niemi, *Acting Principal*
Victor Avdienko↑

HARP

Eleanor Kirk, *Principal*

ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS

Bryndon Hassman

LIBRARIAN

Carrie Weick

√ Leave of absence

Σ Principal for one or more

Fall season operas

↑ Season Substitute

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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

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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

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Hoa Fong (26), Jaya Grace Goheen,

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Meg Horan, Arianna B. Jones,

Megan Luby, Sara Morimoto (12),

Mikael Nohai, Jane Smith,

Hannah Velichko, Alexae Visel,

Sarah Ellen Wilson, Robert Whitehurst

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Leona Schrader-Dee

Don Smith (29)

Scott Stewart (25)

Kirsten Tucker (22)

Amber Vo

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Maur Sela (10)

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Calli Carvajal

Lindsay Saier

SHOW CALL FOREPERSONS

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Christina Martin (12)

Lindsay Saier

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Karalynne Fiebig (12),

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Chri Holmgren-Greene,

Christina Martin (12), Toby Mayer (34),

Gloria Mueller, Naki Mugambi,

Leilani Norman, Y. Sharon Peng,

Lisa Patnoe (34), Lindsay Saier,

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Vanessa Blanchard Lee,

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Sarah Coy, Marisela Garcia,

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Chri Holmgren-Greene,

Raegina Joyner, Amber Loudermilk,

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

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Lucy Briggs

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Michael Chapman (13), *Key*

Jack Davis

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Geoffrey W. Heron (31), *Key*

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Michael Martino

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Enrique Pronio

Michael Ramirez

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Michael Ryan

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Gregory Shaff (37), *Key*

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Cyrus Sindich

Derek Snediker

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Randy Walsh (23), *Key*

Sammy Wong

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Jay Cazel

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Oris Fry

Tim Heaney

Jane Henderson

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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

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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*

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Key Light Board Operator

Karen Jine

Brendan Kierans (12),

Electric Shop Foreperson

Sophie Landau

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Lloyd Murphy, *Key Projectionist*

Baylie Olsen

Jonathan Philpott-Kenny

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Kevin Quintero

Matthew Reynolds

William Rodriguez

Kirt Siders, *Data Administrator*

Andrew Sproule (26), *Key Stage Left*

Jax Steager,

Assistant Key Light Board Operator

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Emad Dajani, *Key*

Christine Dumke

Kimberly Griess, *Key*

Bryan Olson

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Michael Santy

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Uwe Willenbacher (17), *Audio Editor*

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Rhona Gordon, Lua Hadar, Martha Harris,

Stacy Heniser, Jamie Keller,

Karen Kindig, Laila Vatanka

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Gwyneth Hadfield, Kate Juliana,

Jonah Malamud, Haley May,

Eleanor Murphy-Weise

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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



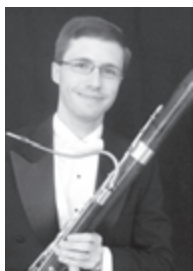
**José González
Granero**
Principal Clarinet



Junghwan Lee
Bass Clarinet↑



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



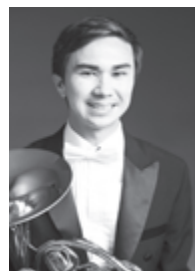
Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



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↑



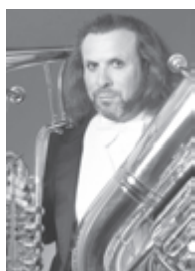
John Pearson
Trumpet



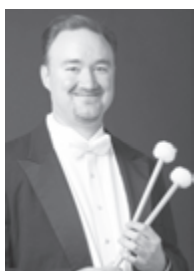
Michael Cox
Acting Principal
Trombone



David Ridge
Principal
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman
Tuba



John Burgardt
Timpani



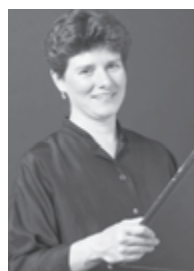
Patricia Niemi
Acting Principal
Percussion



Victor Avdienko
Percussion↑



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian

Not pictured:

Heeguen Song (Second Violin)↑

Sunny Yang (Principal Cello)

Sean O'Hara (Bass)↑

Michelle Caimotto (Flute)↑

Rachel Ahn (Oboe)↑

Rebecca Tobin Krissman (Clarinet)↑

Anthony Delivanis (Horn)↑

Samuel Wamhoff (Trombone)↑

Eleanor Kirk (Principal Harp)

↑ Season Substitute

San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



Nadima Avakian
Soprano



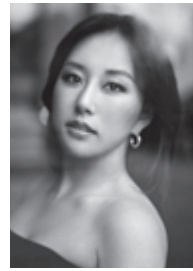
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Cheryl Cain
Soprano



Danielle Cheiken
Soprano



Hannah Cho
Soprano



Sara Colburn
Soprano



Crystal Kim
Soprano



Josephine Lee
Soprano



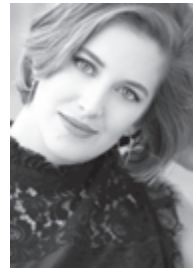
Liesl McPherrin
Soprano



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



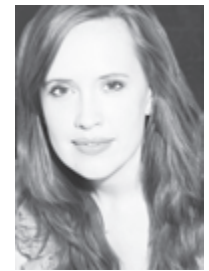
Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



Sarah Nadreau
Mezzo-Soprano



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



**Laurel Cameron
Porter**
Mezzo-Soprano



Whitney Steele
Mezzo-Soprano



Jacque Wilson
Mezzo-Soprano



C. Michael Belle
Tenor



Alan Cochran
Tenor



Kevin Gino
Tenor



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Michael Jankosky
Tenor



Eric Levintow
Tenor



Antonio Nagore
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Jonathan Smucker
Tenor



Andrew Truett
Tenor



William Lee Bryan
Baritone

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



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Baritone



John Fulton
Baritone



Harlan Hays
Baritone



Nikolas Nackley
Baritone



Andrew Thomas
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Baritone



Wilford Kelly
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass



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Bass

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Jamielyn Duggan



Brett Conway



Blanche Hampton



Bryan Ketron
Leave of Absence



Christopher Nachtrab



Chiharu Shibata



Marcos Vedovetto

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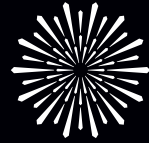
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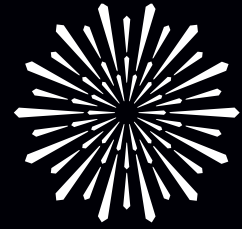
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Participating in the Ritual of *Parsifal*

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

“When I came out of the Festspielhaus, I realized that I had undergone the greatest and most soul-searching experience, and that I would carry that with me for the rest of my life.”—Gustav Mahler

Mahler’s reaction to *Parsifal* in 1883 encapsulates the profundity of experience that I hope you might have here in 2025. Wagner spent his career exploring the transcendent possibilities of the stage and, by his final work *Parsifal*, he unlocked the metaphysical in a way unique in opera before or since.

In *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis outlines the different natures of love, from familial love, to friendship, to erotic love, to unconditional divine love. The first three loves are the *lingua franca* of the opera stage, but rarely does opera venture into divine love. *Parsifal* is one of the exceptions. Rather than taking an emotional journey, *Parsifal* invites us into a deeply spiritual meditation on enlightenment through compassion.

One way Wagner accomplishes this is through an advanced use of “leitmotifs”—musical motifs that represent characters, emotions and ideas. In Wagner’s operas, you can follow the story just by listening to the progression of musical motifs. What is extraordinary in *Parsifal* is that Wagner expands this concept of *leitmotif* to create not just drama, but ritual: a sacred space into which we, the audience, become a part.

From the very first notes of the opera—a unison chant-like motif, taken up over a shimmering radiance of light—we are in a place of enlightened compassion, of something larger than humanity. Out of this root theme emerges much of the musical substance of *Parsifal*—the rising scale of the Grail motif (the “Dresden Amen”), the counterbalancing, weighty falling scale of the faith motif, and the bell motif, woven into the ritual and rite of the Grail Temple.

These motifs are often heard in circular repetition: we are in constant motion but never really moving. It is as though walking slowly up an Escher staircase, always rising, but somehow coming back to where you started.

That is the sublime invitation of *Parsifal*. An invitation not into drama, but into a spiritual ritual in which time is suspended. We are not observing. We are participating. To some degree, we do this every time we gather in the sacred space of the theater: 3,000 people joining together with the possibility for collective catharsis. In *Parsifal*, this is the fundamental essence of the piece: a participation in a ritual deep in our collective unconscious in which the human voice is the connection to a spiritual plane.

It was imperative to us that, in staging *Parsifal*, we create a space conducive for this participatory ritual. We very naturally turned to director Matthew Ozawa. His transcendent production of *Orpheus and Eurydice* (2022) created the kind of holistic immersion so needed for *Parsifal*. I am in awe of the intersection of Eun Sun Kim’s music making and Matthew’s staging and how they are constantly inviting us, the audience, into the ritual.

Ritual exists in all the design elements, but a critical aspect is movement. Matthew and choreographer Rena Butler have created a leitmotif lexicon of movement that seamlessly interweaves into the leitmotifs of music. Slow-moving, purposeful, ritualistic, and shared across the community of the Grail; but also imperceptibly evolving, inflected, changing in the most subtle of ways. Rena has incorporated traditions including Japanese Butoh (舞踏) dance, as well as Noh theater’s Jo-ha-kyū (序 破 急) movements with slow, measured gesture increasing in intensity. Movement in this *Parsifal* is deeply intentional.

The Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh encouraged us to think of every walking step as a moment to connect with the present. He invited us to make each step with intentionality and joyfulness. His walking meditation mantra is “I have arrived. I am home.” I had a chance to do a walking meditation at Thich Nhat Hanh’s root temple in Vietnam earlier this year. What Matthew Ozawa and his team have created in this *Parsifal* reminds me so much of that experience. A ritual of purpose, of intentionality, of a single footstep placed with reverence for something much bigger.

Ritual is not, however, unchanging. Like the musical and movement motifs, ritual morphs imperceptibly in response to changing conditions. And, for me, that is the profundity of *Parsifal*. The Knights are custodians of compassionate enlightenment. But there is a fracture in the world; in the pain of Amfortas is a questioning of the ritual. The ritual must be reframed. While there is reverence for what has been before, there is a reawakening into a new ritual for a new generation. And so, the circle begins once again. 🌸

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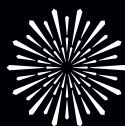
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