

JUNE 26, 2026

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# Pride Concert



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2026 JULY 3  
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# Lili Elbe

AMERICAN  
PREMIERE

Tobias Picker / Aryeh Lev Stollman

August 1, 5, 14, 18, 27



JOIN US for the American premiere of Tobias Picker and Aryeh Lev Stollman's groundbreaking new opera, *Lili Elbe*. Winner of "Best World Premiere" at the 2024 OPER! Awards, *Lili Elbe* tells the true story of a trans woman in the 1920s popularized by the 2015 film, *The Danish Girl*.

MADAMA  
BUTTERFLY  
Puccini

THE MAGIC  
FLUTE  
Mozart

EUGENE  
ONEGIN  
Tchaikovsky

RODELINDA  
Handel

AMERICAN PREMIERE  
**LILI ELBE**  
Picker |  
Stollman



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*Lili Elbe* Illustration by Benedetto Cristofani

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# Welcome

FROM GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

Welcome to San Francisco Opera's 2026 Pride Concert! This evening we celebrate the extraordinary LGBTQIA+ community of which we are so proud to be a part.

It is a joy to welcome you into this space—a gathering place for all, free of the judgment, division, or prejudice that feel so present for many today. This is a building in which we come together and celebrate all that connects us. This is a stage on which we tell deeply resonant stories of our humanity, stories that often reflect the struggle of the individual against society.

Our Managing Director of Artistic, Gregory Henkel, has curated a beautiful journey through a fabulously wide range of styles including opera, musical theater, and pop. Through it all is an empowering message of believing in the beauty of yourself, of being true to who you are, and of knowing that, in doing so, you develop your inner strength and discover that you are not alone. In being together, we can uplift a shared resilience, recognize a shared struggle for acceptance, and share in celebrating the beauty and joy of the LGBTQIA+ community and its allies.

We begin tonight's program with the orchestral work *Agnegram* by Michael Tilson Thomas, long-time music director of our neighbors, the San Francisco Symphony. MTT believed in the fundamental power of music to unite, and he championed a deeply inclusive view of music, born out of his own experiences as a gay leader in the arts. We mourn his passing, and that of his husband, Joshua Robison, who also passed away this year.

We are so grateful to Denise Littlefield Sobel for



sponsoring tonight's concert. Denise champions inclusivity in the arts with inspiring passion and generosity. Her vision and courage are empowering arts organizations across the country to embrace inclusivity as a fundamental value.

We are part of an incredible ecosystem of organizations in the Bay Area doing powerful work to foster safe, inclusive, joyful, community-oriented spaces for the queer community. Like the Opera, these organizations connect ritual and legacy to a forward momentum that propels us into the future. We invite you to stop by our information desk in the lobby to learn more about our community partners, including **San Francisco Pride** whose 56th Festival kicks off tomorrow. **The Marigold Project** is bringing Rainbows All Around Us, a colorful, tangible piece that will invite concertgoers to reflect and remember. **The Tenderloin Museum** explores the intersection of history and art, highlighting queer and other marginalized histories and voices. We invite you to visit the Grand Tier level where the **National AIDS Memorial** has kindly provided us sections from the AIDS Memorial Quilt, and you can see a display of hand-bound books and book-art crafted from the Castro Pride Flag, with gratitude to the **Hand Bookbinders of California**. We are grateful to the **GLBT Historical Society**, an international leader in the field of LGBTQ history for the lightbox display they have provided.

Tonight is a celebration of the Bay Area's extraordinary queer community and allies. We are so happy that you are here and hope that you'll join us after the concert in the lobby, where you can dance the night away with DJ Juanita

MORE! 🌈

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew Shilvock".

Matthew Shilvock  
General Director

# Pride Concert

PROGRAM CURATED BY GREGORY HENKEL

ROBERT MOLLICONE, CONDUCTOR

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA • KAY STERN, CONCERTMASTER

MELODY MOORE  
NIKOLA PRINTZ  
REGINALD SMITH, JR.

SADIE CHESLAK • ALEXA FRANKIAN • THOMAS KINCH

SAPPHIRA CRISTÁL, EMCEE

E. REED FISHER, STAGE DIRECTOR  
JUSTIN A. PARTIER, LIGHTING DESIGNER

Musical Preparation: **Andrew King**

Stage Manager: **Jennifer Harber** • Assistant Stage Managers: **Anna Reetz, Jonathan S. Campbell, Megan Coutts**

Technical Supervisor: **Erik Walstad** • Costume Supervisor: **Jai Alltizer** • Hair and Makeup: **Jeanna Parham**

Musical arrangements by

**Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser** ("Constant Craving")

**Sam Gale** ("The Joke")

**Conor Keelan** ["Be the Change," "How Will I Know," "Any Love," "Let It Rain," "Gender Binary (F\*ck You)," "Finale Medley"]

**Christopher Willis** ("I Can Only Be Me")

The Pride Concert is made possible, in part, by  
**Denise Littlefield Sobel**

Special thanks to Jerome & Thao Dodson for making possible the Dodson Orchestra Shell

**JUNE 26, 2026**



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA

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# Pride Concert

## PROGRAM

***Agnegram* (1998) by Michael Tilson Thomas (1944–2026)**

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA  
ROBERT MOLLICONE, CONDUCTOR**

Written for patron Agnes Albert's 90th birthday by the San Francisco Symphony's legendary former Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas, the exuberant party piece *Agnegram* is a fête of individuality. This music is everything, everywhere, all at once—for MTT, it is a portrait of Albert's "indefatigably enthusiastic spirit," and for us, a testament of MTT's own irrepressible vivacity. The letters of Albert's name are transcribed into musical cryptograms, and the score is packed with musical flashes of Giuseppe Verdi, Pyotr Tchaikovsky, circus bands, and Spike Jones-style absurdity. One of the industry's first, most visible, and most celebrated openly gay leaders, MTT's legacy as a San Francisco and global icon is built on his uncanny ability to not only "see" people but to truly celebrate who they are, as they are. With his longtime partner, Joshua Robison (1946–2026), MTT orchestrated a full musical life, proving by example that being authentically *you* is an eternal superpower.

*Agnegram by Michael Tilson Thomas presented under license from G. Schirmer Inc. and Associated Music Publishers, copyright owners.*

**"Lucky" from *Séance on a Wet Afternoon* (2009) by Stephen Schwartz (b. 1948)**

**MELODY MOORE**

Known for Broadway blockbusters like *Wicked*, *Godspell*, and *Pippin*, Stephen Schwartz brings an intimate, chamber music-like language to his opera, *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*. "Lucky" reveals Schwartz's gift for writing emotionally transparent melodies that carry enormous dramatic weight: Lucky are we to have people who cherish us as we cherish them, even in the most trying conditions. One of the biggest household names in American musical theater, Schwartz has long championed stories about outsiders, yearning, and reinvention—powerful themes that resonate deeply in today's environment.

**"Ô ma lyre immortelle" from *Sapho* (1851) by Charles Gounod (1818–1893)**

**NIKOLA PRINTZ**

Charles Gounod's opera *Sapho* takes inspiration from the ancient Greek poet Sappho. Her surviving verses and mythic biography have made Sappho an enduring icon of lesbian identity and artistic desire—the English words "sapphic" and "lesbian" deriving from her name and that of her home island, Lesbos. Though Gounod points to a male figure as the subject of the opera's final aria, "Ô ma lyre immortelle," time and consciousness have since revealed that as a misdirection. This hauntingly noble song is the heroine's poignant farewell to art and life, a profound reflection on legacy, longing, and being remembered.

**"Peculiar Grace" from *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (2019) by Terence Blanchard (b. 1962)**

**REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

SFJAZZ Executive Artistic Director Terence Blanchard's groundbreaking opera *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*—the first work by a Black composer staged at the Metropolitan Opera—fuses cinematic orchestrations with dynamic jazz harmonies and gospel vibrancy. The pivotal Act II aria, "Peculiar Grace," pulses with spiritual resilience, drawing on Black church traditions while speaking to the complicated realities of masculinity, vulnerability, and self-definition. The song's insistence on survival through self-acceptance lands with particular force: Grace here is not passive, but hard-won.

**"La mamma morta" from *Andrea Chénier* (1896) by Umberto Giordano (1867–1948)**

**MELODY MOORE**

Few arias reach the emotional temperature of Umberto Giordano's "La mamma morta," where private grief erupts into operatic transcendence against the chaos of the French Revolution. The aria played an intensely pivotal role in the Oscar-winning 1993 film *Philadelphia*, in which Tom Hanks' AIDS-stricken protagonist describes Maria Callas' recording as an expression of suffering transformed into beauty—one of mainstream cinema's most powerful intersections of opera and queer experience. Giordano's surging melodies and pacing transform this aria from impassioned lament into a potent act of emotional survival.

**Barcarolle from *The Tales of Hoffmann* (1880) by Jacques Offenbach (1819–1880)**

**MELODY MOORE AND NIKOLA PRINTZ**

Offenbach's Barcarolle, with its gently rocking Venetian rhythm, may just be opera's most seductive duet—lush, hypnotic, and impossible not to hum afterwards. The most famous music from *The Tales of Hoffmann*, the Barcarolle is a sensual duet featuring two feminine voices—one part sung by a gender-fluid character, the other by a courtesan—that is often heard as queer-coded longing. A treasure of the operatic canon, it has enjoyed a second life in queer nightlife and cabaret culture, where its decadent elegance and intoxicating atmosphere are perfectly suited—"Belle nuit, ô nuit d'amour, Souris à nos ivresses!" ("Lovely night, oh night of love, Smile upon our joys!")

**"Be the Change" (2014) by Michael Abels (b. 1962)**

**REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

**SADIE CHESLAK • ALEXA FRANKIAN • THOMAS KINCH**

Michael Abels, acclaimed co-composer with Rhiannon Giddens of the opera *Omar* (co-commissioned by San Francisco Opera and presented here in 2023), is also the visionary behind the scores to the Jordan Peele films *Get Out*, *Us*, and *Nope*. His music melds classical technique with gospel, folk, jazz, and contemporary social consciousness. "Be the Change" is penned in the spirit of protest anthems and communal uplift songs, music that is instantly singable and emotionally expansive. Evocative tunes like this one argue that identity and activism are inseparable—and that art functions as a public square shaped by inspired, individual acts. To hear this music is to listen to our true selves, to believe that there is no limit to what each of us can and will do.

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## PROGRAM CONTINUED

### **"Constant Craving" (1992) by k.d. lang (b. 1961) and Ben Mink (b. 1951)**

**MELODY MOORE AND NIKOLA PRINTZ**

"Constant Craving" catapulted singer-songwriter k.d. lang from cult country outsider to international queer icon almost overnight. The song's suspended harmonies and unresolved cadences mirror its lyrical obsession with longing, giving the track its emotional, almost spiritual, draw: "Maybe a great magnet pulls / All souls towards truth." Lang's open lesbian identity, a rarity in mainstream pop at the time, made this song feel revolutionary—not because it declares queerness, but because it treats emotional vulnerability and living authentically as universal acts of courage.

### **"How Will I Know" (1984) by George Merrill (b. 1956) and Shannon Rubicam (b. 1951)**

**REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

**SADIE CHESLAK • ALEXA FRANKIAN • THOMAS KINCH**

Whitney Houston's smash hit bundles nervous uncertainty inside one of the most explosively joyful pop productions of the 1980s, powered by sparkling synths and gospel-inflected vocals. Songwriters George Merrill and Shannon Rubicam originally wrote the song with Janet Jackson in mind, but Houston's dazzling phrasing turned it into pure pop magic. Few artists have been more embraced by LGBTQIA+ audiences than Houston, whose vocal magnificence, expressive earnestness, and dance-floor energy made her a queer cultural touchstone.

### **"I Can Only Be Me" (1988) by Stevie Wonder (b. 1950)**

**NIKOLA PRINTZ**

Written by Stevie Wonder for Spike Lee's musical comedy-drama *School Daze*, "I Can Only Be Me" turns a simple refrain into a radical anthem of selfhood. Harmonically luxuriant and gospel-inflected, this song moves with the uplift of classic late-1980s Stevie: warm textures, hymn-like cadences, all wrapped around a melody that is lovingly affirmed. Its lyrics—"You can only be you / As I can only be me"—land with particular resonance, a soulful insistence that dignity begins with refusing disguise and that authenticity is sacred.

*Orchestral arrangement of "I Can Only Be Me" by Christopher Willis, based on Eva Cassidy's performance of the Stevie Wonder song.*

### **"Any Love" (1988) by Luther Vandross (1951–2005)**

**REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

**SADIE CHESLAK • ALEXA FRANKIAN • THOMAS KINCH**

Velvet-voiced Luther Vandross absolutely dominated the charts with romantic ballads, but "Any Love"—the most autobiographical song he ever wrote—carries an extra layer of poignancy because of the ambiguity and guardedness that surrounded his private life. The song's plea for connection transcends gender specifications and cuts straight to the heart—"all those feelings I want to touch"—allowing listeners across identities to hear themselves reflected in its aching restraint. Co-written with bassist and producer Marcus Miller, the track exemplifies late-1980s R&B sophistication: sumptuous harmonies, immaculate groove, and heartbreak delivered with unalloyed elegance.



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## PROGRAM CONTINUED

### **"The Joke" (2017)**

**by Brandi Carlile (b. 1981), Dave Cobb (b. 1974), Phil Hanseroth (b. 1975), and Tim Hanseroth (b. 1975)**

#### **MELODY MOORE**

Brandi Carlile wrote "The Joke" as an anthem for people pushed to society's furthest edges, explicitly naming queer youths among those she hoped the song would reach. Its slow-building structure—beginning as a folk confession before erupting into gospel-scale catharsis—turns private pain into collective affirmation. Carlile, one of the most prominent openly lesbian artists in contemporary Americana, has repeatedly framed the song as a reminder that ridicule eventually collapses under the weight of truth, wisely assuring us that "I've seen how it ends / And the joke's on them."

### **"Let It Rain" (2002) by Tracy Chapman (b. 1964)**

#### **REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

Tracy Chapman's writing resists easy categorization: folk storytelling, political witness, and understated emotional directness coexist in nearly every song she touches. In "Let It Rain," Chapman strips her sound down to its essentials. She is sincerity in sound: Over a bed of bluesy figures and gospel harmonies, Chapman's burnished, contralto voice reassures that the best is yet to come. "Give me hope," she intones, "That help is coming / When I need it most." You are not alone: After suffering comes truth, and after truth, enduring hope and sublime renewal.

### **"Gender Binary (F\*ck You)" (2020) by Ryan Cassata (b. 1993)**

#### **NIKOLA PRINTZ**

Ryan Cassata's irresistibly catchy song, "Gender Binary (F\*ck You)," transforms frustration—over labels, gender binary stereotypes, and toxic masculinity—into an act of unrestrained and empowered defiance. The song draws from pop-punk and protest-folk traditions where directness is the point. Cassata, a transgender activist and songwriter, deftly places queer identity not at the outer margins of performance but at the center of authorship itself, declaring "I just want to wear what fits me."

## **FINALE MEDLEY**

**"Greatest Love of All" (1976) by Linda Creed (1948–1986) and Michael Masser (1941–2015)**

**"Everybody Rejoice (A Brand New Day)" (1974) by Luther Vandross (1951–2005)**

**"I'm Coming Out" (1979) by Bernard Edwards (1952–1996) and Nile Rodgers (b. 1952)**

**MELODY MOORE, NIKOLA PRINTZ, AND REGINALD SMITH, JR.**

**SADIE CHESLAK • ALEXA FRANKIAN • THOMAS KINCH**

"Give them a sense of pride," sings the globally adored singer Whitney Houston in "Greatest Love of All," a song where self-worth and self-love are turned into a power ballad. The upbeat number "Everybody Rejoice (A Brand New Day)," written by multi-platinum artist Luther Vandross for the Broadway hit *The Wiz*, exults in a euphoric outlook on the future. "Freedom, you see, has got our hearts singing so joyfully / Just look about / You owe it to yourself to check it out / Can't you feel a brand new day?"—this is personal renewal amplified by ecstatic collective celebration. "I'm Coming Out" was made famous by Diana Ross, and produced by Chic masterminds Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers after Rodgers observed the phrase painted across New York drag clubs in the late 1970s. From disco hit to queer anthem, what began as a dance track became a declaration of proud identity and self-worth, truth and visibility, and exuberant joy: "I'm coming out, I want the world to know, I got to let it show!"

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*Program annotations by Jeanette Yu, editorial consultant for San Francisco Opera, program writer and designer at Chamber Music SF, art director at Masterworks Chorale, and editorial director of California Freemason magazine.*



# About the Artists



## ROBERT MOLLICONE

(East Greenwich, Rhode Island)

### Conductor

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Conductor for *Pride Concert* (2025), *Christmas with Sol3 Mio*, *Opera in the Park*; Music staff member for more than 50 productions, including *Rusalka*, the *Ring* cycle, *Les Troyens*, *Don Carlo*

**Recent and Upcoming:** *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Florentine Opera); Offenbach's *Songbird* (Florentine Opera); Derrick Wang's *Scalia/Ginsberg* (Florentine Opera); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Austin Opera); *Carmen* (Festival Opera); *La Voix Humaine* (Festival Opera); Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *Elizabeth Cree* (West Edge Opera)

Music Director of Bay Area Rainbow Symphony

Head of Music and Principal Coach of the Artist Diploma in Opera Studies at San Francisco Conservatory of Music

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2012, 2013

Merola Opera Program: 2011

*It is such an honor for me to return to conduct the Pride Concert for a second year in a row. As a young queer person, a visit to San Francisco with my first boyfriend helped me to see a world that I fit into and belonged in for the very first time; to be able to contribute to the celebrations and reflections of Pride in this city that has played such a huge role in my life inside and outside the Opera House is both a pleasure and a responsibility that I cherish!*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS CONTINUED



**MELODY MOORE**, soprano

(Kingwood, Texas)

### **Soloist**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Title role of *Tosca*; Susan Rescorla in Christopher Theofanidis' *Heart of a Soldier*; Mimi in *La Bohème*; Countess Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Mother Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Title role of *Tosca* (New Orleans Opera); Helen Douglass in Ulysses Kay's *Frederick Douglass* (Odyssey Opera, Boston Modern Opera Project); Hostess in Gordon Getty's *Plump Jack* (film); Verdi Requiem (Romanian National Opera Cluj-Napoca, Los Angeles Master Chorale); *Fidelio* concert (Transylvania State Philharmonic); Zemlinsky's *Lyrical Symphony* (Baltimore Symphony); Amneris in *Aida* (LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Minnesota Orchestra); Mother in *Hansel and Gretel* (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, LA Opera); Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (HGO); Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* (HGO); Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* (Washington National Opera); title role of *Salome* (Florida Grand Opera); Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* (Hawaii Opera Theatre); Mahler's *Das Klagende Lied* (Houston Symphony Orchestra); Delius' *A Mass of Life* (Grant Park Music Festival)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2006, 2007

Merola Opera Program: 2005

Facebook: @melodymooresoprano

*I am so excited to return to San Francisco Opera as they are my family. They trained me, and they fed me both musically and spiritually. The Opera taught me a standard that set me up for the rest of my time as a singer. I now teach that same standard to young singers. I am most excited to celebrate both my freedom as a gay woman and to hold hands with all our communities in their own truths, experiences, and journeys.*

*I know that the audience will gather due to a unified love of music AND a unified purpose and pride. Gatherings of this nature are a nonviolent act of protest in the world we navigate now. It is imperative that we show in numbers of support; not just give lip service to that support. We will all be surrounded on June 26th, 2026 with love and commitment to the celebration of human value and inalienable rights.*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS CONTINUED



**NIKOLA PRINTZ**, mezzo-soprano

(Oakland, California)

### **Soloist**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Soloist in *Pride Concert* (2025); title role of *Carmen Encounter*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; Jade Boucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*; Schwabacher Recital Series

**Recent and Upcoming:** Billie Jean King in Laura Karpman's *Balls* (Philharmonia Orchestra at Royal Festival Hall, Opera Parallèle); Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'Été* (Vallejo Symphony); Philip Glass' *Les Enfants Terribles* (Lille Opera); title role of Handel's *Alcina* (Festival Opera); title role of *Carmen* (Festival Opera); Peter Lieberman's *Neruda Songs* (San Francisco Conservatory of Music Orchestra); "Summer of Love" tour (Vermont Symphony Orchestra); Manuel de Falla's *El Sombrero de Tres Picos* (San Francisco Symphony); *Das Lied von der Erde* (San Francisco Ballet, Vallejo Symphony)

San Francisco Adler Fellowship Program: 2023, 2024

Merola Opera Program: 2021, 2022

*I'm so excited for this year's Pride Concert. I love performing for my community! I love that music we perform can be so many things for so many people. It can be a tune we hum for the rest of the night, a deep house beat we dance to, a torch song that grips us. It can be a high note that cuts you in half, a melody that makes you feel empowered, it can even be a way of resistance! I hope the concert is both a good time and a hot cup of coffee in the face of fascism.*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS CONTINUED



**REGINALD SMITH, JR.**, baritone

(Houston, Texas)

### **Soloist**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Count Monterone in *Rigoletto*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Carlisle Floyd's *The Pilgrimage* (Carnegie Hall); Pirate King in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Seattle Opera); Tonio in *Pagliacci* (Minnesota Opera); Verdi Requiem (Oakland Symphony); Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel* (Houston Grand Opera); Mendelssohn's *Elijah* (Windsor Symphony Orchestra); holiday concerts (Phoenix Symphony, Dallas Symphony Orchestra); title role of *Porgy and Bess* (Washington National Opera); Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Sacramento Philharmonic & Opera); Amonasro in *Aida* (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Fort Worth Opera); Scarpia in *Tosca* (New Orleans Opera, New Mexico Philharmonic, Santa Fe Opera); *Giving Voice* concert (HGO); recital (Greenville's Fine Arts Center); title role of *Falstaff* (HGO); Emile in Terence Blanchard's *Champion* (Chicago); Jim in *Porgy and Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Uncle Paul in Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Chicago); Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* (San Diego Opera); Germont in *La Traviata* (Holy City Arts & Lyric Opera); Castor in Gregory Spears' *Castor and Patience* (Cincinnati Opera); Count Monterone in *Rigoletto* (Portland Opera)

Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (2015)

Website: [reginaldsmithjr.com](http://reginaldsmithjr.com)

Instagram: @reggiesings

Facebook: @reginaldsmithjrbaritone

*I am excited to sing such glorious music with fantastic artists, in one of the best cities. Particularly, I am excited to sing "Brand New Day" because I have always been a huge fan of The Wiz and Luther Vandross!*

*Singing a concert is always different than preparing a role for an opera. In an opera, you prepare to take on different characters. With this concert, I get to be my most authentic self. So, for this concert, I look forward to connecting to the audience, not as a character, but as myself, fully and proudly.*





**SAPPHIRA CRISTÁL**

(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

**Emcee**

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Emcee of *Pride Concert* (2025)

Sapphira Cristál (runner-up and Miss Congeniality of *RuPaul's Drag Race* season 16) is a classically trained opera singer, composer, and drag queen known for her theatrical lip syncs and six-octave range. She is renowned as a charismatic host who forges a special connection with her audiences.

Sapphira holds 16 pageant crowns and has performed globally. In 2024, she was thrice the guest artist in Madonna's Celebration Tour, and she debuted her original operatic production, *Soundcake*, with Monét X Change and Thorgy Thor at Lincoln Center. Afterward, she brought her one-woman show, *The Cristál Ball Tour*, across North America. Recently, Sapphira has hosted and headlined Pops programs with San Francisco Opera, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

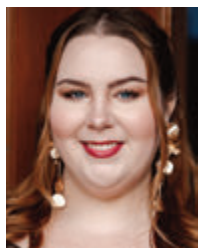
Sapphira inspires young people through appearances at colleges, youth camps, and high schools. She taught several years of master classes in drag makeup and performance at Emerson College, and she has given artist talks at Rockland Community College. An experienced attitude and stage presence coach, Sapphira has also taught master classes at the Philadelphia Burlesque Academy and various dance studios.

Sapphira enjoys partnering with charitable organizations to raise funds to change people's lives. Her personal credo is: "There is no better exercise for the heart than reaching down to lift someone up," and she has made it her mission to uplift, encourage, and inspire those around her. @sapphiracristal



*I had a great time at last year's Pride Concert! It was a one-of-a-kind event, and I truly loved the music. I am honored that SFO enjoyed having me enough to ask me back. This is a fantastic event to hold during Pride month—not only because it is top-tier entertainment for those in the LGBTQIA+ community who love classical and orchestral music but also because it showcases the defining footprint that queer people have left on music as a whole. As a lifelong lover of opera, I am supremely humbled and beyond grateful for this opportunity to stand on a stage graced by so many greats of the industry over the years—in one of the most prestigious opera houses in the world. Hosting this concert feels like an affirmation that I am truly a part of this artistic community that has been formative and fundamental to me for my entire life. Who knows? Maybe it will become tradition!*

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS CONTINUED



### SADIE CHESLAK

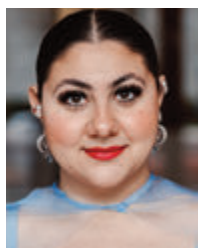
(Duluth, Minnesota)

#### Mezzo-Soprano

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Second maidservant in *Elektra*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Erda in *Das Rheingold* (San Francisco Opera);

Principessa in *Suor Angelica* scenes (Merola Opera Program); Orphée in excerpts of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* (Wolf Trap Opera); workshopped Ellen Reid's *p r i s m*, Ilya Demutsky's *Black Square*, and the title role of Sky Macklay's *The Surrogate* Winner of The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (2025) San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2026 Merola Opera Program: 2025



### ALEXA FRANKIAN

(Oakville, Ontario, Canada)

#### Soprano

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:**

Klytemnestra's trainbearer in *Elektra*; Mimi in *Bohème Out of the Box*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Mimi in *La Bohème*

(Merola Opera Program); title role of *Iolanta* (Merola); excerpts as the title role from *Suor Angelica*, Alice Ford from *Falstaff*, and Fidelia from Puccini's *Edgar* (Merola); Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Philadelphia's Academy of Vocal Arts); Suzel in Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* (AVA); Despina in *Così fan tutte* (AVA); Henech Kon's *Bas Sheve*; Alice Ho's *The Monkiest King* San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2026 Merola Opera Program: 2024, 2025



### THOMAS KINCH

(Cardiff, Wales)

#### Tenor

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Don José in *Carmen*; Melot in *Tristan und Isolde*; First Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*; Amelia's Servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Fourth

Squire in *Parsifal*; An officer in *The Barber of Seville*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Earl of Bothwell in *Thea Musgrave's Mary, Queen of Scots* (San Francisco Opera); Florestan in *Fidelio* (Utah Opera); title role in Act II of *Otello* (Schwabacher Summer Concert); Macduff in Verdi's *Macbeth* (Paisley Opera/Scottish Opera); Turiddu in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (*A Paisley Kiss*) (Paisley Opera); Licinio in Gaspare Spontini's *La Vestale* (New York's Teatro Grattacielo); First Armored Man in *The Magic Flute* (Welsh National Opera); Turiddu and Canio in *Cavalleria*

*Rusticana/Pagliacci* (Iford Arts); Lt. B.F. Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (Opera Bohemia, OperaUpClose); Turiddu (Edinburgh Grand Opera)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2024, 2025, 2026 Merola Opera Program: 2023



### E. REED FISHER

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

#### Stage Director

**San Francisco Opera Highlights:** Stage Director of *Pride Concert* (2025); Associate Director for Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*;

Assistant Director for *Carmen*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Don Giovanni*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Les Troyens*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *La Bohème*, Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*

**Recent and Upcoming:** Associate Director for *Manon* (San Francisco Opera); Assistant Director for *Bohème Out of the Box* (San Francisco Opera)



### 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* (2025); *Idomeneo*; *Rigoletto* (2025)

**Recent and Upcoming:** *Macbeth* (Magic Theatre); *Gods & Monsters* (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, Shall We Dance, Big Top Dreamers* (Transcendence Theater Company); *Rich Girl* (Florida Studio Theater); *COLORED* (Kyle Marshall Choreography); *The Book of Mountains and Seas*; *PrEP Play, or Blue Parachute*; *Getting There*; *To My Girls* (New Conservatory Theatre Center)

Instagram: @justinlights

Website: justinpartierlighting.com

# Denise Littlefield Sobel



DREW ALTIZER

**D**enise 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 San Francisco Opera commissioned its first opera in Spanish, *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, Denise made Spanish supertitles available for the first time. Last year, she sponsored San Francisco Opera's first Pride Concert. Denise is continuing her tremendous support for tonight's performance. Join us in thanking Denise for her leadership in making tonight possible.



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# Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

## FIRST VIOLIN

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

## SECOND VIOLIN

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

## 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

## BASS

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

## FLUTE

Stephanie McNab, *Acting Principal*  
Susan KangΣ↑  
Katrina Walter↑

## PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab  
Susan Kang↑

## OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*  
Gabriel Young, *Associate Principal*  
Benjamin Brogadir

## ENGLISH HORN

Benjamin Brogadir

## CLARINET

José González Granero, *Principal*  
Joshua Choi  
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*  
Anthony Delivanis  
Logan BryckΣ

## TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*  
Scott Macomber  
John PearsonΣ

## TROMBONE

Michael Cox, *Principal*  
Samuel Wamhoff↑  
David Ridge

## BASS TROMBONE

David Ridge, *Principal*

## TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman, *Principal*

## TIMPANI

John Burgardt, *Principal*

## PERCUSSION

Patricia Niemi, *Acting Principal*  
Victor Avdienko↑

## HARP

Eleanor Kirk, *Principal*

## LIBRARIAN

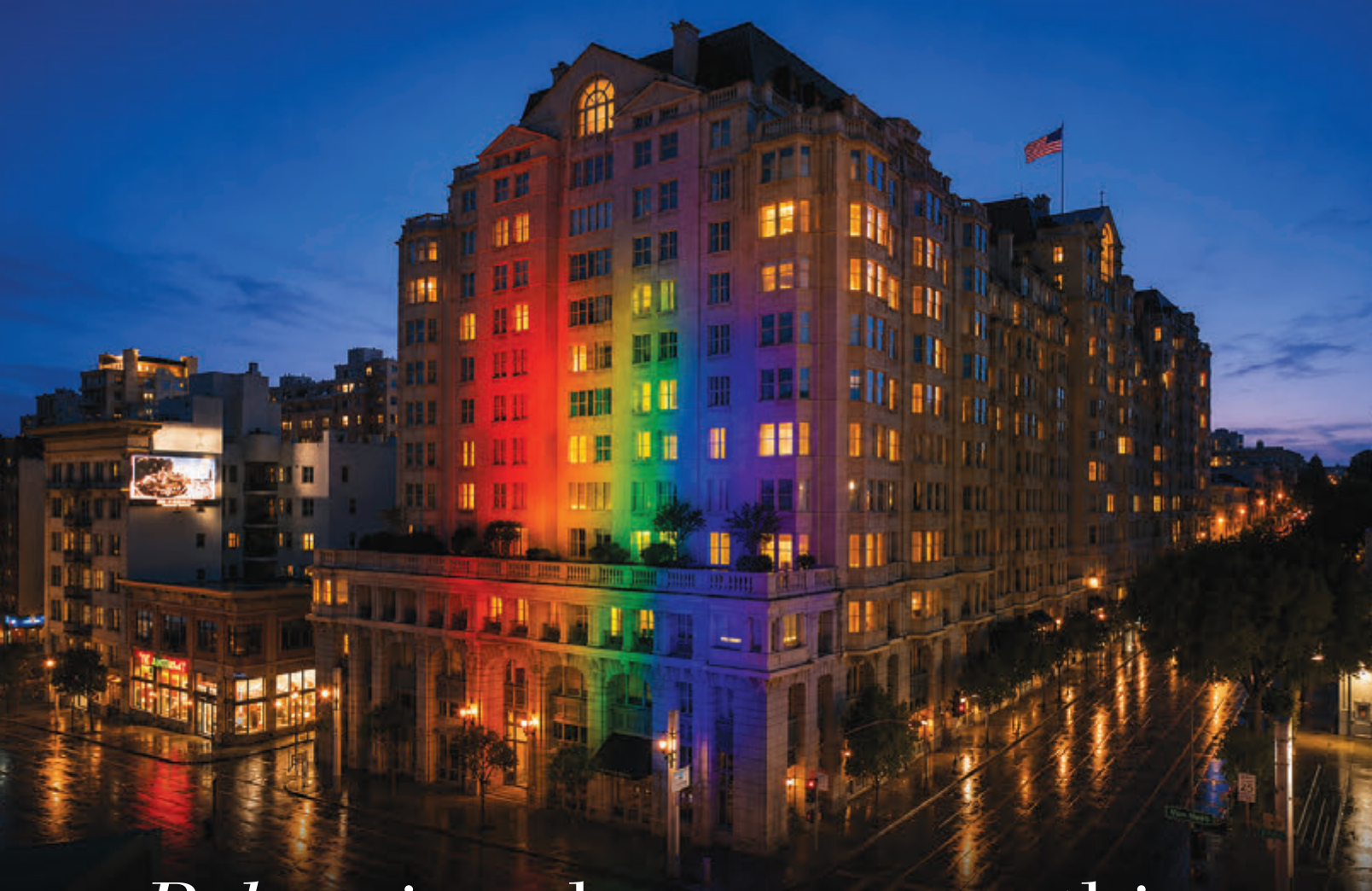
Carrie Weick

√ Leave of absence

Σ Principal for one or more

Summer season operas

↑ Season Substitute



# *Belonging* changes everything.

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San Francisco Towers is proud to support the San Francisco Opera Pride Concert and a city shaped by creativity, individuality and connection, where people can live openly, authentically and where they truly belong.



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# Schedule for the Evening

Start your evening with a visit to **The Marigold Project's Community Altar: Rainbows All Around Us**, located at the top of the stairs on Van Ness Avenue. The Altar embraces and celebrates the depth of the human experience by creating a collective display of care, healing and well-wishers.

## 7 PM DOORS OPEN

Visit the Grand Tier level to view our various Pride exhibits:

### *Northside*

Selections of the **AIDS Memorial Quilt**, provided by the **National AIDS Memorial**  
**The Rainbow Pride Flag Project** featuring a series of unique hand-bound books and book-art objects crafted from the decommissioned Castro Pride flag

### *Southside*

View a light box installation created in collaboration with the **GLBT Historical Society**

## 7:05 PM PRE-CONCERT TALK

Before the concert, lead book artist Insiya Dhatt moderates a panel with artists Dominic Riley, Servane Briand, and Bridget McGraw.

## 8 PM CONCERT BEGINS

## 9:35 PM POST-SHOW DANCE PARTY WITH DJ JUANITA MORE!

Once the concert ends, the dance floor opens and the party continues with DJ Juanita MORE!

## 10:30 PM LAST CALL

## 11 PM EVENING ENDS, THANKS FOR JOINING US!

**LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY ACTIVATION SPONSOR, THOMAS E. HORN & BOB ROSS FOUNDATION**

### A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS







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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S 2026-27 SEASON

# Join Us on Opening Weekend



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026

## Open the Season in Style!

Secure your place at San Francisco Opera's biggest fundraiser of the year, with proceeds supporting the future of opera and opera education in the Bay Area.

**TICKETS ON SALE NOW**  
**SFOPERA.COM/OPERA BALL**

*Opera Ball* is made possible, in part, by  
Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey.



SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2026  
ROBIN WILLIAMS MEADOW | 1:30PM

## Opera in the Park

**Free and open to all!**

Join us for this beloved Bay Area tradition.  
Music Director Eun Sun Kim leads the San Francisco  
Opera Orchestra and stars from San Francisco Opera's  
2026-27 Season in an afternoon of glorious music.

*Opera in the Park* is made possible, in part, by  
Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey.

Additional support provided by the William and Gretchen Kimball Fund and Kaiser Permanente.

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Illustrations by Brian Stauffer.