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Mary, Queen of Scots

BY THEA MUSGRAVE



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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Vol. 104, No. 2 • 2026–27 Season • September/October 2026

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AT A GLANCE AND OVERVIEW

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**Encore—Connecting Arts, Culture
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Simon Boccanegra

MUSIC BY **GIUSEPPE VERDI** • REVISED LIBRETTO BY **ARRIGO BOITO**

Structure: Prologue and 2 acts, with one intermission

Running time: 2 hours, 50 minutes

Language: Italian with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Simon Boccanegra*, a hero of the people, elected doge of Genoa
- *Amelia Grimaldi*, Simon's long-lost daughter, raised by the Grimaldi family
- *Gabriele Adorno*, a young man in love with Amelia
- *Jacopo Fiesco*, a nobleman who opposes Simon

Based on the life of Genoa's first elected head of state (or doge), Verdi's tragic opera was not a success at its 1857 premiere, and the composer later admitted it was probably too sad or pessimistic for audiences. Nearly a quarter century after the failed premiere, Verdi thoroughly revised the opera in collaboration with librettist Arrigo Boito. The result was an

all-but-new work that stands alongside Verdi's late-period masterpieces *Don Carlo*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. *Simon Boccanegra* follows the title character (pronounced in the Italian form as Simone, or "Si—moan—eh"), who leads a divided society while enduring the heartache of his own fractured family.

In director Claus Guth's production, flashbacks and a split-stage perspective underscore how memory and past events shape the present, while a gradually descending meteorite emphasizes the weight of leadership borne by Simon.

Listen for:

One masterstroke of the 1881 revision of *Simon Boccanegra* was the creation of the Council Chamber scene that ends Act I. In this turbulent finale, grievances threaten to boil over while, outside, the populace sounds ready to revolt. Risking bedlam, Simon admits the mob into the chamber and calls for justice and peace in equal measure. Will the plotters strike? Will the people be pacified? It's a thrilling way to head into intermission!

Mary, Queen of Scots

MUSIC AND LIBRETTO BY **THEA MUSGRAVE**

Structure: 3 acts, 2 intermissions

Running time: 3 hours

Language: English with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Mary Stuart*, newly returned to Scotland as queen
- *James Stewart, Earl of Moray*, Mary's half-brother
- *The Earl of Bothwell*, a baron of the Lowlands and eminent soldier, ultimately Mary's third husband
- *Lord Darnley*, Mary's second husband

Mary, Queen of Scots, the fifth of 11 operas to date by Scottish composer Thea Musgrave, explores self-reliance amid harrowing trials in the life of one of history's most iconic royals. While Romantic playwright Friedrich Schiller, bel canto composer Gaetano Donizetti, and numerous 20th-century novelists and filmmakers have dramatized Mary's conflict with Elizabeth I and subsequent execution for treason, Musgrave's opera focuses on the young queen as she fights to retain power

while three men—her half-brother, her husband, and a potential ally—vie to control her. Musgrave's libretto juxtaposes episodes of public unrest with the gentle normalcy of the queen singing a lullaby to her baby, the future king of Scotland and England, while Musgrave's incisive score propels the action forward with raw intensity and soaring emotion.

San Francisco Opera affiliate Spring Opera Theater presented the West Coast premiere of Musgrave's opera in April 1979 at the Curran Theatre, with the composer conducting. The Company's first opera by a female composer returns this season for its mainstage premiere in a co-production with English National Opera by director and designer Stewart Laing.

Listen for:

Act I concludes with a ball where French and English period dances and a traditional Scottish air dramatically collide. As the different musical styles continue to overlap, the latent social tensions within Mary's court are exposed and the sectarian fault lines erupt.

WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to the 2026-27 Season! We are delighted that you are joining us for another year of extraordinary artistry on the War Memorial Opera House stage. The launch of a new season is always a special moment as we reaffirm the importance of coming together as a community to make and receive art. Our general director, Matthew Shilvock, addresses why this is so important in his back-page article.

Opera making here is possible because of an ecosystem of exceptionally devoted professionals, each dedicated to their craft at the highest level of excellence. It begins with an incredible core of talented people who are with us throughout the season—our orchestra, chorus, dancers, crews, stage management, music staff, and our administrative staff. We then welcome creative teams and cast members from all around the world who join us for 6-8 weeks for individual productions.

It is always exciting to feel the intersection of Bay Area-based talents and visiting artists coming together in shared art-making. Sustaining creativity of this caliber here in our own community is vitally important to what it means to be such an iconic part of the world.

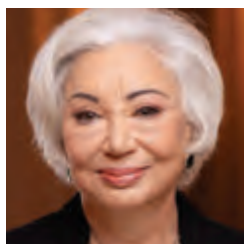
This is our 104th season and the exciting trends that began in the centennial continue with new audiences and donors: full subscriptions have grown by 12 percent this season, and last year we welcomed many new generous donors. Artistically we continue to enjoy a blend of thrilling new operas, and beautifully told canonical operas, and we are preparing to launch the *Ring* cycle with this summer's *Das Rheingold*.

Thank you for being a part of this operatic journey with us. Extraordinary things await, and we are thrilled to share them with you. We invite you to return often and see the many wonderful and varied productions on this incredible stage.

With warmest wishes,



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



Jack Calhoun
President
San Francisco Opera Association





The Opera In You Workshop / KRISTEN LOKEN

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Opera Unbound is a suite of free community programs presented by San Francisco Opera's Department of Engagement & Connectivity, in partnership with public libraries and community centers throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Whether we're giving riveting opera talks, hosting screenings of performances from the mainstage, or hosting book clubs that dive into the literary works that inspire the stories we tell, we're grateful and honored to partner with the Bay Area's libraries to bring Opera Unbound to you.

The Opera In You 2026 Showcase
MATTHEW WASHBURN



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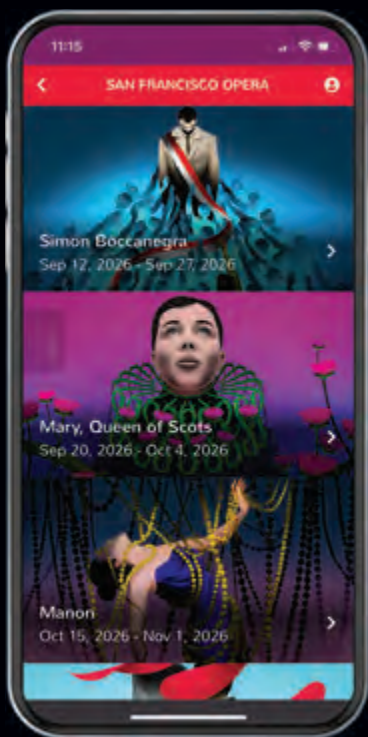


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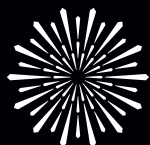
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Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

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Check your coat at the north and south ends of the Main Lobby. For the safety and comfort of our audience, please check large bags at coat check.

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Discover unique opera-inspired menus and special dining experiences at sfopera.com/dine before your next performance. From light bites to elegant meals, the Opera House offers a variety of options.

CAFÉS: Enjoy sandwiches, snacks, and refreshments.

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Dress Circle Lounge • Level 3, South,

Open one hour before curtain

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

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

PRE-ORDER!

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. HELP US MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!

- Please 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.
- We invite you to 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.

ACCESSIBILITY

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 or 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.

LISTENING DEVICES

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

LIVE TITLES: TEXT-TO-VOICE SUPERTITLES

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

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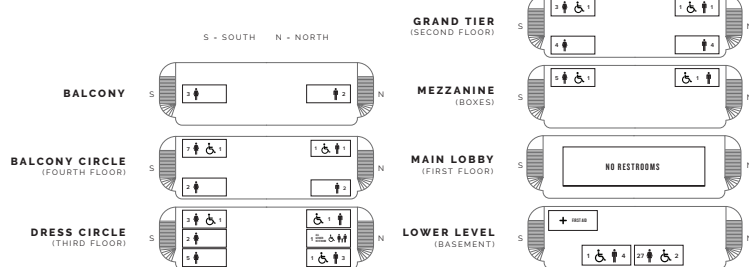
See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

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).

RESTROOMS

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



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



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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).

TAXI SERVICE

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

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

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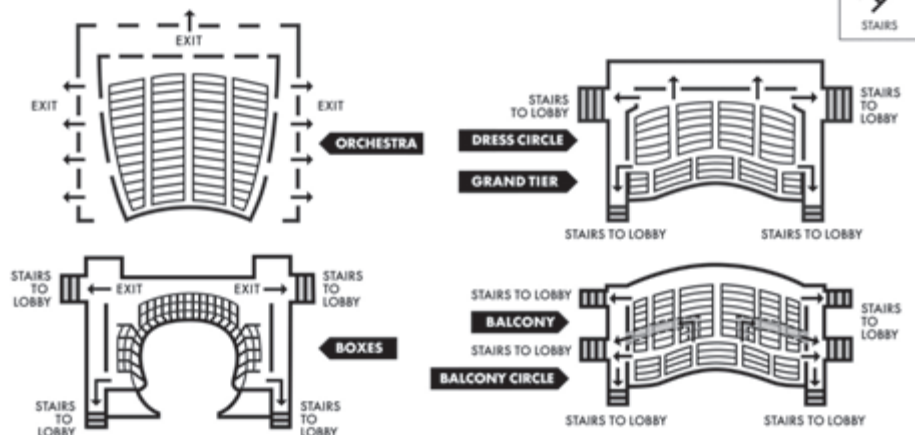
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PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, follow any lighted exit sign to the street. **WALK**, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons, proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.

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.

Jensen & Lori Huang



KRISTEN LOKEN

Last fall, at a very special *Monkey King* event hosted by Jensen and Lori Huang on the War Memorial campus, the Huangs announced a multi-year commitment of \$5 million a year to San Francisco Opera to support its artistic work. Their first gift helped to underwrite the Opera's acclaimed production of composer Huang Ruo and librettist David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*. In this and subsequent seasons, their gifts will support the creative vitality of the Company including mainstage operas, young artist training, community programming such as the *Bohème Out of the Box* series, and digital media initiatives, allowing San Francisco Opera to build on record ticket sales, new audiences, and an exciting creative momentum.

With this extraordinary commitment, the Huangs joined the Opera's Company Sponsors, a group of 18 households who provide seven-figure support for the Company through both annual gifts and through draws on their endowment funds. Jensen Huang, founder and CEO of NVIDIA, said: "San Francisco is home to innovation and

imagination. We are delighted to partner with and support the San Francisco Opera—one of the city's greatest anchors of culture and the arts."

Matthew Shilvock, General Director of San Francisco Opera remarked: "I am profoundly grateful to Jensen and Lori Huang and their family for this breathtaking commitment to San Francisco Opera. At this exciting moment when San Francisco is reverberating with the extraordinary possibilities of innovation, this gift shows what is possible when technology and the arts join to propel forward creativity. This is a great affirmation of the cultural vitality of the Bay Area, and I am overjoyed to be taking the creativity of the Company forward with Jensen and Lori's heartfelt partnership."

The Huangs' gifts to the Opera are part of a broad investment in the cultural vitality of San Francisco, which includes most recently a groundbreaking \$75M gift to Vanderbilt University to create the Jen-Hsun and Lori Huang College of Art, Architecture and Design in San Francisco.

John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



TERRENCE MCCARTHY

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

A Bay Area native, John's love for opera began in high school through his friendship with Ronald Adler, son of 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.

Marieke & Jeff Rothschild



NOAH BERGER

“**T**he central theme of our philanthropy has been to have a positive impact on the lives of others who have not had the opportunities and good fortune we have enjoyed,” note Marieke and Jeff Rothschild. As 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.”

Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem

Simon Boccanegra and Mary, Queen of Scots



Jan and Maria each cultivated a love of opera from a young age, although they grew up half a world apart. After a distinguished career in publishing in Japan and Europe, Jan Shrem founded Clos Pegase Winery in California's Napa Valley, where he assembled an extraordinary collection of modern and contemporary art. Maria Manetti Shrem achieved international success with her fashion-based entrepreneurial ventures, introducing Gucci and Fendi to major department and specialty stores across the United States. In joyous partnership, the Manetti Shrems have devoted their shared passion and focus to philanthropic causes that advance education, the performing and visual arts, and medical research and care.

Although their lives led them around the globe, their individual passions ultimately brought them to San Francisco Opera—and to each other. As Company Sponsors for more than a decade, Jan and Maria have established four generous funds:

- The Conductors Fund, which helps ensure the continued appearances of distinguished conductors on the podium.
- The Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund, which brings today's most compelling artists in the Italian repertoire to San Francisco Opera.
- The Emerging Stars Fund, which supports the

Company in showcasing exciting, rising young artists throughout the season.

- The Luminaries Concert Fund, which enables San Francisco Opera to present legendary artists for special events and performances.

In December 2022, Maria received The Spirit of the Opera award for her devotion to San Francisco Opera, her exceptional commitment to advancing the Company's success, and her sustained support of the art form. She is the 2023 UC Davis Medal recipient, honored for her profound arts legacy and her passion for fostering exploration and education. In April 2024, Maria made history by donating eight endowments to create an Arts District at the UC Davis College of Letters and Science—the most significant gift in the college's history—ensuring that the arts and humanities are protected in perpetuity and benefiting more than 30,000 students each year, along with top faculty, emerging talents, and world-renowned artists. She is also the 2025 recipient of San Francisco Opera Guild's Crescendo Award.

Her visionary leadership continues to shape the cultural landscape and enrich lives across the globe. Jan Shrem, revered for his generosity and vision, passed away in September 2024 at the age of 94. He is remembered for his philanthropic spirit, and Maria carries the torch forward into San Francisco Opera's future.

Production Sponsor Spotlights



Diane B. Wilsey (Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor)

Dede Wilsey, a longtime San Francisco Opera board member, patron, and Opera Ball supporter, believes deeply in the transformative power of the arts, particularly the multi-faceted world of opera. Says Dede, “It’s a marvelous spectacle. From the voices and pageantry to the scenery, costumes, and acting, opera fills the senses and takes you to another place.” Thanks to Dede’s generosity, opera enthusiasts of all ages have much to celebrate. As Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor for the twentieth consecutive year, she is excited to celebrate the start of our season with the opening performance of *Simon Boccanegra*. She is also supporting the celebratory floral arrangements that grace the War

Memorial Opera House on September 12, the free, annual *Opera in the Park* concert at Robin Williams Meadow on September 13, and the opening production of Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra* under the baton of Eun Sun Kim. Dede’s leadership support was critical in the creation of the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera, a dynamic, intimate space at the Veterans Building, which opened in spring 2016. Her philanthropic commitment to the community extends to many organizations. Dede has been chairman of the board of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco since 1996 and serves on the boards of the San Francisco Opera, Ballet and the War Memorial Performing Arts Center and is a lifetime trustee of UCSF.



Jerome & Thao Dodson (*Simon Boccanegra*)

“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* (*William Tell*), Thao, already an opera lover, suggested to Jerry that they go.

William 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.

DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Production Sponsor Spotlights



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Denise Littlefield Sobel (*Simon Boccanegra*)

Denise Littlefield Sobel is a philanthropist with a longstanding commitment to the visual, performing, and supporting arts. She is at the forefront of several initiatives to promote diversity within the arts, including at San Francisco Opera. Denise serves on numerous diversity committees for other nonprofit organizations. When the Company commissioned its first opera in Spanish, *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, Denise made Spanish supertitles available for the first time. She championed inclusivity through sponsoring San Francisco Opera's *Pride Concert* these past two years, celebrating representation in opera. Denise supports a variety of cultural institutions around the world, including the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, MA, where she is currently the

first woman Chair of the Board of Trustees. In 2019, the French government presented Sobel with the country's highest civilian honor, naming her a Chevalier of the Légion d'honneur in recognition of her extraordinary contributions to French culture. In 2023, she was also appointed an Officer of the French Council of the Order of Arts and Letters. The youngest child of Edmund Wattis Littlefield and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield, she continues her parents' legacy of support of San Francisco Opera through her personal philanthropy and the Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Endowment Fund, which provides a permanent and unrestricted source of income for the Company. In 2021, she and her brother, Ed Littlefield, Jr., received the Crescendo Award, bestowed by the San Francisco Opera Guild, for their family's half-century support of San Francisco Opera.



Dianne Taube (*Simon Boccanegra*)

For more than three decades, Dianne Taube has been a catalyst for growth, innovation, and artistic excellence at San Francisco Opera. Together with her late husband, Tad, she began a relationship with the Company in 1991 that has grown into one of enduring philanthropic partnership and leadership, helping San Francisco Opera expand its artistic ambitions, strengthen its institutional foundation, and reach new audiences.

The Taubes' legacy can be seen throughout the Company. Their major support made possible the **Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater**, creating a vibrant setting for performances and community engagement. Their endowment of the **Tad and Dianne Taube General Director** position reflects their belief in visionary leadership as essential to the Opera's future. And their lead funding for the groundbreaking **Taube Media Suite**, together with their support for **Opera at the Ballpark** simulcasts, has helped extend the experience of San Francisco Opera far beyond the walls of the War Memorial Opera House.

"As an ongoing Company sponsor, Dianne exemplifies the very spirit of philanthropy, inspiring others to give with the same generosity and vision," says Matthew Shilvock, the Tad and Dianne Taube General Director.

Dianne's commitment extends well beyond philanthropy. A member of the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors for more than 25 years, she has contributed her leadership and perspective to the Company's long-term vitality. She and Tad have also sponsored more than 10 productions, helping bring both beloved classics and compelling contemporary works to the stage.

"Our many years with San Francisco Opera reflect a deep belief in the importance of the arts to the life of our community," Dianne says. "Tad and I have always believed that great cultural institutions must both pursue excellence and find new ways to welcome people in. I am especially proud that our support has helped San Francisco Opera reach audiences throughout the Bay Area and beyond. It is deeply meaningful to me to continue that commitment and to help ensure that this extraordinary art form thrives for generations to come."

Production Sponsor Spotlights



San Francisco Opera Guild (*Simon Boccanegra*)

San Francisco Opera Guild is a proud partner to San Francisco Opera. Working with over 60,000 students annually in Bay Area schools and communities, the Guild engages TK grade classrooms in 150 Bay Area schools with a full menu of opera education programs including Sing a Story, Opera Together, Book to Bravo!, Voices for Social Justice, Songs of the Season, Student Dress Rehearsals, and the upcoming holiday debut of *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Young artists seeking in-depth professional training thrive in the Summer Conservatory and Opera Scouts programs which encourage students to explore their voices and perform locally and abroad while learning about culture and artistic practice.

With a focus on social emotional learning as well as skill building, San Francisco Opera Guild believes the life lessons drawn from creative expression are the foundation of confidence, integrity, and compassion. San Francisco Opera Guild is a proud supporter of San Francisco Opera and a Production Sponsor of *Simon Boccanegra*. Giving Voice to Potential since 1939. www.sfooperaguild.com



Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions (*Mary, Queen of Scots*)

San Francisco Opera's tradition of artistic innovation owes much to the vision of Phyllis C. Wattis, whose enduring belief that opera should challenge, inspire, and evolve continues to shape the Company today. Through the **Phyllis C. Wattis Fund for New Productions**, her legacy supports works that expand the possibilities of the art form and bring contemporary stories to the stage.

Mrs. Wattis championed many of San Francisco Opera's most significant productions, including the commissioning of *Dead Man Walking*, as well as works by Tippett, Henze, Berg, and Janáček. Through her endowment, the Company has continued to present ambitious new productions such as *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Innocence*, and this season's *Mary, Queen of Scots*.

General Director Matthew Shilvock reflects, "Mrs. Wattis gave us the courage to forge bold new paths, embrace a dynamic artistic vision, and ensure the cultural vitality of this great city."

Mrs. Wattis believed opera must continually evolve to reflect the world it serves. More than two decades after her passing, her extraordinary legacy continues to inspire San Francisco Opera's commitment to bold artistic creation.



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Louise Gund (*Mary, Queen of Scots*)

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.

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The Australian Ballet in *Oscar* (Sep 25-27), weaving Oscar Wilde's life and work into a ballet of romance and forbidden love.



The most respected countertenor of his generation, **Iestyn Davies** (Oct 25) returns for a ride through 400 years of music, accompanied by harp.



William Kentridge's *The Head & the Load* (Nov 12-15), declared by *The New York Times* as a "fiercely beautiful historical pageant."



Lise Davidsen (Nov 19), "the greatest soprano in the world" (*Telegraph*) sings Bach, Wagner, Reger, Richard Strauss, and more.



The Monteverdi Choir & English Baroque Soloists perform **J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*** (Feb 21) under the legendary Masaaki Suzuki.



Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads the **Vienna Philharmonic** (Mar 2-4) in three ravishing, Mahler-focused programs.

LISE DAVIDSEN, SOPRANO

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The official source for Cal Performances' tickets is calperformances.org.

The San Francisco Opera Donor Family

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

Listed gifts were received between **August 1, 2025 through August 15, 2026**. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of our donor listings. If we have misspelled or omitted a name, please accept our apology and notify us at **(415) 565-3212** or **membership@sfopera.com** so that we may update our records accordingly.

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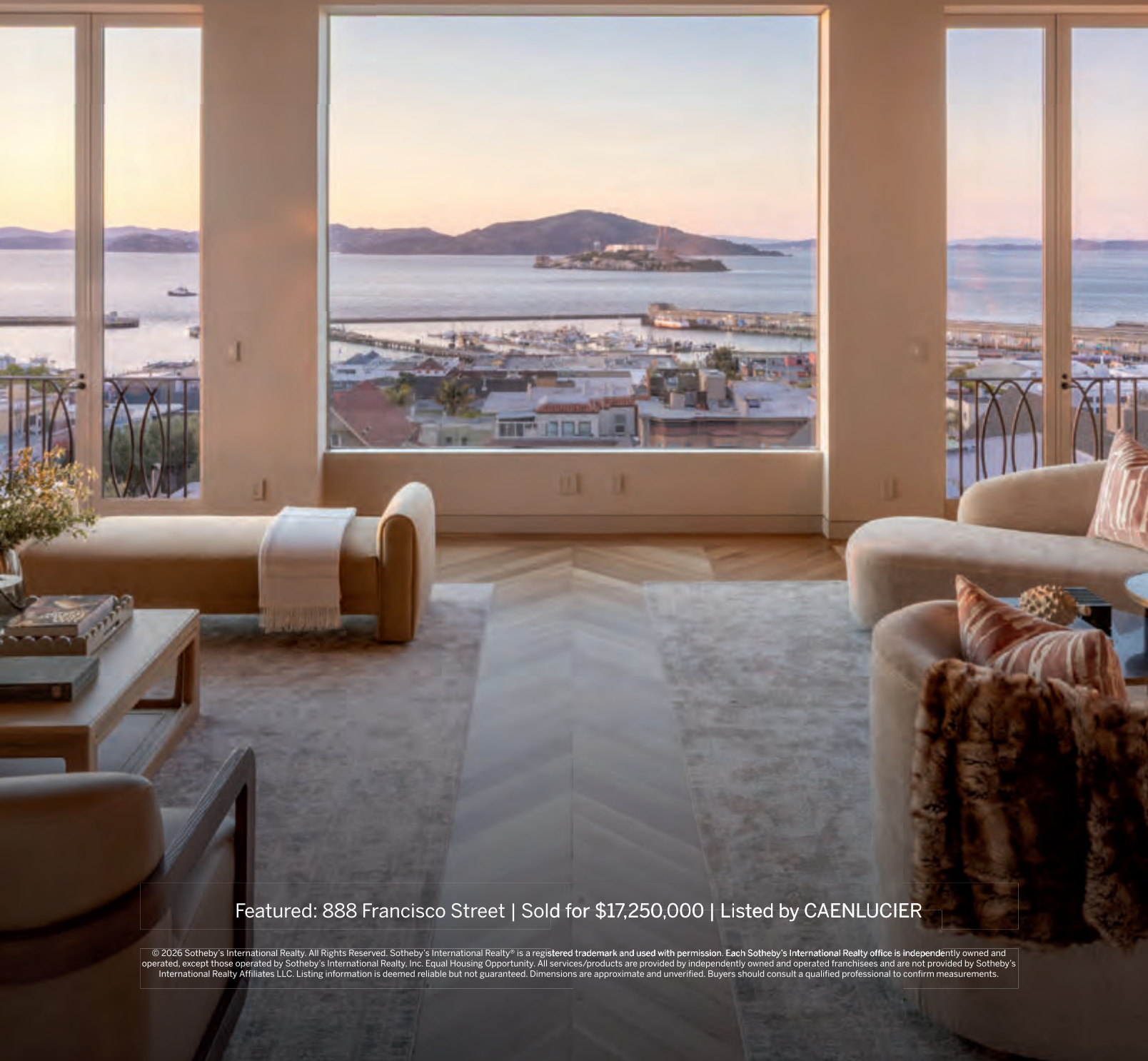
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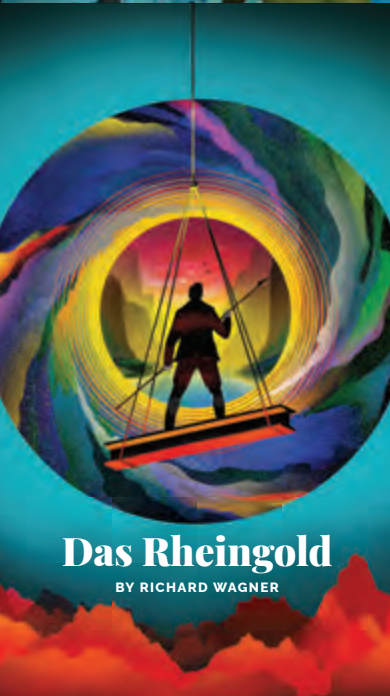
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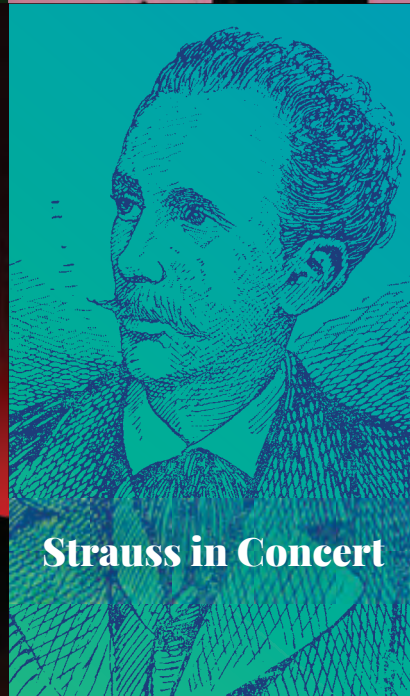
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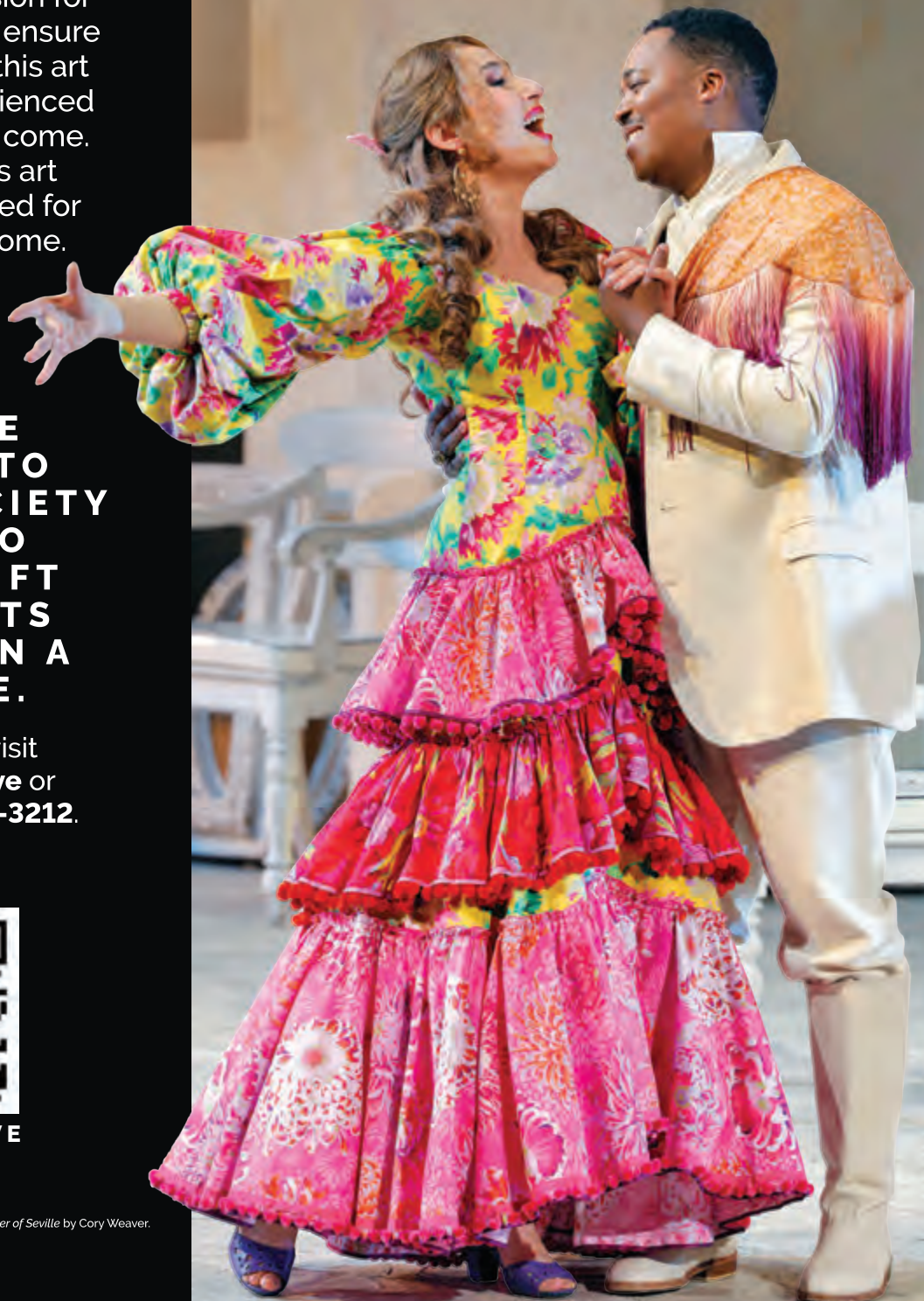
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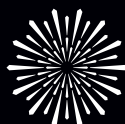


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Mary, Queen of Scots

OPERA IN THREE ACTS BY THEA MUSGRAVE

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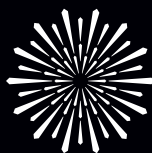
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Mary, Queen of Scots

Set in Scotland during a period of turbulent political and religious upheaval, *Mary, Queen of Scots* follows the young monarch as she navigates the demands of power. Musgrave's opera explores how rival ambitions, religious conflict, and competing loyalties transform a queen's reign into a private tragedy. Mary soon discovers that the greatest threat to her crown comes not from foreign enemies but from those closest to her.

When the opera begins, Mary has recently been widowed as Queen of France and returns to Scotland to claim the throne she inherited as an infant. The kingdom she returns to has transformed in her absence. Protestant reform has eclipsed the Catholic faith in which she was raised, and Scotland's most powerful leaders have grown accustomed to ruling without her. Among the most influential is her Protestant half-brother, James, Earl of Moray. Though barred from inheriting the throne because of his illegitimate birth, his outward loyalty conceals an increasingly determined ambition to govern in her place.

Mary proves herself a capable and diplomatic ruler, refusing to favor the competing factions around her. Every decision carries political consequences. The charismatic Earl of Bothwell, a trusted military commander, and the young English nobleman Lord Darnley emerge as both potential allies and suitors, while James works to ensure that no one weakens his influence over the crown. Hoping to strengthen both her position in Scotland and her claim to the English crown, Mary marries Darnley, whose own claims to the Scottish and English thrones make the match a powerful dynastic alliance.

Rather than securing her future, the marriage accelerates the kingdom's unraveling. The marriage quickly exposes Darnley's vanity and growing unreliability. Sensing an opportunity, James exploits Darnley's jealousy to advance his own designs on power. At the center of the court stands David Riccio, Mary's trusted Italian secretary and closest political confidant, whose friendship with the queen becomes the target of rumor and manipulation. Incited by James and his allies, Darnley murders Riccio before Mary's eyes, shattering both her marriage and her confidence in those around her.

From that point on, Mary's greatest struggle is as personal as it is political. She gradually realizes that every man who claims to protect her—her ambitious half-brother James, her volatile husband Darnley, and the increasingly possessive Bothwell—is ultimately pursuing his own interests. Isolated yet increasingly resolute, she rejects

James's attempts to control the throne and publicly exposes his duplicity, rallying the Scottish people behind their queen.

That triumph proves temporary. After the birth of her son, Mary's grip on the kingdom begins to weaken as rebellion spreads. Seeking protection, she places her trust in Bothwell, only to find herself further compromised by his actions. While Bothwell consolidates his position and James continues his relentless campaign to discredit Mary, Darnley is murdered, and public opinion turns decisively against the queen. Accused of crimes she did not commit and abandoned by many who once supported her, Mary is forced to flee Scotland, leaving behind both her crown and her infant son who will ultimately unify the kingdoms of Scotland and England as James I.

Unlike many dramatizations that focus on Mary's imprisonment and execution in England, Musgrave's opera concludes at the moment her Scottish reign comes to an end. Its emotional climax lies not in martyrdom but in exile and sacrifice: a queen stripped of power, separated forever from her child, and driven from the country she fought to rule. Behind her lies a kingdom divided; before her, an uncertain future.

First performance: Edinburgh, King's Theatre;
September 6, 1977

First performance in the United States:
Norfolk, Virginia Opera, Center Theater; March 29, 1978

First San Francisco Opera performance: Curran Theatre;
April 12, 1979

The 1979 West Coast premiere of *Mary, Queen of Scots* was presented by Spring Opera Theater, a San Francisco Opera affiliate, with the composer conducting. For information about the cast and production, visit archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 13 principals, 45 choristers, 4 dancers; **62 total**

Orchestra: 2 flutes (both doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (2 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 1 trombone, 1 timpani, 2 percussion, 1 harp, 1 organ, 31 strings (10 first violins, 8 second violins, 5 violas, 4 cellos, 4 basses);

52 total

Banda: 1 flute, 1 oboe, 1 English horn, 1 bassoon, 1 trumpet, 1 percussion; **6 total**



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Assistant Conductor
Sara Jobin

Prompter
Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad

Musical Preparation
Bryndon Hassman
Brian Cho†
Peter Walsh
Fabrizio Corona

Diction
Jessica Berman

Assistant Director
Dan Wallace Miller

Stage Manager
Darin Burnett

Assistant Stage Managers
Rosie Burns Pavlik
Megan Coutts
E. Reed Fisher

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Intimacy Director
Maya Herbsman

Technical Supervisors
Erik Walstad
Shannon Dodson

Costume Supervisor
Galen Till

Hair and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 • 2 PM
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 • 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26 • 7:30 PM
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 • 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2 • 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4 • 2 PM

Mary, Queen of Scots

Opera in three acts by **Thea Musgrave**

Based on **Amalia Elguera's** play *Moray*

(Sung in English with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Cardinal Beaton	David Soar
James Stewart, Earl of Moray	Thomas Mole[#]
Earl of Morton	Olivier Zerouali†
Earl of Ruthven	Chance Jonas-O'Toole
Mary, Queen of Scots	Heidi Stober
James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell	Thomas Kinch†
Mary Seton	Sadie Cheslak†
Mary Beaton	Sofia Gotch†
Mary Livingston	Mary Hoskins†
Mary Fleming	Alexa Frankian†
Lord Gordon	Philip Skinner
Henry, Lord Darnley	Christopher Sokolowski*
David Riccio	Hadleigh Adams
Lords	William Lee Bryan, Michael Jankosky
Crowd Member	Sally Mouzon

Soldiers, Courtiers, Lords of Congregation, and people of Edinburgh

[#] American Debut ^{*} San Francisco Opera debut [†] Current Adler Fellow

PLACE AND TIME: A contemporary Scottish city

ACT I

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III

The performance will last approximately three hours with two intermissions.

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.

“Mary, Queen of Scots, Got Her Head Chopped Off”

BY STEWART LAING

Mary Stuart is a historical figure who has also become a mythic one in the popular imagination, like Joan of Arc. For more than four centuries, the facts of Mary's tragic life have inspired storytellers to reshape them for dramatic effect in plays, novels, television series, ballets, films, rock songs, and operas. Perhaps the clearest example is the tempestuous encounter imagined between Mary and her cousin Elizabeth I as they contest each other's right to the English throne. The meeting appears in Friedrich Schiller's German play *Maria Stuart*, Gaetano Donizetti's Italian opera *Maria Stuarda*, and Martha Graham's section of the American dance work *Episodes*. It is also the centrepiece of the 2018 English film *Mary, Queen of Scots*, starring Saoirse Ronan and Margot Robbie as the competing queens and based on John Guy's biography *Queen of Scots: The True Life of Mary Stuart*. Yet it never happened: The two queens never met. One fact is clear, however. As a famous Scotland chant goes, “Mary, Queen of Scots, got her head chopped off.”

Thea Musgrave wrote both the libretto and music for *Mary, Queen of Scots*, and her retelling reflects a woman's perspective in the 1970s, a time of surging feminism in the Western world. Musgrave focuses on Mary's time as Queen in Scotland: the opera begins with Mary's return to Scotland as the widowed queen of France and ends with her abdication and flight from her homeland. Her personal rule in Scotland lasted less than six years. Thea is less interested in Mary's jostling with Elizabeth over the English crown or in dramatizing her execution. Instead, she asks how a woman strives to wield power in a society that is controlled by men. The men who surround Mary—her half-brother James Stuart; her English-born, playboy husband, Lord Darnley; and the military leader, the Earl of Bothwell—all see her merely as a means to secure their own power over Scotland. Musgrave is clearly inspired by historical facts, and she creates a Mary who grapples with her power as a woman—a character shaped, in my mind, as much by the world of the 1970s as that of the 1560s.

Where did this lead me in approaching a new production of Musgrave's extraordinary and dramatic opera? I placed



Stewart Laing.
OMMY GA-KEN WAN

this mythic character in modern dress, as many stage directors have done before me. I imagined a mythic kingdom inspired by the contemporary Scotland where I live. This imagined kingdom is wet and bitterly cold, desperately poor, and home to a downtrodden population fractured by a violent religious schism. I imagined Mary arriving in this bleak environment as a woman of extreme social and material privilege: She has lived a life of luxury and rich culture, adored by the people of a European superpower. Mary begins the opera as a celebrated socialite who abruptly finds herself a mere figurehead in a desolate land. Her journey is her striving for a position of real political authority through turbulent times.

Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* is not a history lesson. If we want one, we can spend a couple of hours on Wikipedia. Instead, Musgrave gives us an imagined world of dynamic, believable characters, thrilling dramatic situations, and the intense emotional truth of her overwhelming music. 🌟

Mary Rules the Stage

**THEA MUSGRAVE
TRANSFORMS A
TURBULENT CHAPTER
OF SCOTTISH HISTORY
INTO A VIVID CONTEST
OF POLITICS, DESIRE,
AND SOUND**

BY DEREK KATZ

Since its 1977 premiere, performances of Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* have been received as major events, with the critics praising the opera's dramatic power and unusually effective interplay of words and music. Andrew Porter of *The New Yorker* was "bowled over" and "carried away" by the American premiere, which he described as turning Norfolk, Virginia, for a while into "the center of America's operatic life." Porter specifically praised the emotional power of Musgrave's melodic lines, the tensions of her harmonies, and the colors of her orchestration, which eloquently matched the drama's striking visual elements and made him care deeply about its central character. The *San Francisco Chronicle's* Robert Commanday, reviewing the 1979 West Coast premiere by Spring Opera Theater, a San Francisco Opera affiliate, called the opera "triumphant," with "a drama cast in the manner of a Shakespearean history" and a "wonderful wedding of words to music." Now San Francisco Opera brings Musgrave's sweeping, expressive historical drama to the War Memorial Opera House for its mainstage premiere, at a time when the tensions among power, loyalty, ambition, and personal desire could hardly be timelier.



Heidi Stober as the title role of *Mary, Queen of Scots*
in Stewart Laing's production.
ELLIE KURTZ/ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA



The striking union of words and music noted by Commanday is the product of an unusual compositional process. Musgrave wrote the libretto herself, basing it on an unfinished play by Amalia Elguera, the Peruvian poet and writer who had provided the libretto for Musgrave's previous opera *The Voice of Ariadne*. For *Mary, Queen of Scots*, Musgrave not only reworked Elguera's play but allowed music and text to develop in tandem. Working from a draft outline of the drama, she revised the libretto as the composition developed so that, in her own words, "the libretto could reflect the demands made by the music and vice versa." Musgrave also shifted the dramatic focus. Elguera's play, *Moray*, centered on Mary's half-brother James Stewart, Earl of Moray. As Musgrave sets it, James remains the protagonist, but Mary becomes the opera's central character. Mary is both the emotional core of the opera and the meatiest vocal role, while the opera explores

her doomed relationships with the men who surround her and their competing agendas.

Fault Lines

Musgrave illuminates these relationships through compositional techniques and devices, many familiar from earlier historical operas. The chorus frequently establishes the character of each scene. The men first appear as monks, intoning prayers in Latin. In the next scene, they join the women in an offstage farewell to France, sung in French by Mary's retinue as she arrives in Scotland; later, they become soldiers and townspeople who process onstage to welcome Mary in English. These echoes of Gregorian chant and French song are joined by many other instances of music borrowed or composed in imitation of older styles to evoke time and place. The opera opens with "The Bonnie Earl of Moray," a traditional Scottish air about one of its central characters, played by three oboes in their bagpipe-like lowest register. Borrowed and deliberately archaic music is concentrated in the ballroom scene that ends in Act I. A small stage band plays French and Italian dance music, including a Pavanne and a Saltarello composed by Musgrave in a plausibly Renaissance style, a Branle published by Pierre Attaignant in the 16th century, and a Dance Royale and a Rotta from even earlier collections. These dances collide with a Scottish song, using music in the style of Mary's time and a verse by Scottish court poet William Dunbar. A lute

***"Musgrave has a
sure instinct for
operatic gesture
and spectacle."***



song for Lord Darnley's Italian companion Riccio, accompanied by two solo violas, plucked cello, and harp, evokes the timbres of Renaissance viols, lutes, and guitars. The soundscape is distinctively Musgrave's, but both her use of pre-existing music and her allusions to older styles conjure the atmosphere of Mary's 16th-century court.

Dramatically, the songs and dances of the ballroom scene establish the tension among the characters. James, Earl of Moray, is angered when Mary dances foreign dances with Henry, Lord Darnley, who has recently arrived from Queen Elizabeth's court. Meanwhile, the Earl of Bothwell and his men shout down the dance music with their Scottish song; Mary restores the peace by joining them. This use of song and dance to evoke period revelry and heighten social tensions has distinguished precedents: the three simultaneous dance bands in the Act I finale of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*; the offstage dance music that begins Verdi's *Rigoletto* (another opera set in the 16th century, though Verdi makes little attempt to evoke its period musically); and, perhaps most relevantly, the courtly dances from Benjamin Britten's *Gloriana*.

The musical conflict created by different dances and songs sounding at once is an immediately audible hallmark of Musgrave's works. She was particularly interested in the music of American composer Charles Ives and adapted his practice of layering musical ideas that move at different speeds, offering multiple and simultaneous musical frames

of reference. At many moments in the score, the orchestra plays repeated figures whose relationship to the vocal lines is unspecified, granting unusual freedom to the singers. Instrumentalists are occasionally given a span of time and a collection of pitches from which to improvise rhythms and articulations in the moment. Similarly, singers are sometimes given syllables and pitches but no rhythms, allowing them to follow the contours of natural speech freely. Musgrave is especially fond of placing one character in the foreground, singing a fully notated arioso melody while another provides speechlike commentary to the side.

Musgrave has a sure instinct for operatic gesture and spectacle. The martial brass fanfares that accompany the soldier Bothwell are an obvious example. This pairing of music with character has a subtler echo in the frequent use of English horns for Mary's music. The score is full of interpolated songs, including Riccio's Act I lute song and the gorgeous Act III lullaby sung by Mary and Mary Seton. Although nothing quite functions as a conventional aria, scenes often center on extended melodic ariosos for one or more principals that teeter on the brink of aria, duet, or trio, creating the balance among solo numbers, ensembles, and choruses from earlier works.

Westward Ties

Mary, Queen of Scots is unmistakably Scottish: composed by a Scot, it dramatizes a pivotal moment in Scottish

A scene from English National Opera's 2025 presentation of *Mary, Queen of Scots* with David Riccio (Barnaby Rea) and Lord Danley (Rupert Charlesworth).

ELLIE KURTZ/ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA



Heidi Stober as the Scottish queen, 2025.

ELLIE KURTZ/ENGLISH NATIONAL OPERA

history and even incorporates a traditional Scottish ballad. Yet the opera's creation and early performance history tell a California story, with San Francisco Opera in a leading role. Musgrave composed *Mary, Queen of Scots* while living in Santa Barbara, where she had first arrived in 1970 as a guest composer at University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). She soon began writing pieces for UCSB faculty, including violist Peter Mark. Their productive artistic collaboration led to *Elegy* for Mark and cellist Geoffrey Rutkowski; a piece for viola and electronic tape; and later, a viola concerto for Mark; it also led to their marriage in 1971. Afterward, Musgrave increasingly made Santa Barbara her American home and became a prominent part of its music scene. Her works were heard frequently in the community; she conducted her own music with the Santa Barbara Symphony and on campus, where she taught in UCSB's College of Creative Studies.

The opera's early productions also had a distinct California flavor. Mark became artistic director of Virginia Opera in 1975, a position he held for 35 years. Virginia Opera gave the American premiere of *Mary, Queen of Scots* in March 1978, during the company's third full season. Mark conducted the production, which was directed by David Farrar, another California-trained artist at the beginning of a distinguished career. The founding stage director of Virginia Opera, Farrar knew Mark from UCSB, where he

had been a graduate student and faculty member. An outstanding bassoonist, he had also been a fellow at Music Academy of the West and principal bassoonist of the Santa Barbara Symphony before turning from instrumental performance and musical scholarship to stage direction. Farrar directed the following production of *Mary, Queen of Scots*, given by San Francisco Opera's Spring Opera Theater at the Curran Theatre in April 1979, with Musgrave conducting. After a subsequent 1981 production at New York City Opera conducted by Mark, Musgrave quipped, "Peter took care of the East Coast, and I the West Coast."

Mary, Queen of Scots is an opera full of incident and narrative sweep. Across the years of Scottish history it covers, there are four deaths, a sexual assault, two banishments, a marriage, and a childbirth. Many of these events occur offstage, making room for Musgrave to develop the opera's emotional core: the fears, jealousies, ambitions, and desires of its characters. Her focus on the inner lives of these familiar yet remote historical figures makes them recognizable and brings their situations to life. That focus gives *Mary, Queen of Scots* such expressive power and helps explain why Musgrave's achievement continues to rule the stage. 🌟

Derek Katz is an Associate Professor of Musicology at University of California, Santa Barbara.



Mary, Queen of Scots portrait by unknown artist from the Scottish Catholic Heritage Collections Trust. / ALAMY

Queen in Her Own Right

LONG CAST AS ELIZABETH I'S DOOMED OPPOSITE, MARY WAS A SHREWD SOVEREIGN WHO NAVIGATED THE PERILOUS CONVERGENCE OF GENDER, FAITH, AND DYNASTIC POWER

BY ETHAN H. SHAGAN

In books and movies, Mary, Queen of Scots (1542–1587) is too often reduced to a dramatic foil for her cousin Elizabeth I of England (1533–1603)—the moon reflecting Elizabeth's light rather than a sun in her own right. England and Scotland were wholly distinct kingdoms in the sixteenth century, but they were trapped together on their island like two snakes in the same egg. By depicting Mary as Elizabeth's dupe, English writers can suggest that the smaller kingdom of Scotland was never more than a wholly owned subsidiary of England, even though they did not become the Kingdom of Great Britain until 1707, 165 years after Mary's birth. Casting Mary as

Elizabeth's sacrificial lamb, offered up for the good of both kingdoms, promotes a national myth of Elizabethan glory and of Britain as its natural extension.

But there is more at stake in this tradition of representation: There is also the politics of gender and sexuality. In the kingdoms of old Europe, royal bodies were strangely public rather than private. One of a monarch's principal duties was to produce an heir, which they did through the same passionate, awkward, sweaty business as the rest of us. Every kingdom was thus hostage to what its monarch chose to do with their body, their attractions and proclivities, their pairings and



Above: Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, where Mary resided upon her return to Scotland in 1561. / ROBERT WYATT, ALAMY
 Top right: Embroidered panel inscribed "A Catte" and bearing Mary's cipher
 was likely made by the Scottish Queen while she was held captive in England. / ROYAL COLLECTION, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS
 Bottom right: Engraving of James Stewart (1531–1570), Mary's half-brother, the illegitimate son of King James V. / ALAMY

jealousies. Desire was a matter of state. This premodern intersection of sex and power is part of what makes thrones and their games so endlessly fascinating to modern audiences. But it trapped female monarchs, in particular, in an impossible double bind. Queens could not fulfill their public duties without sexuality, yet public female sexuality invited charges of "whoredom." How, then, could a queen be a good woman—and how could a good woman be a queen?

The coincidence that Scotland and England were simultaneously ruled by women, who adopted divergent responses to this dilemma—one celebrated as the "Virgin Queen," the other scandalously and thrice married—therefore turns any narration of their supposed rivalry into a commentary on appropriate behavior for women. In the gendered plotline usually superimposed on their histories, Mary is imagined to be passionate, impulsive, and feminine, forfeiting political success by swooning over one man after another; in that most traditional of stereotypes, her inability to bridle her emotions and urges leads to her fall. Elizabeth, by contrast, is imagined as calculating, controlled, and masculine, achieving political success by rejecting her suitors and forgoing motherhood. Elizabeth's refusal of domesticity, which embarrassed

many Victorians, has made her a role model for many women today. But there is immense irony in the way a progressive interpretation of Elizabeth, as an icon of independent womanhood, forces us unwittingly into a regressive interpretation of Mary, in which women cannot be rational and political while they remain sexual.

A Crown in Peril

A fair account of Mary's reign therefore requires us to consider Mary on her own terms and remove Elizabeth from the picture altogether—the two had little to do with one another while Mary was still queen. Four pertinent facts are helpful to contextualize the historical Mary Stuart and the immense difficulties she faced to assert her agency in a world ruled by men.

First, when her father King James V, died in December 1542, Mary became queen at the ripe old age of six days, making her one of the youngest monarchs in world history. Of course, an infant could reign but not rule, so regents had to govern in her place until she reached maturity. This was a recipe for civil war—as the Bible puts it, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child!"—and factions were fighting to control Mary and her future while she was still in the cradle.

Second, in a world where sons ordinarily inherited their fathers' titles, queens regnant were an anomaly. In France, women were legally barred from succeeding to the throne. In Scotland there was no formal prohibition, but no woman had ever previously ruled the kingdom in her own right, and many male political and religious leaders regarded female rule as unnatural, disastrous, or a punishment from God.

Third, when a queen married, she was expected, as a woman, to obey her husband. So, the courtship of queens was a matter of intense and often violent negotiation for this privilege and its attendant political power. In 1543, the English sought to bind the infant Mary to marry its young heir to the throne, Edward Tudor. When diplomacy failed, Henry VIII's forces invaded Scotland the following year. The devastating conflict became known as the "Rough Wooing"—a grim metaphor for coercion on a national scale. England failed to secure the match, and Mary instead married the French dauphin Francis in 1558; he became Francis II the next year, making her queen consort of France. But English interference in Scottish politics did not abate.

Fourth and finally, while Mary was in France with her new husband—between their marriage in 1558 and his untimely death in 1560—there was a Protestant Reformation in Scotland, led by a group of nobles known as the "Lords of the Congregation" who embraced the Reformation largely because it gave them an excuse to wrest power from a Catholic queen. Their spiritual leader, the fiery preacher John Knox, was famous for his 1558 misogynist screed *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*.

Mary's reign was structurally compromised by her sex, her age, and her religion, and she faced an uphill climb to consolidate power when she returned to Scotland in 1561. All things considered, she did a remarkable job. She finessed the religion question pragmatically, permitting the Protestant settlement to stand while worshipping privately as a Catholic, and maintaining her Protestant rivals in power, even as the French were spiraling into decades of religious wars. Rather than marrying another foreign prince after her first husband's death, she married her own half-cousin, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, who lacked any independent power base from which to challenge her but who had a decent claim to be heir to the throne of England after the childless Elizabeth died, enabling their son eventually to inherit both crowns. With consummate skill she played off against one another the many men who attempted to use their proximity to her to

gain power for themselves. A neutral observer in 1565 might have congratulated her on a difficult job well done.

The Long Fall

But there was only so long that Mary could hold back the tide before her vulnerable position was overwhelmed. To make a long and genuinely operatic story very short: Darnley, frustrated in his demand for the Crown Matrimonial, betrayed Mary in hopes of being made co-monarch rather than merely consort to his royal wife, conspired with the Protestant lords, and murdered Mary's private secretary, the Catholic David Rizzio. Darnley and Mary briefly reconciled, at least partially, but in February 1567 Darnley was assassinated and a nobleman named James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, was blamed for his death. Mary then scandalously married Bothwell, although whether voluntarily or as the result of another "rough wooing" is a mystery. At that point, having married her late husband's alleged murderer, like *Hamlet's* Gertrude *avant la lettre*, her enemies attacked Mary as an unnatural woman and husband-killer. Rebellion against her became inevitable. In July 1567, she was forced to abdicate in favor of her one-year-old son, James. The following year Mary fled south to England in the misplaced hope that there another reigning queen, her cousin Elizabeth, would empathize and help her regain her throne. Instead, Elizabeth had Mary locked away for almost two decades before finally executing her in 1587.

In the end, the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots—thrust by accident of birth into a brutal world of power, sex, and politics in which women were supposed to be objects rather than agents—was hardly a howling success. But Mary's refusal to be anything but the protagonist of her own story nonetheless makes her a formidable model of female power. Even if her reign finally came crashing down, there were victories, too, both public and private. Mary married strategically, sacrificing her own independence and eventually her life in hopes of dynastic victory. In this she was spectacularly successful: Mary's son, James Stuart, inherited not only the throne of Scotland but of England, too. By contrast, her cousin Elizabeth's refusal to marry meant that she produced no heir, and her dynasty ended with her death, the epitome of political failure. We must remember that it is to Mary Queen of Scots, not to Queen Elizabeth I, that today's British monarchy traces its ancestry. 🌟

Ethan H. Shagan is Jane K. Sather Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley.

Artist Profiles

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



THEA MUSGRAVE
(Edinburgh, Scotland)
Composer and Librettist
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Conductor of *Mary, Queen of Scots*

Queen of Scots

Recent and Upcoming: *Mary, Queen of Scots* (English National Opera)

Select Operas: *The Voice of Ariadne* (1973); *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1977); *A Christmas Carol* (1979); *Harriet, The Woman Called Moses* (1984); *Simón Bolívar* (1992)

Website: theamusgrave.com



CLELIA CAFIERO*
(Naples, Italy)
Conductor
Recent and Upcoming: *Tosca* (San Francisco Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Orange, Angers-Nantes); *Carmen* (Orange, Opera Australia, English National Opera, Marseille); *La Bohème* (Tokyo Nikikai Opera Foundation, Berlin State Opera, ENO); *Maria Stuarda* (Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); *La Traviata* (Semperoper Dresden, Marseille); Offenbach's *La Périochole* (Liège); *Così fan tutte* (Tokyo); *Madama Butterfly* (Quebec Opera); *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Tours); Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (Festival Radio France)

Orange, Angers-Nantes; *Carmen* (Orange, Opera Australia, English National Opera, Marseille); *La Bohème* (Tokyo Nikikai Opera Foundation, Berlin State Opera, ENO); *Maria Stuarda* (Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); *La Traviata* (Semperoper Dresden, Marseille); Offenbach's *La Périochole* (Liège); *Così fan tutte* (Tokyo); *Madama Butterfly* (Quebec Opera); *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Tours); Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (Festival Radio France)



HEIDI STOBER
Soprano
(Waukesha, Wisconsin)
Mary, Queen of Scots
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Blanche in Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *Zdenka in Arabella*; *Angelica in Orlando*; *Gretel in Hansel and Gretel*; *Norina in Don*

Dialogues of the Carmelites; *Zdenka in Arabella*; *Angelica in Orlando*; *Gretel in Hansel and Gretel*; *Norina in Don*

Pasquale; *Pamina in The Magic Flute*; *Oscar in Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Nannetta in Falstaff*; *Susanna in Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Magnolia Hawks in Show Boat*; *Atalanta in Xerxes*; *Johanna in Sweeney Todd*; *Sophie in Werther*

Recent and Upcoming: Title role of Strauss' *Daphne* (Seattle Opera); title role of Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* (English National Opera); *Musetta in La Bohème* (Metropolitan Opera); *Pat Nixon in John Adams' Nixon in China* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); *Poulenc Gloria* (Colorado Symphony); *Brahms Requiem* (Utah Symphony); *Debussy's La Demoiselle Éluë* (Dresden Philharmonic); *Euridice in Orfeo ed Euridice* (Chicago's Music of the Baroque); *Berg's Seven Early Songs* (Hungary's Pannon Philharmonic); *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony* (New Japan Philharmonic on tour, Boston Baroque); *Zdenka in Arabella* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); *Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni* (Berlin, Japan's Hyogo Performing Arts Center); *Micaëla in Carmen* (Berlin, Houston Grand Opera); *Pamina in Die Zauberflöte* (Berlin, Semperoper Dresden); *Oscar in Un Ballo in Maschera* (Berlin); *Despina in Così fan tutte* (Metropolitan Opera, Hamburg State Opera); *Gretel in Hansel and Gretel* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, London's Royal Ballet and Opera); *Dalinda in Ariodante* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Fiordiligi in Così fan tutte* (Semperoper Dresden); *Adina in L'Elisir d'Amore* (Semperoper Dresden); title role of Rahel in Detlev Glanert's *Die Jüdin von Toledo* (Semperoper Dresden); *Johanna in Sweeney Todd* (Opernhaus Zürich); *Antigone in Enescu's Oedipe* (Amsterdam's Dutch National Opera); *Mahler's Second Symphony* (San Francisco Symphony); *Mozart Requiem* (Switzerland's Musikkollegium Winterthur, Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Stravinsky's Cantata* (LA Philharmonic)

@heidistober.soprano



THOMAS MOLE#♪
Baritone
(High Wycombe, UK)
James Stewart, Earl of Moray
Recent and Upcoming: *Count*

Almaviva in The Marriage of Figaro (San Francisco Opera); title role of *Billy Budd* (Glyndebourne Festival); *Harlequin in Ariadne auf Naxos* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Belcore in L'Elisir d'Amore* (Munich); *Male Consort IV in Brett Dean's Of One Blood* (Munich, Santa Fe Opera); *Silvio in Pagliacci* (Munich); *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* (English National Opera at BBC Proms); *Ping in Turandot* (Munich, Santa Fe); *Peter in Hänsel und Gretel* (Munich); *Kuligin in Káťa Kabanová* (Munich); *Fiorello in Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Munich); *Mityukha in Boris Godunov* (Munich); *Guccio in Il Trittico* (Munich); *Third Nobleman in Lohengrin* (Munich); *Schobiak in Le Grand Macabre* (Munich); *Morales in Carmen* (Glyndebourne, BBC Proms); *Escamillo in Carmen* (Opera Holland Park); *Fauré Requiem* (MusicAeterna); *Second Prisoner in Fidelio* (Glyndebourne); *Wagner in Faust* (Munich); *Marullo in Rigoletto* (Munich); *Valentin in Faust* (Munich)



THOMAS KINCH♪†+
Tenor
(Cardiff, Wales)
James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell
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 Il Barbiere di Siviglia*

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

Recent and Upcoming: Tichon in *Kát'a Kabanová* (Polish National 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



CHRISTOPHER SOKOLOWSKI 🎭
Tenor
(The Hudson Valley, New York)
Henry, Lord Darnley
Recent and

Upcoming: Title role of *Parsifal* (Opera Ballet Vlaanderen); title role of *Lohengrin* (Theater Bremen, Budapest's Hungarian State Opera); Manolios in Martinů's *The Greek Passion* (Hannover State Opera); Captain Vere in *The Story of Billy Budd* (Aix-en-Provence Festival); Narraboth in *Salome* (Valencia's Palau de les Arts); Tambourmajor in *Wozzeck* (Brussels' La Monnaie); Walther in *Tannhäuser* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Froh in *Das Rheingold* (Munich); The Shepherd in Szymanowski's *King Roger* (Des Moines Metro Opera, Komische Oper Berlin); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra); Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* (Munich, St Gallen Symphony Orchestra); Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (Lyon National Orchestra) Instagram: @chrisoko7



HADLEIGH ADAMS 🎭+
Baritone
(Wellington, New Zealand)
David Riccio
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Agrippa in

John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; Ormonte in *Partenope*
Recent and Upcoming: Stanley Kowalski in Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Florida Grand Opera); Hawkins Fuller in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* (FGO); title role of *Wozzeck* (West Edge Opera); La Bête in Philip Glass' *La Belle et la Bête* (Atlanta Opera, Opera Parallèle); Doug Hansen in Joby Talbot's *Everest* (Portland Opera, Opera Parallèle); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Seattle Symphony); Britten's *War Requiem* (Brisbane) San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2013, 2014 Merola Opera Program: 2012 Instagram: @hadleigh.adams



DAVID SOAR 🎭
Bass
(Nottinghamshire, UK)
Cardinal Beaton
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Zuniga in

Carmen; Titirel in *Parsifal*
Recent and Upcoming: Bass soloist in Stravinsky's *Les Noces* (Cincinnati May Festival, San Francisco Symphony, Philharmonie de Paris); Judge Turpin in *Sweeney Todd* (Utah Opera, Zurich Opera House); Timur in *Turandot* (Lyric Opera of Kansas City); Fasolt in *Das Rheingold* (Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Zurich); Fafner in *Das Rheingold* (Pacific Symphony); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Hawaii Symphony Orchestra); Handel's *Messiah* (New York's Saint Thomas Church); Hobson in *Peter Grimes* (English National Opera); Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Festival Napa Valley); Capulet in *Roméo*

et Juliette (Zurich); Colline in *La Bohème* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera); Lodovico in Verdi's *Otello* (Royal Ballet and Opera); Mr. Flint in *Billy Budd* (Royal Ballet and Opera); Sir Walter Raleigh in Britten's *Gloriana* (Madrid's Teatro Real, ENO); Beethoven's *Christus am Ölberge* (London Symphony Orchestra) Instagram: @davidsoar_bass



PHILIP SKINNER 🎭+
Bass-Baritone
(Jacksonville, Florida)
Lord Gordon
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Prison Guard in Jake

Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; Barak's One-Eyed Brother in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Benoit/Alcindoro in *Bohème Out of the Box*; Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*; Lepidus in John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; Doctor Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville*; Dansker in *Billy Budd*; The Duke of Verona in *Roméo et Juliette*; Geronte di Ravier in *Manon Lescaut*
Recent and Upcoming: Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (San Francisco Opera); Doctor in *Wozzeck* (West Edge Opera); Benoit/Alcindoro in *La Bohème* (Opera San José); Speaker in *The Magic Flute* (San José); Wotan/Gunther in *The Legend of the Ring* (West Edge Opera); Monterone in *Rigoletto* (San José); Seneca in *La Coronazione di Poppea* (West Edge Opera); Leslie Groves in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* (San José); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Carnegie Hall); Nikitich in *Boris Godunov* (San Francisco Symphony); King in *Aida* (Pacific Symphony); Eric/Ghost of Bazzetti in Jake Heggie's *Great Scott* (San Diego Opera) Recipient of San Francisco Opera Medal (2022) San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 1986, 1987 Merola Opera Program: 1985

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



OLIVIER

ZEROUALI†+

Baritone
(Middletown,
Delaware)

Earl of Morton

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Trojan Man in *Idomeneo*; Marullo in *Rigoletto*; Motorcycle Cop in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; Schaunard in *Bohème Out of the Box*; Fiorello in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*

Recent and Upcoming: Innkeeper in *Manon* (San Francisco Opera); Silvio in a love duet from *Pagliacci* (Merola Opera Program); *Song As Drama* recital (Merola); Malatesta in a scene from *Don Pasquale* (Merola Grand Finale); Robert in *Iolanta* (Yale Opera Theatre); Betto in *Gianni Schicchi* (Yale); Brother in Kurt Weill's *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Yale); Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* (Glimmerglass Festival); workshops of Olivia Shortt's *The Museum of the Lost* and Ashley Au's *Inertia* (Highlands Opera Studio)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2025, 2026
Merola Opera Program: 2024



CHANCE JONAS- O'TOOLE

†+
Tenor
(Dallas, Texas)

Earl of Ruthven

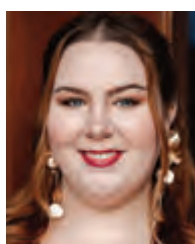
San Francisco Opera

Highlights: A young

servant in *Elektra*

Recent and Upcoming: Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (San Francisco Opera); Spoletta in *Tosca* (San Francisco); David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); Steersman in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Berlin); Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Berlin); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Berlin); Gastone in *La Traviata* (Berlin); First Jew in *Salome* (Berlin); Anna Bolena (Berlin); John/Angel 3 in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* (Berlin); Chekalinsky in *Queen of Spades* (Berlin);

John Little in Daniel Bernard Roumain's *We Shall Not Be Moved* (Pittsburgh Opera); Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola Opera Program)
Merola Opera Program: 2022, 2023
@chance_jonasotoole_tenor



SADIE CHESLAK

†+
Mezzo-Soprano
(Duluth, Minnesota)

Mary Seton

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 Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* excerpts (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



SOFIA GOTCH

†+
Soprano
(Oakland, California)

Mary Beaton

San Francisco Opera

Highlights:

Klytemnestra's

confidante in *Elektra*; Musetta in *Bohème Out of the Box*

Recent and Upcoming: Pousette in *Manon* (San Francisco Opera); Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (San Francisco); Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* (San Francisco); Alice in *Le Comte Ory* (Merola Opera Program); Almirena in *Rinaldo* (Manhattan School of Music); Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* (MSM); La Fée in *Cendrillon* (MSM); Titania, the Fairy Queen, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (MSM); Sharp Ears, the Vixen, in

The Cunning Little Vixen (MSM); soprano soloist in Mahler's Fourth Symphony (MSM Symphony Orchestra); high soprano soloist in Matthew Aucoin and Peter Sellars' *Music for New Bodies* (American Modern Opera Company, Aspen Music Festival & School)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2026
Merola Opera Program: 2025



MARY HOSKINS

†+
Soprano
(Saratoga Springs, Utah)

Mary Livingston

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Cretan

Woman in *Idomeneo*;

Paralegal in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; Fourth maidservant in *Elektra*

Recent and Upcoming: Title role in the final scene of *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Schwabacher Summer Concert); excerpts from *Fidelio* and Strauss' *Die Ägyptische Helena* (Merola Grand Finale concert); scenes concert as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, Mary in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers*, and First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Wolf Trap Opera); arias from *Don Giovanni* and *Pagliacci* (Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2025, 2026
Merola Opera Program: 2024



ALEXA FRANKIAN

†+
Soprano
(Oakville, Ontario,
Canada)

Mary Fleming

San Francisco Opera

Highlights:

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

Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Iolanta* (Merola Opera Program); excerpts as Mimi in *La Bohème*, the title

role of *Suor Angelica*, Alice Ford in *Falstaff*, and Fidelia in 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



WILLIAM LEE BRYAN
 Baritone
 (Saint Paul, Minnesota)

Lord

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Captain and Zaretsky in

Eugene Onegin; Officer in *The Barber of Seville*; Usher in *Rigoletto*; Messenger in *La Traviata*; Sergeant in *Manon Lescaut*; Second inmate in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; Man in a Crowd in Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; various roles in *Billy Budd*
Recent and Upcoming: Creonte in Johann Simon Mayr's *Medea in Corinto* (Teatro Nuovo); Fifth Jew and Cappadocian in *Salome* (Florida Grand Opera); Alvaro in *Florencia en el Amazonas* (FGO)

Past Performances: Duke of Verona in *Roméo et Juliette* (Minnesota Opera); Mr. Hatfield in William Bolcom's *Dinner at Eight* (Minnesota Opera); Marcello in *La Bohème* (Minnesota Opera)
 Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



MICHAEL JANKOSKY

Tenor
 (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)

Lord

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Man in

Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Engineer in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; Giuseppe in *La Traviata*; Peasant in *Eugene Onegin*; Stone/Eunuch in Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*

Recent and Upcoming: Engagements with San Francisco Choral Society, American Bach Soloists, Santa Cruz Baroque Festival, Cantata Collective
 Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus, San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Philharmonia Baroque Chorale



SALLY MOUZON

Mezzo-Soprano
 (Alexandria, Virginia)

Crowd Member

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Mother in Jake Heggie's *Dead*

Man Walking (2025); Sister Lillianne in *Dead Man Walking* (2000); Old Woman in Marco Tutino's *Two Women*; Joan in Christopher Theofanidis' *Heart of a Soldier*

Recent and Upcoming: Elle in *La Voix Humaine* (West Coast Opera)
 Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus

Creative Team



STEWART LAING

(Alyth, Scotland)

Director and Production Designer

Recent and

Upcoming: Director of David Sawer's *The*

Skating Rink (Garsington Opera); Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots* (English National Opera); *Them!* (National Theatre of Scotland); *Creditors* (Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum); *The End of Eddy* (Unicorn Theatre, Melbourne International Arts Festival, BAM's Next Wave Festival)
 Designer of *Endgame* (Old Vic); *Pygmalion* (Old Vic); *The Rheingold* (ENO); *The Valkyrie* (ENO); *La Bohème* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Madrid's Teatro Real)
 Tony Award: Scenic Design for *Titanic* (1997)



D.M. WOOD

(Toronto, Ontario, Canada)

Co-Lighting Designer

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Norma*

Recent and

Upcoming: *Tosca* (Glyndebourne Festival); Weill's *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (English National Opera); Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (ENO); Handel's *Arminio* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera); Philip Venables' *4.48 Psychosis* (Royal Ballet and Opera); *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *La Bohème* (Malmö Opera, Minnesota Opera); Nicola Porpora's *Polifemo* (Rhin Opera); *Die Walküre* (Royal Danish Opera, Greek National Opera); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opéra Orchestre National de Montpellier, Deutsche Oper Berlin); *The Rape of Lucretia* (Royal Ballet and Opera, Snape Maltings); *La Traviata*

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

(Norwegian Opera); Halévy's *La Juive* (Geneva); Catalani's *Edmea* (Wexford Festival Opera); Thomas' *Le Songe d'Une Nuit d'Été* (Wexford); *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Wexford); *La Favorite* (Houston Grand Opera); Philip Glass' *Les Enfants Terribles* (Opera Omaha); *Twilight Zone* (West End); *The Niceties* (Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre)



MIMI JORDAN SHERIN*
(Seattle, Washington)
Co-Lighting Designer
Recent and Upcoming: *Judgement Day* (Park

Avenue Armory); *La Fanciulla del West* (Metropolitan Opera); *Il Trittico* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera); *La Bohème* (London, Madrid's Teatro Real, Lyric Opera of Chicago); Tchaikovsky's *The Enchantress* (Mariinsky Theatre); *Falstaff* (Glyndebourne Festival); *Jenůfa* (Vienna State Opera); *Parsifal* (Paris Opera); Handel's *Ariodante* (Canadian Opera Company, Valencia's Palau de les Arts Reina Sofia, Chicago); *Lohengrin* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Munich); *Boris Godunov* (London, Deutsche Oper Berlin); *Elektra* (COC); *Don Giovanni* (Oslo); *Der Rosenkavalier* (Glyndebourne); *Billy Budd* (Frankfurt Opera); *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (London); *Roméo et Juliette* (Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu)



COLM SEERY
(Dublin, Ireland)
Choreographer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Movement Director of John Adams' *Antony*

and *Cleopatra*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale* Choreographer of *Madama Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de*

Frida y Diego; *Il Trovatore*; *Partenope*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Rigoletto* Revival Choreographer of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; *Andrea Chénier*; Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* Dance Master of *Don Giovanni*; *Eugene Onegin*; *La Traviata*; *Orfeo ed Euridice*; *Lohengrin*; Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *L'Elisir d'Amore*

Recent and Upcoming: Choreographer of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (San Francisco Opera); *Idomeneo* (Berlin State Opera); Britten's *Gloriana* (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Ariodante* (Vienna State Opera, Israeli Opera) Associate Choreographer of *Andrea Chénier* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera) Revival Choreographer of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); *La Traviata* (Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); *Manon* (Dallas Opera, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colon); *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne); *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Glyndebourne); *Rinaldo* (Glyndebourne)



JOHN KEENE
(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
Chorus Director
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Don Giovanni; Bright

Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eugene Onegin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Orpheus and Eurydice*; *Madama Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; 100th Anniversary Concert; *Il Trovatore*; Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; *Lohengrin*; Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *The Elixir of Love*; *The Magic Flute*; Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*;

Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; *Tristan und Isolde*; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; *Carmen*; *La Bohème*; *Idomeneo*; *Rigoletto*; Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*; Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; *Elektra*; *Simon Boccanegra*

Recent and Upcoming: *Manon*; *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Tosca* Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and San Francisco Conservatory of Music Voice Concerto Competition judge Instagram: @keenejohn



DAVE MAIER
(El Cerrito, California)
Fight Director
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Elektra*; Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Il*

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

Recent and Upcoming: *Julius Caesar* (Marin Shakespeare Company); *The Cherry Orchard* (Marin Theatre); *Dracula* (SF Playhouse); *House of Bernarda Alba* (Oakland Theater Project)



MAYA HERBSMAN
(San Francisco, California)
Intimacy Director
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: John

Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *La Traviata*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*

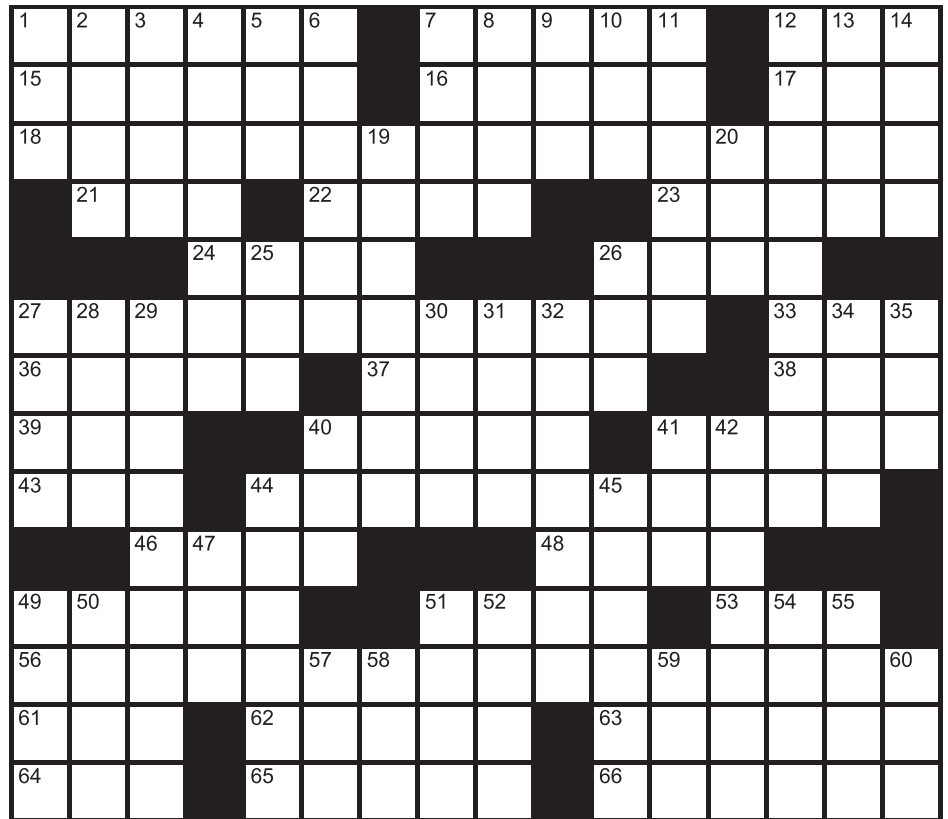
Recent and Upcoming: *Manon* (San Francisco Opera); Peter Brook's *La Tragédie de Carmen* (Merola Opera Program); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Merola); *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola)

ACROSS

1. Brazilian dances
7. Sanctify
12. Quick punch
15. Yielding
16. Type of pad or envelope
17. Stadium cheer
18. Edward IV's line upon making an arrest?
21. Snakelike fish
22. "___ Don't Preach"
23. Bit of Kuwaiti cash
24. Substance with a low pH
26. Submissive
27. Elizabeth I's educational assistant?
33. Female farm animal
36. Air traffic control instrument
37. Half note, to a British musician
38. "I get it now!"
39. Self-regard
40. Ovid's language
41. Spot for a sacrifice
43. Overwhelming urge
44. How George III made money?
46. Dull sound of impact
48. They might be essential
49. Made inquiries
51. Former Second Gentleman Emhoff
53. Prefix with athlete or angle
56. Elizabeth II's weather report?
61. Fuss
62. Chilling
63. Snarl
64. Wood for archery
65. Connection points
66. English county where Brighton is

DOWN

1. Mole, e.g.
2. ___ vera
3. Swampy ground
4. Dessert made with honey, nuts, and phyllo
5. Mandela's org.



6. "That's enough!"
7. 36-Across signal
8. Actress Olin of *Chocolat*
9. One might be poached
10. Spotted
11. Miniature burger
12. Romantic poet
13. Gustav Mahler's widow
14. Suds
19. Well-situated mafioso
20. Piece of business attire, typically
25. Saturn, for one
26. May honoree
27. Animal hunted for food
28. Fury
29. Third baseman in a classic routine
30. Former Yugoslav autocrat
31. Inst. of higher learning
32. Visit a restaurant
34. 29-Down's teammate at second base
35. Piece of corn
40. Young fellow
41. C.I.O.'s merger partner
42. Pays attention
44. New York river
45. Subject of the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution
47. "If ___ Be a Buckaroo" (American folk song)
49. Opposite of home
50. Fries or baked beans, say
51. Bones, to a gambler
52. Bills in a till
54. Tatters
55. Castaway site
57. Musician Yoko
58. Relieved (of)
59. *Contenu de la Seine*
60. Nickname for a Houstonian, perhaps

Joshua Kosman is the former music critic for the San Francisco Chronicle and co-constructor of the cryptic crossword "Out of Left Field."

See the solution on page 57



*Thea Musgrave at a rehearsal for the 1979 West Coast premiere of *Mary, Queen of Scots* by Spring Opera Theater, a San Francisco Opera affiliate. / ROBERT MESSICK*

“You Have to Go for It with Your Whole Self”

THEA MUSGRAVE ON *MARY, QUEEN OF SCOTS*,
COMPOSING FOR THE STAGE,
AND THE DRAMATIC POWER OF MUSIC

IN CONVERSATION WITH
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

MATTHEW SHILVOCK: You have had such an extraordinary life in music. Do you remember a moment when you first felt called to become a composer?

THEA MUSGRAVE: Music was always very important in my life. I remember my very first piano lesson when I was five years old at a little primary school in Edinburgh. I went into the room, and there was my teacher, Miss Baxter, with an upright piano. She said, “Come, darling. Come and stand on the seat.” I thought that was weird, but I did it. Then she said, “Now, face the wall.” She opened the lid of the piano and started playing.

I looked down and saw all the hammers moving, and that absolutely fascinated me. It still does. That was really my first moment of being captured by music.

I studied piano and practiced for hours every day as I got older. When I was about 15, I thought I would either become a musician or go into medicine. I imagined I would discover cures for all the world’s diseases. But when I started studying medicine in Edinburgh, I realized that my steps kept wandering away from the medical school and into the music school next door. I found it much more interesting and much more fun.

MS: Was that when you began focusing on composition?

TM: No, not at all. I liked making things up, but I wasn’t thinking, “I’m going to be a composer.” I was mainly playing piano.

At Edinburgh University, I studied counterpoint with Hans Gál, along with history, orchestration, and all the usual things. Toward the end of my degree, I had to write a composition. I wrote something rather outrageous, and they nearly failed me—but they remembered I had also written a more conventional piece, so I got my degree.

Then I went to Nadia Boulanger in Paris. I showed her the conventional piece, and she said, “Qu’est-ce que c’est?” I told her I had another piece. She looked at it and said, “Ah, I see you have ideas. Now you need to learn some technique.” She recognized that there was something there, but turning ideas into something practical is another matter.

MS: Boulanger was such an important mentor for so many major composers. What made her such a powerful teacher?



Matthew Shilcock and
Thea Musgrave in 2025.

TM: She allowed you to be yourself. By then, I knew I wanted to be a composer, and I brought her my work. She would examine it very carefully and help me develop it.

I have always thought I had two great teachers. One was Boulanger. The other I never met: Donald Francis Tovey. His great lesson was about the long-term journey of music. If you are writing an opera, you have to think: What is this about? Where are you going? How does each scene lead to the next? How do you arrive at the ending?

You have to think not only moment to moment, but about the entire journey—dramatically and harmonically.

MS: That ability to sustain a large dramatic form is so important in opera. How did that develop for you?

TM: It happens gradually. You begin by writing songs, piano pieces, choral works, short orchestral pieces. Opera comes later. You have to have some idea what you are doing—and you have to be crazy enough to attempt it.

MS: Let’s talk about *Mary, Queen of Scots*. What drew you to this story?

TM: It was commissioned by Scottish Opera, and I am Scottish—from Edinburgh—so perhaps it was natural. Mary’s story was connected to places I knew: Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace. Once I thought of it, I felt I was the person who should write it because I was Scottish and a woman.

I knew Donizetti had written an opera about Mary [*Maria Stuarda*, 1835], but his focused on the later part of her life. I wanted to write about the time when she was actually in Scotland: her return, her struggles, and ultimately her forced departure.

The ending was always central to me. In the original production, a huge portcullis comes down. Mary is on one side, her son is on the other, and there is no way for her to return to him. She leaves Scotland without him. It is a heartbreaking image because that son eventually became the person who united England and Scotland.

MS: The opera captures both Mary’s power and her isolation. She begins surrounded by royal ceremony, but by the end she is completely alone.



Thea Musgrave conducted Spring Opera Theater's April 1979 performances of Mary, Queen of Scots at the Curran Theatre.



The recording of the 1978 U.S. premiere starring Ashley Putnam as the queen has been available on LP, CD, and can now be streamed on Apple Music and Spotify.

TM: Yes. It is a very sad story. She is young, and she cannot trust the men around her. Her half-brother James has his own ambitions, and their struggle is at the center of the opera.

But although she loses politically, she does take control of her own life. She stands up for herself.

MS: You wrote the libretto yourself. Did that allow you to shape the drama more effectively?

TM: Absolutely. A writer who does not understand music can make a beautiful text that simply takes too long to sing. Singing expands words. A line that works when spoken can become enormous when sung.

You also have to think about vowels. Some words are terrible to sing on high notes. A soprano cannot sing certain vowels easily at the top of the voice. You have to think practically.

For example, James says “I must rule.” “Rule” is actually a difficult word to sing. In the music I changed the order to “Rule, I must!” so that “must” lands on the important note. When you write your own libretto, you can make those decisions.

MS: Is writing opera a constant conversation between words and music?

TM: All the time. Normally the words come first, but sometimes you find a wonderful musical line and realize the words do not fit. Then you adjust them. The music and text constantly influence each other.

Before the music comes the scenario—the journey. What is this about? What happens in this scene? Because of that, what happens next? Some things may be historically important, but they may not be necessary for the opera.

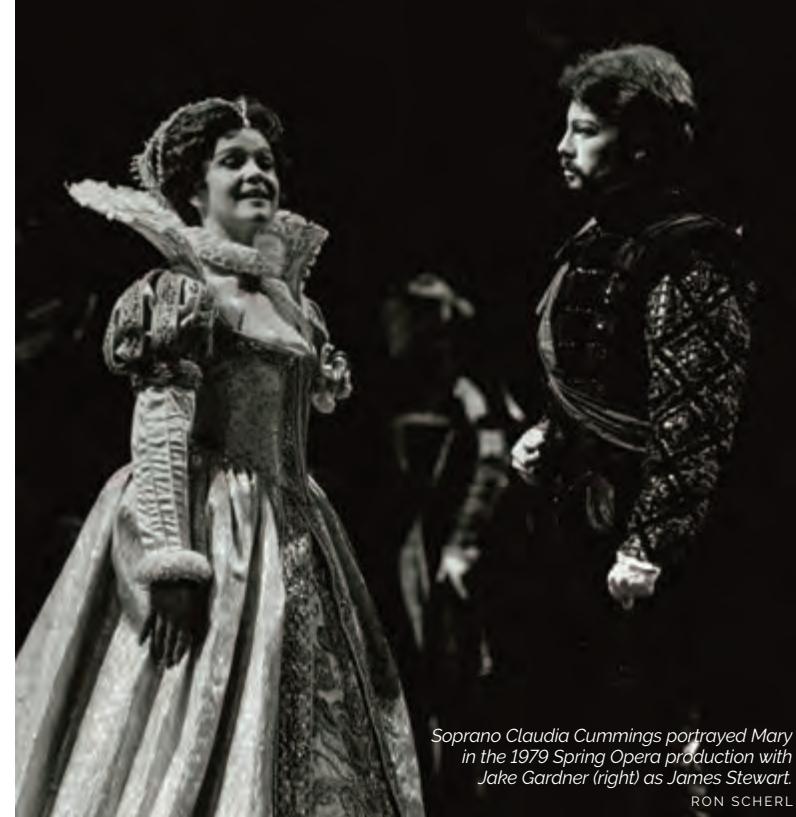
MS: Your music has such a strong theatrical instinct. Where does that come from?

TM: It developed gradually. One of the first works where I thought about making the orchestra itself dramatic was my Clarinet Concerto. The soloist does not just stand there—they move through the orchestra and interact with different groups of players.

I have always loved doing that. Above all, I love orchestrating. I love using the orchestra, finding ways to express things, using instruments in unusual ways, and discovering how sounds can move and interact with each other. Sometimes the instruments literally move around the orchestra—standing up, sitting down, changing position. That is part of the drama.

I have always enjoyed finding unusual ways to use instruments and space. But I tell my students: never make something complicated just to make it complicated. Find a way to do something simple that sounds complicated.

MS: Your music also has a strong sense of color and recurring musical ideas. Do you think in terms of leitmotifs?



Soprano Claudia Cummings portrayed Mary in the 1979 Spring Opera production with Jake Gardner (right) as James Stewart.
RON SCHERL



Claudia Cummings as Mary, 1979.
RON SCHERL

TM: They tend to happen naturally. I do think of certain tonalities as having meaning. A major always has a meaning for me. It is yellow; it is the sun, royalty, majesty. E major is green.

MS: Do you think in colors?

TM: Not really. It is just that E major is green, I don't know why. (laughs)

MS: The Scottish identity of Mary, Queen of Scots, is also very present in the music.

TM: That was important to me. Some of the Scottish dances come from traditional tunes associated with Robert Burns, who often wrote poetry to preserve melodies that already existed.

I also created the French music myself. At one point I needed a pavane, and this was before the internet. I thought, "I'm not going to drive to the library to find one," so I simply invented one. (laughs)

The music had to serve the drama. The French world and the Scottish world collide, just as they do in Mary's life.

MS: You are still composing today. What keeps that creativity alive?

TM: I enjoy it. Very simply, if I didn't enjoy it, I wouldn't do it.

MS: What do you hope to give young composers?

TM: The first thing I ask my students is, "Are you an owl or a lark?" They look at me strangely, and I say, "Are you a morning person or an evening person?"

You have to understand yourself. Find out when you work best and organize your life around that. But what you write is always up to you. I never tell anyone what they should compose. You have to go for it with your whole self.

MS: After revisiting *Mary, Queen of Scots* decades later, does it feel like looking back at your own creative process?

TM: Not really. I look at it as an audience member. It is extraordinary to see something I wrote so long ago come alive in a completely new way.

This new production was so imaginative. I was worried about how they would create the ending without the original portcullis, but when I saw what they did, I had one word: "Wow."

MS: What has it been like to return to this work after 50 years?

TM: Wonderful. Especially seeing the singers and watching how they bring the characters to life. I am fascinated by seeing what happens next. I love doing this. What can I say? I love doing it. 🌟

The Return of the Queen

HEIDI STOBER TAKES ON
THE SCOTTISH MONARCH
AT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

BY LOUISE T. GUINHER

CHRIS GONZ

Soprano Heidi Stober has no interest in playing the diva. “I admire the people who have these big star careers,” says the Wisconsin-born soprano. “But that hasn’t been my plan. I want to sing in all sorts of places with all sorts of people. Last year, I had two Mahler 2’s pretty close together. One was in Poland with the European Union Youth Orchestra [EUYO], and the next was with the San Francisco Symphony during Esa-Pekka Salonen’s final concerts as music director there. The EUYO musicians were so young, and it was some of the most impressive and moving music-making of which I’ve ever been a part. I will hold that Mahler 2 with me for the rest of my life. And, of course, the experience with Esa-Pekka was phenomenal in a different way. I would love to be able to keep doing this for as long as possible.”

Stober began her musical life as a pianist, studying from early childhood, but it was at a choir concert where she found her destiny. “As a pianist, I never enjoyed performing in front of people, so at competitions or recitals, I was incredibly nervous. But in high school, I had my first solo in choir, and I don’t think I can ever adequately put into words what that feeling was. I felt most at home in my being—such joy, mixed with this inexplicable freedom. There was a release, a letting go that I had never experienced.”

Stober has made a career of taking things as they come. “I have colleagues who knew, ‘Okay, I want to go to *these* schools to study voice, and then I want to get into *these* young artist programs, and *these* are the houses where I hope to work,’” she says. “I didn’t have those things in mind.” After stints in Utah Opera’s resident-artist program and the Houston Grand Opera Studio, she landed in Berlin, now her home base. “My managers and I had talked about going to Europe to audition and supplement my work in the States,” she says. “Deutsche Oper Berlin offered me a job in the ensemble on the spot. Again, it was not my plan! I had never even thought about moving to Germany to be a *fest* singer [full-time, resident artist at a German opera company]. I thought, ‘Okay, I’ll do two years in the ensemble, and I’ll move back to the States.’ But then I met the father of my son. Often I look at my son, Henry, and I think, ‘Wow, if I hadn’t taken that leap, you wouldn’t be here.’ So, hey, you never know in life—right?”

“I think my biggest challenge is my life with Henry,” she says. “I never like being away from him, and as he’s getting into the teenage years, I have this gut feeling that he might need me more than he did when he was little.

I’m very happy that he gets to experience life as not only a bilingual kid but also a bicultural kid. He’s spent so much time with me in the States, and he’s definitely a German boy, but he’s definitely an American boy as well.”

HOME BASE

In her unpredictable life, one constant has been San Francisco Opera. Her relationship with the Company began with her 2010 debut as Sophie in Massenet’s *Werther*. Subsequent roles have ranged from Atalanta in Handel’s *Xerxes* to Zdenka in Strauss’ *Arabella*. Her latest San Francisco Opera triumph, in 2022, was an edgy, glowing performance as Blanche in Poulenc’s *Dialogues des Carmélites*. “Deutsche Oper has been my home house in Germany,” she says. “But my true home house in the world is San Francisco. I will forever be indebted to them for supporting me not only with work opportunities but with career and role development. You name a role from my core repertoire and I’ve done it there, from Norina to, most recently, Blanche. That was certainly a turning point for me—dramatically, vocally, maybe the most important in my career. I heard from people at the house that there were patrons who had seen me in 12 roles before Blanche who said, ‘Who is that, and where has she been?’ And that doesn’t bother me, because I think it exemplifies, in a positive way, being a chameleon.”

That shapeshifting ability is central to Stober’s artistry. “I don’t want to offend anyone with this statement, because of course the music and our voices are profoundly important, but the acting for me has always been *as* important as what I’m doing vocally. I *love* delving into these different characters. I remember doing *Ariodante* with Alice Coote in Chicago. There was an aria in which she is practically moaning in pain, and one particular note stood out because it was so raw, so genuine, so human. If you had taken it out of context, would you have said, ‘That’s a beautifully sung note’? Absolutely not. But I remember thinking, ‘That’s the kind of singer I want to be.’ If we’re well trained, somehow we’re supposed to be able to sing nicely, prettily, beautifully all the time. But if it’s coming from *here*,” she says, indicating her heart, “that is what matters most.”

Stober has allowed her repertoire to develop in a very natural way. “Deutsche Oper, during my time in the ensemble, started asking me to sing bigger, heavier repertoire quite early on, and I kept saying no,” she says. “I know they weren’t so happy with me about that. I’m glad I stuck to it. Slow and steady wins the race.” After a



Heidi Stober with composer Thea Musgrave and Scottish baritone Donald Maxwell.



Blanche in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, 2022. CORY WEAVER



Magnolia Hawks in Jerome Kern's *Show Boat*, 2014. / CORY WEAVER



Norina in Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, 2016. CORY WEAVER

steady diet of Susannas, Paminas, Zerlinas, and lighter Handel roles, she has moved into meatier repertoire. “I sang Morgana [in Handel’s *Alcina*], and now I’ve sung Alcina. With the Mozart women, I’ve sung Fiordiligi [*Così fan tutte*], I sing Elvira [*Don Giovanni*] all the time, and my first Contess [*The Marriage of Figaro*] is coming up in Copenhagen. I’ve sung Zdenka, and now I’m singing Arabella. Then there are the French roles, my first Violetta at English National Opera [ENO], and, as far as Wagner, Elsa [in *Lohengrin*] will be added to the mix.” Dream roles include Ellen Orford in Britten’s *Peter Grimes* and the Composer in Strauss’ *Ariadne auf Naxos*. “I’m just taking things step by step,” she says.

CLAIMING THE CROWN

The latest step for Stober is the title role in Thea Musgrave’s *Mary, Queen of Scots*, which she has already sung in a two-performance run at ENO and brings to San Francisco Opera this month. “When ENO asked me, I will fully admit that I had never heard of the opera,” she says. “To take on a role like that, with almost everyone in the cast *and* our conductor *and* our director all new to the piece—and we did it all in two weeks. It’s such a dramatic piece! I was completely taken with the music. And then the story of this young woman, married at 15, widowed at 18, returning to a country she left as a child and being bombarded and undermined by these three men. Her strength and her resilience. I was drawn to how strong a mother she was in the libretto that Thea wrote. There’s vulnerability in Mary, but also tremendous strength.”

Stober met Musgrave during the ENO run. She and her husband, conductor Peter Mark, who conducted the work at Virginia Opera, “both had input for me,” Stober says. “She’s thrilled that she gets to see this again after so many years. The meat and potatoes—the bones—of this piece are there. It’s so clear in her writing. There was nothing in learning it that made me think, ‘I should ask Thea if we could change this.’”

“This time around [in San Francisco], we’ll have weeks,” she adds. “Part of me can’t even wrap my mind around having so much time to sink my teeth into it in a different way. No one else is returning from the ENO cast, so that will also make it new—to see what the dynamic is like with my three main men. I’m just over the moon to perform this work again in San Francisco!”

Louise T. Guinther, former senior editor at Opera News magazine, is an arts writer based in New York.

FIGARO UP, FIGARO DOWN



Opera On Screen

Mark your calendar for two new opera films coming to San Francisco's Roxie Theater. On Sunday, October 4, The Healing WELL will host a benefit screening of **FIGARO UP, FIGARO DOWN**, the 2026 San Francisco International Film Festival Audience Award winner about Tim Blevins, the Julliard-trained opera singer whose journey through homelessness turns personal collapse into a deeply moving, operatic search for home. A panel discussion with Blevins and director Javid Soriano follows the film. A week later at the Roxie, **TENOR: My Name is Pati**, a new documentary that tells the remarkable story of Samoan tenor brothers and former Adler Fellows Pene Pati and Amitai Pati, will be shown on October 11. Pene Pati, who stars in Massenet's *Manon* next month, will attend a Q&A after the film along with director Rebecca Tansley. For more information, visit healingwellsf.org and roxie.com. 🌀

CROSSWORD PUZZLE SOLUTION FROM PAGE 49

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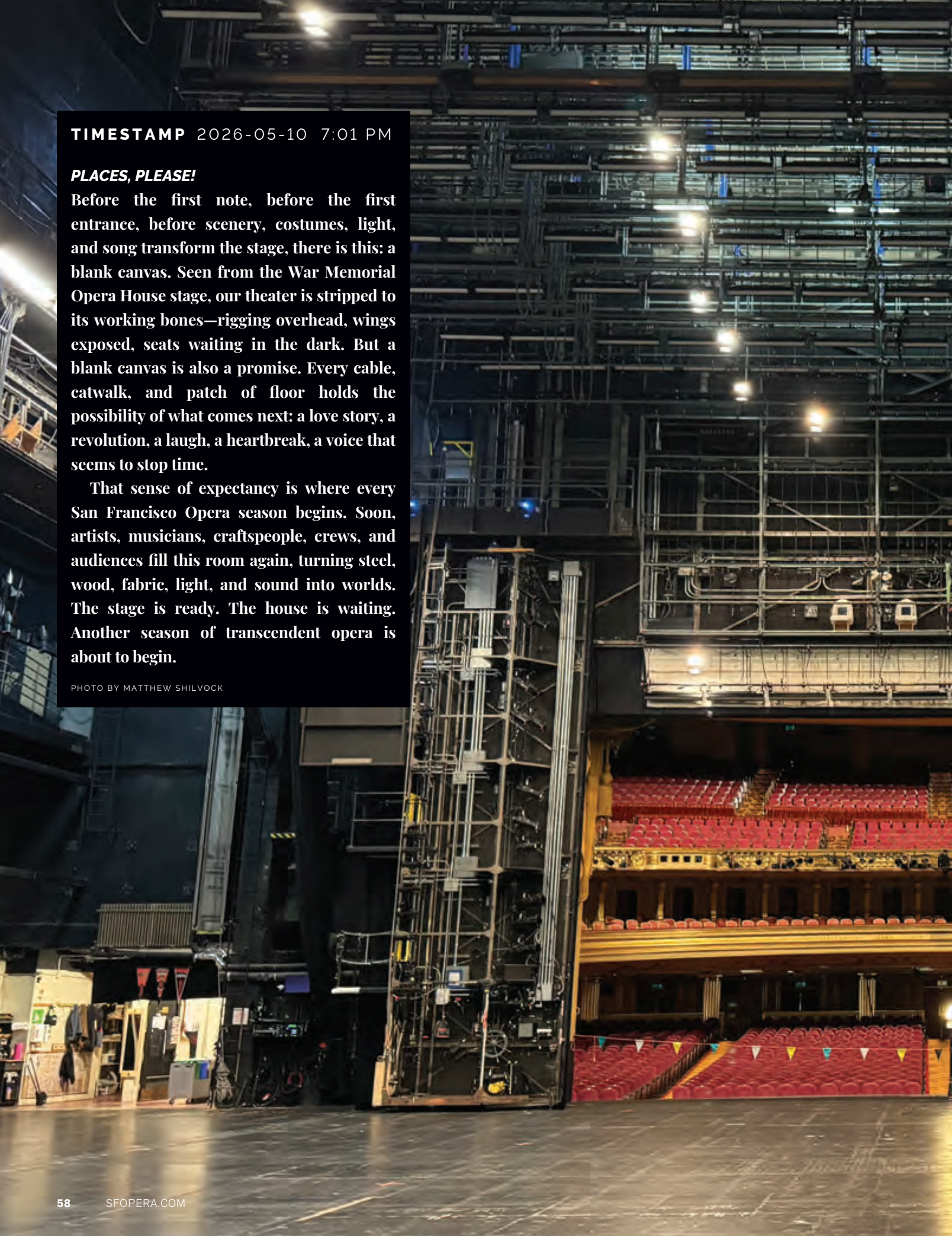
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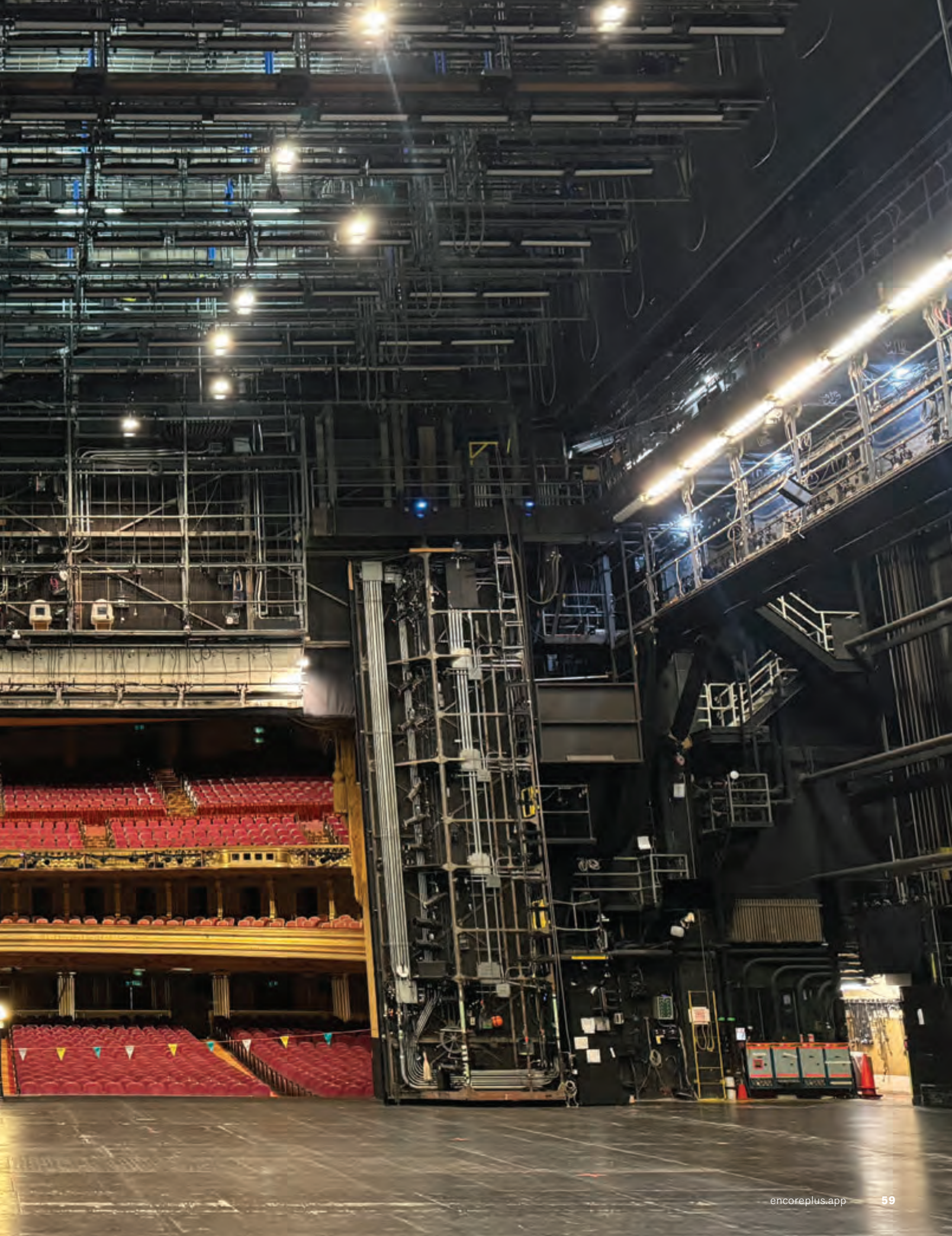
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PHOTO BY MATTHEW SHILVOCK





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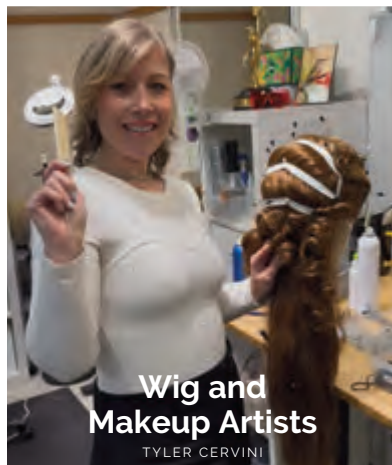
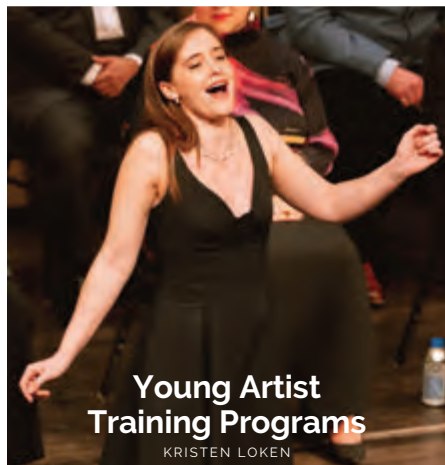
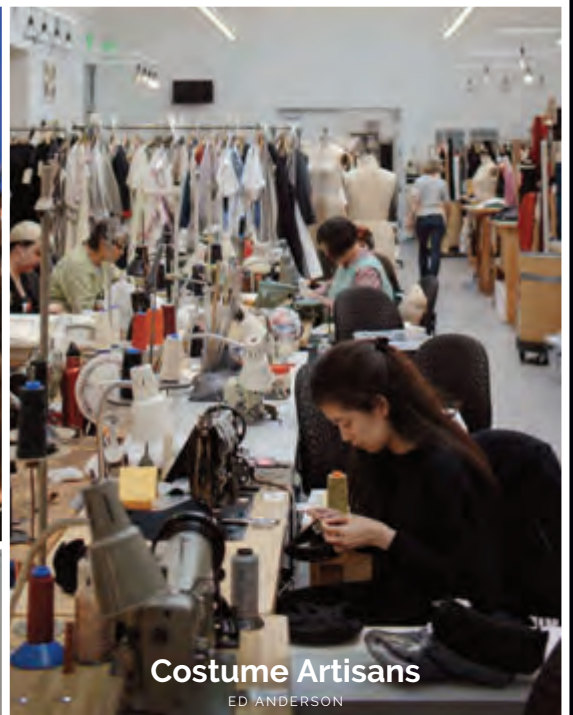


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Tony Gorzyski, *Head of Wardrobe*
Cynthia Fusco, Carol Horaitis,
Robert Horek, Brendan Cooper,
Wardrobe Assistants

WIG, HAIR, & MAKEUP

Jeanna Parham,
Department Head of Wigs, Hair, and Makeup
Christina Martin,
*Assistant Department Head of
Wigs, Hair, and Makeup*

REHEARSAL

Trey Costerisan,
Rehearsal Department Director
Jordan W. Thomas,
Rehearsal Department Scheduling Manager
Jayne Diliberto,
Rehearsal Department Coordinator: Personnel

Dr. Myron Marx, *Company Medical Adviser*

Seyfarth Shaw LLP, *Counsel*

Armanino LLP, *Independent Public Accountants*

UCSF doctors:
Dr. George Rutherford
Dr. Robert Harrison
Dr. Sanziana Roman

Asero Insurance Services, *Insurance Brokers*

Cory Weaver, *Official Photographer*

Yamaha is the Official Piano of San Francisco Opera

Pianos supplied by Piedmont Piano

Backstage Personnel

COSTUME SHOP

Jai Alltizer (26), *Costume Shop Manager*
Galen Till (22),

Senior Production Supervisor
Manuel Gutierrez (27),
Production Coordinator
Robyn Marsh, *Costume Supervisor*
Sally Thomas (26), *Head Tailor*
Amy Ashton-Keller (32), *Head Draper*
Emma Lehman (11),

Santiago Suanes (16), *Drapers*
Paula Wheeler (34), *Senior Milliner*
Karen Lewis, *Dyer/Painter*
Jersey McDermott (27),
Senior Craftsperson/Shoe Specialist
Julia Colvard, Taylor Newell,

Kristen Tracy (18), *Assistant Cutters*
Niko Suits, *First Hand*
Victoria Mortimer, *Costume Assistant*
Teddy Rose Baker, *Shopper*

COSTUME TECHNICIANS

Miriam Acosta
Hoa Fong (27)
Jaya Grace Goheen
Ashley Grambow
Kathy Griffith
Gillian Haratani (14)
Aki Hasegawa
Meg Horan
Arianna B. Jones
Sara Morimoto (13)
Mikael Nohai
Sarah Ellen Wilson
Robert Whitehurst

WARDROBE DEPARTMENT

CORE CREW

Nicolas Chacon
Linda Edwards (28)
Edward Fonseca (15)
Lorraine Lewis (14)
Phil Perry (29)
Leona Schrader-Dee
Don Smith (30)
Scott Stewart (26)
Kirsten Tucker (23)
Amber Vo

DRESSERS

Paula Barish
Kathleen Blake (13)
Ava Byrd
Ash Cable
Kathleen Crowley
Alan Herro
Claudia Holaday (47)
Patricia Kazmierowski
Julia Neal
Patrick Sanchez (16)

WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP DEPARTMENT

SENIOR WIG ARTISTS

Erin Hennessy (13)
Maur Sela (11)

WIG ARTISTS

Calli Carvajal
Lindsay Saier

SHOW CALL FOREPERSONS

Calli Carvajal
Christina Martin (13)
Gloria Mueller

PRINCIPAL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Calli Carvajal
Karalynne Fiebig (19)
Luna Finn
Denise Gutierrez (43)
Raegina Joyner
Toby Mayer (35)
Naki Mugambi
Leilani Norman
Lisa Patnoe (35)
Vanessa Root
Tim Santry (35)

SHOW CALL WIG, HAIR, AND MAKEUP ARTISTS

Vanessa Blanchard Lee (10)
Kristen Campbell
Calli Carvajal
Sarah Coy
Luna Finn
Marisela Garcia
Salma Gongora
Erin Hennessy (13)
Chri Holmgren-Greene
Raegina Joyner
Amber Loudermilk
Christina Martin (13)
Toby Mayer (35)
Robert Mrazik (20)
Gloria Mueller
Naki Mugambi
Leilani Norman
Lisa Patnoe (35)
Y. Sharon Peng (11)
Jordan Plath
Vanessa Root
Lindsay Saier
Maur Sela (10)
Sophia Smith (12)
Kimberly Virgen

SCENE SHOP

Dennis Forry
Christian Martinez
Dylan Maxson
Victor Sanchez (29)

SCENIC ART DEPARTMENT

Lauren Abrams

CARPENTRY DEPARTMENT

Jesse Austin
Lucy Briggs
Gabriel Castellani (16),
Automation Key
Michael Chapman (14)
Jack Davis
Paul Delatorre (27),
Night Crew Foreperson
Jacob Elliott
Hunter Erbach, *Inventory Key*
Tony Garcia
Karla Hargrave
Geoffrey R. Heron (20)
Geoffrey W. Heron (32)
Philip Heron (24),
Automation and Rigging Foreperson
Rahgen Hill
Ed Joe (22)
Nick Kukiella
Wyatt Martinez
Michael Martino
Anna McGriff
Alex Meyer, *Automation Layout*
Ben Miller, *Assistant Flyperson*
Harry Niedzwetzki (34)
Jesse Nugent
John O'Donnell (38), *Key Flyperson*
Enrique Pronio
Michael Ramirez, *Assistant Key*
James Ryan
Michael Ryan
Eila Saarni, *Key*
Raymond Sais
Gregory Shaff (38), *Key*
Harper Shipley, *Assistant Key*
Cyrus Sindich
Derek Snediker
Sean Walden (15),
Warehouse Foreperson
Randy Walsh (24), *Key*
Sammy Wong

PROPERTY DEPARTMENT

Scott J. Barringer (26), *Key*
Amy Boussard
Christy Carter
Jay Cazel
James Eldredge (22), *Shop Mechanic*
Oris Fry
Tim Heaney
Jane Henderson
Gabby Hernandez-McKig
Patricia Hewett (19), *Assistant Key*
Myron Seth Isaacs (26), *Key*
Mark Kotschnig (24), *Key*
John Matlock, *Assistant Key*
Victor McCarthy
Baylie Olson
Beth Ozarow (30), *Out of House Key*
Sarah Shores (19), *Shop Mechanic*
Mae Toone
Morgan Womble-Dahl

ELECTRICS DEPARTMENT

Eugene Ahn (13), *Gel Room*
John Boatwright (39),
House Head Electrician
Ariel Bott, *Assistant Key Stage Left*
Danielle Colburn
Henry Cotter
Andrew Custer
Erik Docktor (19), *Projection Programmer*
Amy Domjan, *Layout Electrician*
Will Grunig (24)
Griffin Harwood
Robert Haycock, *Key Stage Right*
Matt Heron, *Pyro Technician*
Bernard Honigman (27),
Key Light Board Operator
Brendan Kierans (13),
Electric Shop Foreperson
Sophie Landau (12)
Maria Mendoza (38), *Projection Coordinator*
Lloyd Murphy, *Key Projectionist*
Jonathan Philpott-Kenny
Glenn Quilici, *Assistant Key Stage Right*
Kevin Quintero
Matthew Reynolds
William Rodriguez
Kirt Siders, *Data Administrator*
Andrew Sproule (27), *Key Stage Left*
Jax Steager,
Assistant Key Light Board Operator
Greg Walker, *Shop Mechanic*

AUDIO DEPARTMENT

Emad Dajani, *Key*
Patrick Dowd
Christine Dumke
Ryan Napoli
Bryan Olson, *Key*
Ziggy Tomcich (24)
Brian Losch, *Audio Consultant*

MEDIA DEPARTMENT

Claude Bauschinger, *Video Editor*
Doug Hunt
Mitchell Kell
Michael Santy
Brian Shimetz
Uwe Willenbacher (18), *Audio Editor*

STUDIO TEACHERS

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

WRANGLERS

Alexandra Armstead
Jonah Malamud
Haley May

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

2026 Adler Fellows

As Adler Fellows, emerging singers and pianists receive rigorous individualized coaching as well as opportunities to cover and perform roles in mainstage performances. **Our Adler Friends and Sponsors play a vital role in their training, nurturing the talent and creativity of these emerging artists and ensuring they reach their full potential as part of the program.** We are very grateful for our Friends of Adler and Adler Sponsor support received between August 1, 2025 through August 15, 2026. For more information about sponsorship opportunities, please call **Patron Operations at (415) 565-3212**.



Mezzo-Soprano
SADIE CHESLAK
Duluth, Minnesota
First-year Adler
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Shai Edberg



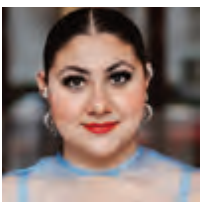
Tenor
THOMAS KINCH
Cardiff, Wales
Third-year Adler
Sponsored by
Shai Edberg
Neil & Elsa Pering



Pianist/Coach
BRIAN CHO
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
First-year Adler
Sponsored by
Karen J. Kubin
James A. Heagy,
in memory of Jayne Heagy



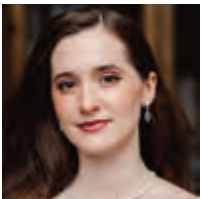
Pianist/Coach
JI YOUN LEE
Seoul, South Korea
Second-year Adler
Sponsored by
Lisa Erdberg & Dennis Gibbons
and an anonymous donor



Soprano
ALEXA FRANKIAN
Oakville, Ontario, Canada
First-year Adler
Sponsored by
Jim & Gayle Tunnell



Baritone
GABRIEL NATAL-BÁEZ
Toa Alta, Puerto Rico
First-year Adler
Sponsored by
Peggy & Boyce Nute



Soprano
SOFIA GOTCH
Oakland, California
First-year Adler
Sponsored by
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Baritone
OLIVIER ZEROUALI
Middletown, Delaware
Second-year Adler
Sponsored by
Bill Walker
Helen Berggruen,
for Five Arts Foundation



Soprano
MARY HOSKINS
Saratoga Springs, Utah
Second-year Adler
Sponsored by
Shai Edberg
Anne & Jeffrey Katz

"It is impossible to fully sum up all I have learned during my time as an Adler Fellow. The program has helped me improve every aspect of my artistry from my musical, vocal, and acting abilities to holistic training such as leadership training, health and wellness guidance, and learning how to manage my finances. It has been a life-changing experience for which I will always be grateful."

—Mary Hoskins, soprano

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Victoria Kirby
Mingming Li
Sylvia R. Lindsey
Bernice Lindstrom,
in memory of John W. Lindstrom
Cheryl Samantha & Laurence Lyons Ph.D.
Betty Maddux,
in memory of Ed Koester
Robert Meadows & Dennis Otto
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Ms. Cynthia Schreuder Kalev
Anonymous (2)

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Robert Ciulla, & Ji Young Lee

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Phyllis Edwards Scholarship Fund
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The Caramae Turner Hoffmann &
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Sheila Wishek[§]
William Randolph Hearst Young Artist Fund

[§] deceased

2026-27 Artists

PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Hadleigh Adams+Ω
Javier Arrey
 Zhengyi Bai+Ω
 Vitor Bispo*
 Aleksey Bogdanov+
 William Lee Bryan
 Eleonora Buratto*
 Cheryl Cain
Ryan Capozzo
 Sadie Cheslak+†
 Daniel Cilli
 Steven Cole
 Catherine Cook+Ω
Caroline Corrales+Ω
 James Creswell+
Phoebe Dinga
 Amina Ebris+Ω
 Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Alexandra Fitz Gibbon■
 Alexa Frankian+†
 Stephen Gaertner*
 Kevin Gino
 Sofia Gotch+†
 Joshua Guerrero*
 Patrick Guetti*
 Blanche Hampton■
*Jongwon Han*Ω
 Stella Hannock
 Mary Hoskins+†
Katherine Ivie
 Christopher Jackson
 Michael Jankosky
 Silvie Jensen
 Chance Jonas-O'Toole+
 Peter Kellner*
 Quinn Kelsey +
Crystal Kim
 Thomas Kinch+†
 Laura Krumm+Ω

Judit Kutasi
 Eric Levintow
 Riccardo Massi*
 Simone McIntosh+Ω
Jana McIntyre+
Alexander McKissick
 Thomas Mole*
 Sally Mouzon
 Brian Mulligan
 Maurizio Muraro
 Nik Nackley
Sarah Nadreau
 Gabriel Natal-Báez+†
 Toni Marie Palmertree+Ω
 Andrew Pardini
 Pene Pati+Ω
 Chester Pidduck
Robert Pomakov
 Taylor Raven+
 Brenton Ryan
 B Schaubhut*
 Chiharu Shibata■
 Alek Shrader+Ω
 Philip Skinner+Ω
 Olivia Smith+Ω
 David Soar
 Christopher Sokolowski*
 Whitney Steele
 Heidi Stober
 Falk Struckmann
 Jesslyn Thomas
Diego Torre
 Dale Travis+Ω
 Christian Van Horn
 Rachel Willis-Sørensen
 Kwangchul Youn
 Adela Zaharia
 Slavka Zámečniková
 Olivier Zerouali+†

CONDUCTORS

Clelia Cafiero*
 Eun Sun Kim
 Sebastian Weigle*

PRODUCTION

Claus Guth
 Robert Innes Hopkins
 Stewart Laing*
 Erhard Rom
 Christian Schmidt

STAGE DIRECTORS

Vincent Boussard
 Katherine M. Carter
 E. Reed Fisher
 Stewart Laing*
 Shawna Lucey
 Francesca Zambello

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Denni Sayers
 Colm Seery

KEY:

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

Chorus

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

REGULAR CHORUS

Buffy Baggott	Nadima Kombajyan
Kathleen Bayler	Josephine YoonGeong Lee
C. Michael Belle	Eric LevintowΩ
William Lee BryanΩ	Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Cheryl CainΩ	Liesl McPherrin
Janet Campbell	Sally MouzonΩ
Danielle Cheiken/	Nikolas NackleyΩ
Alan Cochran	Sarah Nadreau
Sara Colburn	Antonio Nagore
Edith Dowd	Erin Neff
Angela Eden	William O'Neill
Anders Froehlich	Andrew Thomas PardiniΩ
John Fulton	Alexander John Perkins
Kevin GinoΩ	Philip Pickens/
Stella HannockΩ	William Pickersgill
Harlan Hays	Chester PidduckΩ
Katherine Ivie	Laurel Cameron Porter
Christopher JacksonΩ	Jonathan Smucker
Michael JankoskyΩ	Whitney SteeleΩ
Silvie JensenΩ	Jesslyn ThomasΩ
Wilford Kelly	Andrew TruettΩ
Crystal Kim	Jacque Eileen Wilson
Bojan Knežević	

EXTRA CHORUS

Morgan Balfour	Yitao Lin
Daniel Brakefield	Benjamin Liupaogo
Erich Buchholz	Joachim Luis
Daniel CilliΩ	Michael Orlinsky
Clare Demer	Carly Passer
Phoebe Dinga	Leandra Ramm
Spencer Dodd	Mary Rauh
Mélissa Dufort	Dewey Reikofski
Stephanie Feigenbaum	Cliff Romig
Margaret Genovese	Grace Sawyko
Lena Goldstein	B SchaubhutΩ
Luis González	Chung-Wai Soong
Spencer Greene	Lee Stewart
Matt Hidalgo	Carmello Tringali
Nina Jones	Troy Turriate
David Kekuewa	Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst
Michael Kuo	Nicholas Volkert
Marielle Leiboff	

∇ Chorus member on leave of absence
 Ω Solo Role

San Francisco Opera extends its gratitude and appreciation to the following labor organizations whose members, artists, and craftspeople make possible our performances.

American Federation of Musicians, Local 6
 American Guild of Musical Artists, Inc.
 International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Local 16
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 Make-Up Artists and Hair Stylists Union, Local 706, I.A.T.S.E.
 The Art Directors Guild & Scenic, Title and Graphic Artists Local 800

United Scenic Artists Local Usa – 829, I.A.T.S.E.
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Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

FIRST VIOLIN

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

SECOND VIOLIN

Jeremy Preston, *Principal*
Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*
Aya Kiyonaga, *Acting Assistant Principal*Σ
Ka-Yeon Lee
Leslie Ludena
Craig Reiss
Heeguen Song↑
Karen Shinozaki Sor↑

VIOLA

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

CELLO

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

BASS

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

FLUTE

Stephanie McNab, *Acting Principal*
Susan KangΣ↑
Bethanne Walker↑

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*
Gabriel Young, *Associate Principal*Σ
Benjamin Brogadir
Eder Rivera↑

ENGLISH HORN

Benjamin Brogadir

CLARINET

José González Granero, *Principal*
Joshua ChoiΣ
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 WamhoffΣ↑
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

Fall season operas

↑ Season Substitute

Corps Dancers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

Brett Conway↔
Jamielyn Duggan↔
Alexandra FitzGibbon□
Blanche Hampton↔■
Felipe Leon□
Coral Martin↔

Micah Moch□
Christopher Nachtrab↔
Chiharu Shibata↔■
Marcos Vedovetto↔

↔ Tenured

√ Tenured Dancer on Leave of Absence

□ Resident Corps

■ Solo Role

Supernumeraries

Simon Boccanegra

Eric Dew
Andy Dovchin
Alan LoFaso
Christina Rocco
Elisabeth Smith
Orkhontulga Tsedensodnom

San Francisco Opera Orchestra



Kay Stern
Concertmaster



Maya Cohon
Associate
Concertmaster



Heidi Wilcox
Assistant
Concertmaster



Mariya Borozina
First Violin



Jennifer Cho
First Violin



Dawn Harms
First Violin



Jennifer Hsieh
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman
First Violin



Naoko Nakajima
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano
First Violin



Dian Zhang
First Violin



Jeremy Preston
Principal
Second Violin



Martha Simonds
Associate Principal
Second Violin



Aya Kiyonaga
Acting Assistant
Principal, Second Violin



Ka-Yeon Lee
Second Violin



Leslie Ludena
Second Violin



Craig Reiss
Second Violin



Carla María 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



Jung-Hsuan Ko
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Joseph Lescher
Principal
Bass



Jonathan Lancelle
Associate Principal
Bass



Shinji Eshima
Acting Assistant
Principal Bass



William Wasson
Bass



Stephanie McNab
Acting Principal
Flute & Piccolo



Susan Kang
Flute↑

↑ Season Substitute

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



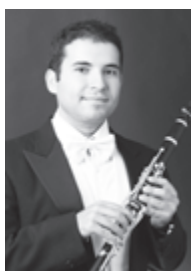
Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



Gabriel Young
Associate Principal
Oboe



Benjamin Brogadir
English Horn



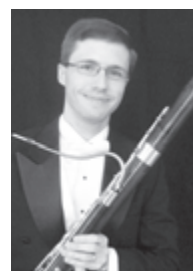
José González Granero
Principal Clarinet



Junghwan Lee
Bass Clarinet



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



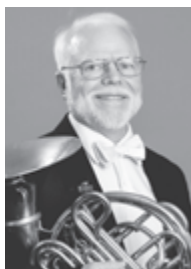
Shawn Jones
Bassoon/
Contrabassoon↑



Kevin Rivard
Principal
Horn



Phillip Palmore
Horn



Brian McCarty
Associate Principal
Horn



Logan Bryck
Utility Horn



Adam Luftman
Principal
Trumpet



Scott Macomber
Trumpet



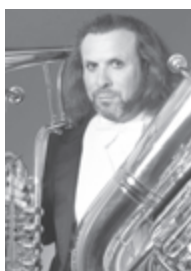
John Pearson
Trumpet



Michael Cox
Principal
Trombone



David Ridge
Principal
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman
Principal
Tuba



John Burgardt
Principal
Timpani



Patricia Niemi
Acting Principal
Percussion



Victor Avdienko
Percussion↑



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian

*Not pictured members: Sunny Yang (Principal Cello);
Joshua Choi (Clarinet); Anthony Delivanis (Horn);
Eleanor Kirk (Principal Harp)*

*Not pictured seasonal substitutes: Ani Bukujian (First Violin);
Emma Votapek (First Violin); Heeguen Song (Second Violin);
Karen Shinozaki Sor (Second Violin); Anna Kruger (Viola);
Saul Richmond-Rakerd (Cello); Sean O'Hara (Bass);
Evan Hillis (Bass); Bethanne Walker (Flute); Eder Rivera (Oboe);
Samuel Wamhoff (Trombone)*

↑ Season Substitute

San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



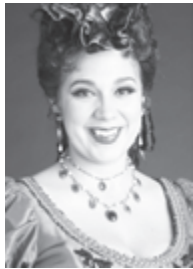
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Cheryl Cain
Soprano



Danielle Cheiken
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Sara Colburn
Soprano



Angela Eden
Soprano



Katherine Ivie
Soprano



Crystal Kim
Soprano



Nadima Kombajyan
Soprano



**Josephine
YoonGeong Lee**
Soprano



Liesl McPherrin
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



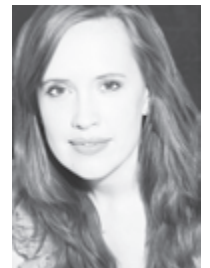
Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



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
leave of absence



**Alexander John
Perkins**
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Jonathan Smucker
Tenor



Andrew Truett
Tenor

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



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Baritone



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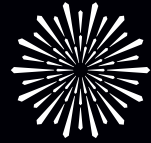
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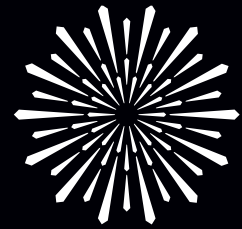
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Making Sense of the World

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

I am increasingly feeling the gravitational pull of theaters as audiences seek out collective catharsis and meaning amidst a turbulent world. This has, admittedly, always been the *raison d'être* of the stage: from Sophocles and Euripides onwards, theater has dramatized human action not simply to entertain, but to illuminate the world in which we live.

I don't think it is coincidence that this gravitational pull is happening at a time of increasing isolation. A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control found that one in four adults lack adequate social and emotional support, with loneliness highest amongst the 18-29 age group. And many in that Gen-Z cohort are increasingly encountering the world through the fragmented feeds of social media rather than through shared civic spaces.

This epidemic of isolation has created an urgent need for places where we can make sense of life in broader, more connected contexts. Finding belonging is a fundamental human need. Religion, mythology, storytelling, art, and theater have long helped us grapple with the enduring questions such as: Where do we belong? How do we live? How do we understand each other? The renewed appeal of the stage may reflect a desire to wrestle with those questions together rather than alone.

It is in this context that our first two operas of the season find particular resonance. Both *Simon Boccanegra* and *Mary, Queen of Scots* explore the burden of leadership, thrust upon their protagonists. In both cases, the protagonists are forced to fight off Machiavellian claims on their authority by people supposedly close to them. And, in both cases, the leaders' sacrifices ensure that their heirs can carry their legacy forward.

Both stories are dramatizations of history, but neither aims to teach history. There are much better forums for that! Verdi and Musgrave are rather using historical figures to explore timeless questions about power, sacrifice, and human responsibility.



Verdi was drawn to *Simon Boccanegra* for its acute dramatic possibility and exploration of human fallibility. Revising the opera 25 years later with Arrigo Boito, he worked to heighten the theatrical drama to make it even more compelling, adding in the Council Chamber scene that becomes the moral center of the work as Boccanegra pleads for reconciliation.

We leave *Simon Boccanegra* not with a lesson in fourteenth-century Genoese politics

but with compassion for a father who finally finds his daughter, only to lose everything to political jealousy. Claus Guth's production makes that burden physically felt through the inexorable descent of a giant meteorite onto the stage.

Musgrave similarly uses history to explore leadership under siege. Mary is fighting to keep her throne against the scheming of three men close to her—her half-brother James, her husband Darnley, and the Earl of Bothwell. In her operatic drama, Musgrave collides the personal with the political, giving an incredible immediacy to Mary's story. It is a resonance furthered through Stewart Laing's production, set in a contemporary Scottish town, making sectarian conflict feel immediate rather than historical. We feel the urgency of Mary's leadership playing out against the impossible tensions of the country she is leading.

Written more than a century apart and in radically different musical languages, these operas ask very similar and enduring questions: What does leadership demand? Can power and compassion coexist? How do we find a way out of the cycle of political violence? These are not historical questions; they are contemporary ones, and they remind us why theater still matters so urgently—not because it tells us what happened, but because it helps us understand what it means.

As Aristotle observed in his *Poetics*, "Poetry is more philosophical than history, because poetry speaks of universals, while history speaks of particulars." In that poetic universalism remains one of theater's great appeals to our collective understanding of our world. 🌟

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