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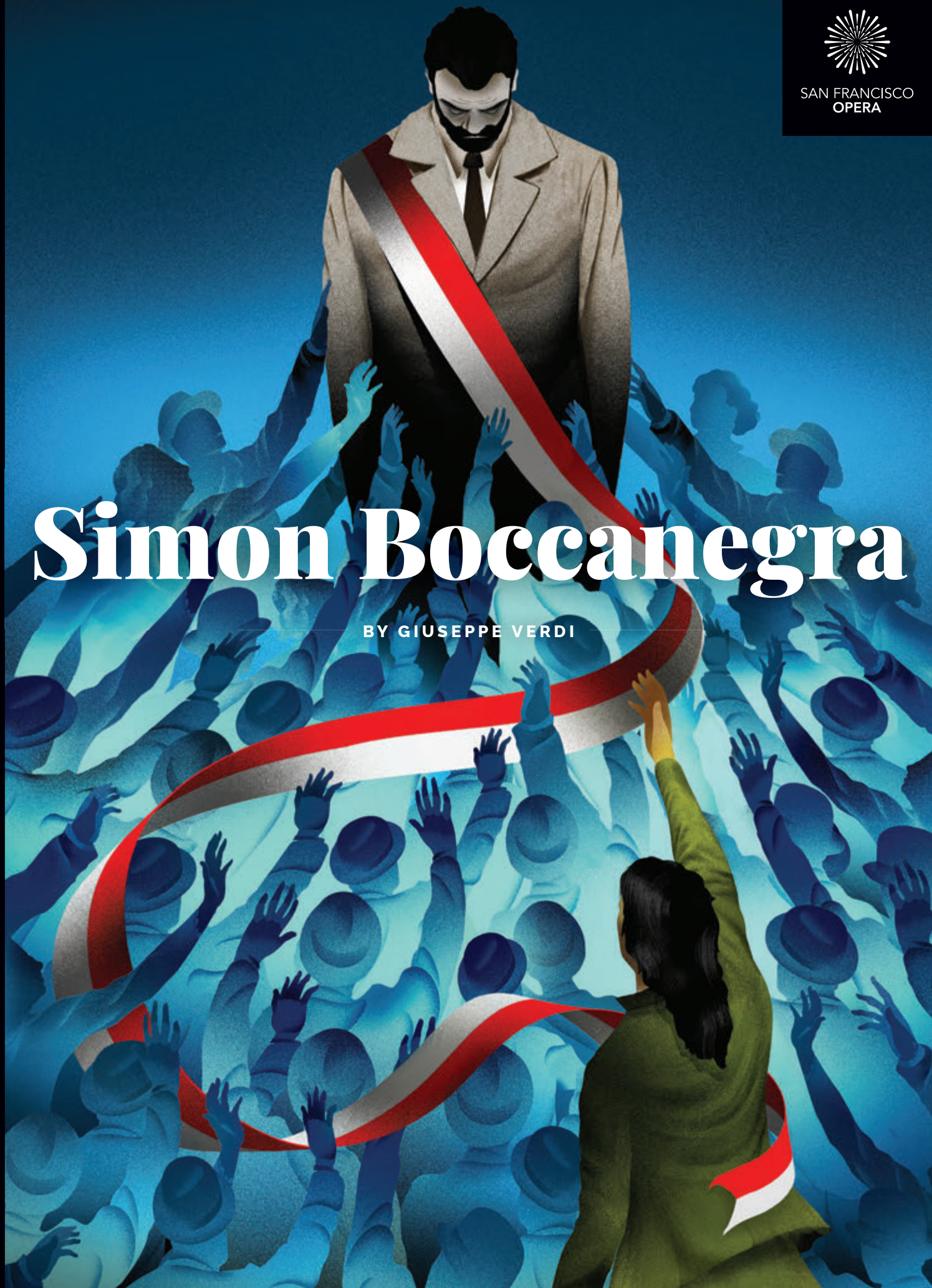
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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Simon Boccanegra

BY GIUSEPPE VERDI



Van Cleef & Arpels

Haute Joaillerie, place Vendôme since 1906





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SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Vol. 104, No. 1 • 2026–27 Season • September 2026

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AT A GLANCE AND OVERVIEW

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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.

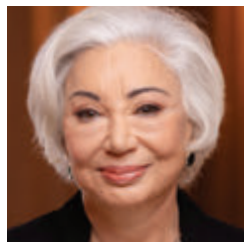
This is our 104th season and the exciting trends that began in the centennial continue with new audiences and donors: full subscriptions have grown by 12 percent this season, and last year we welcomed many new generous donors. Artistically we continue to enjoy a blend of thrilling new operas, and beautifully 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

A Deeper Dive into Opera

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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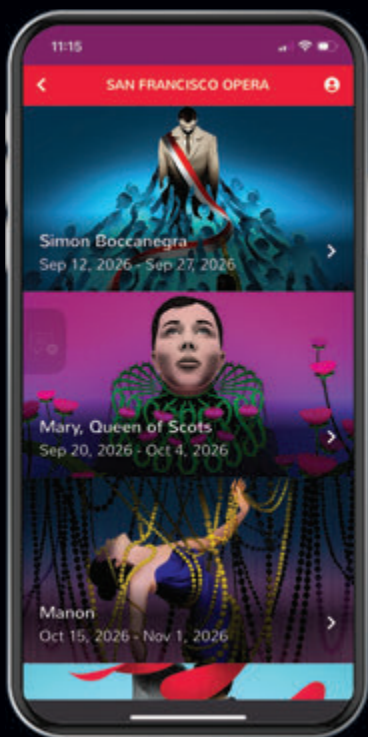


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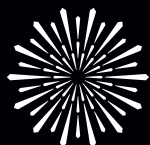
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Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

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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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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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- 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.

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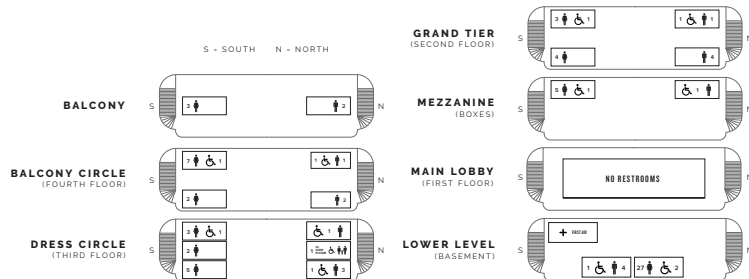
See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

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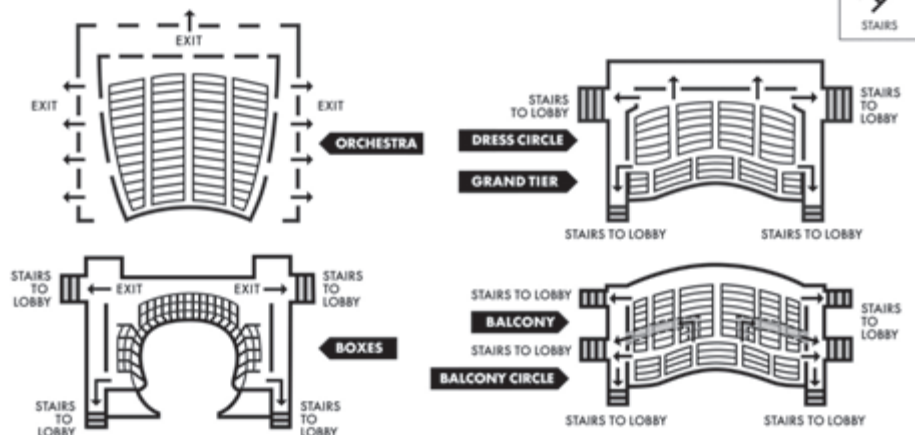
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PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, follow any lighted exit sign to the street. **WALK**, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons, proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.

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



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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 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.

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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.

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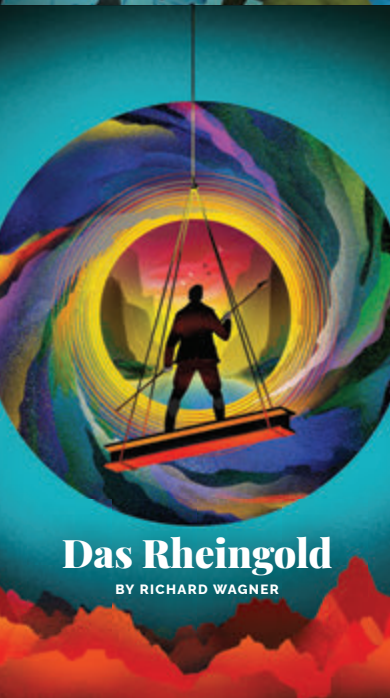
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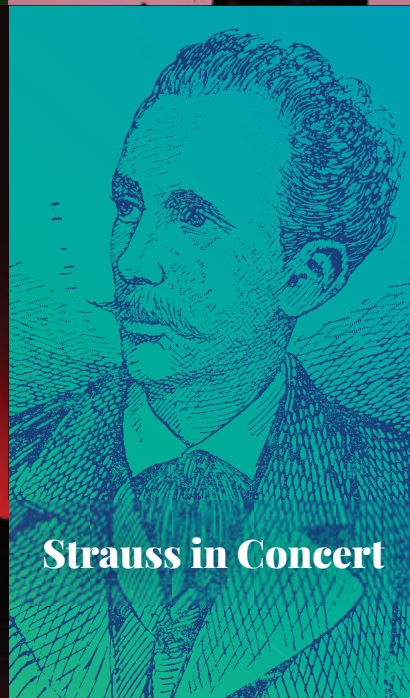
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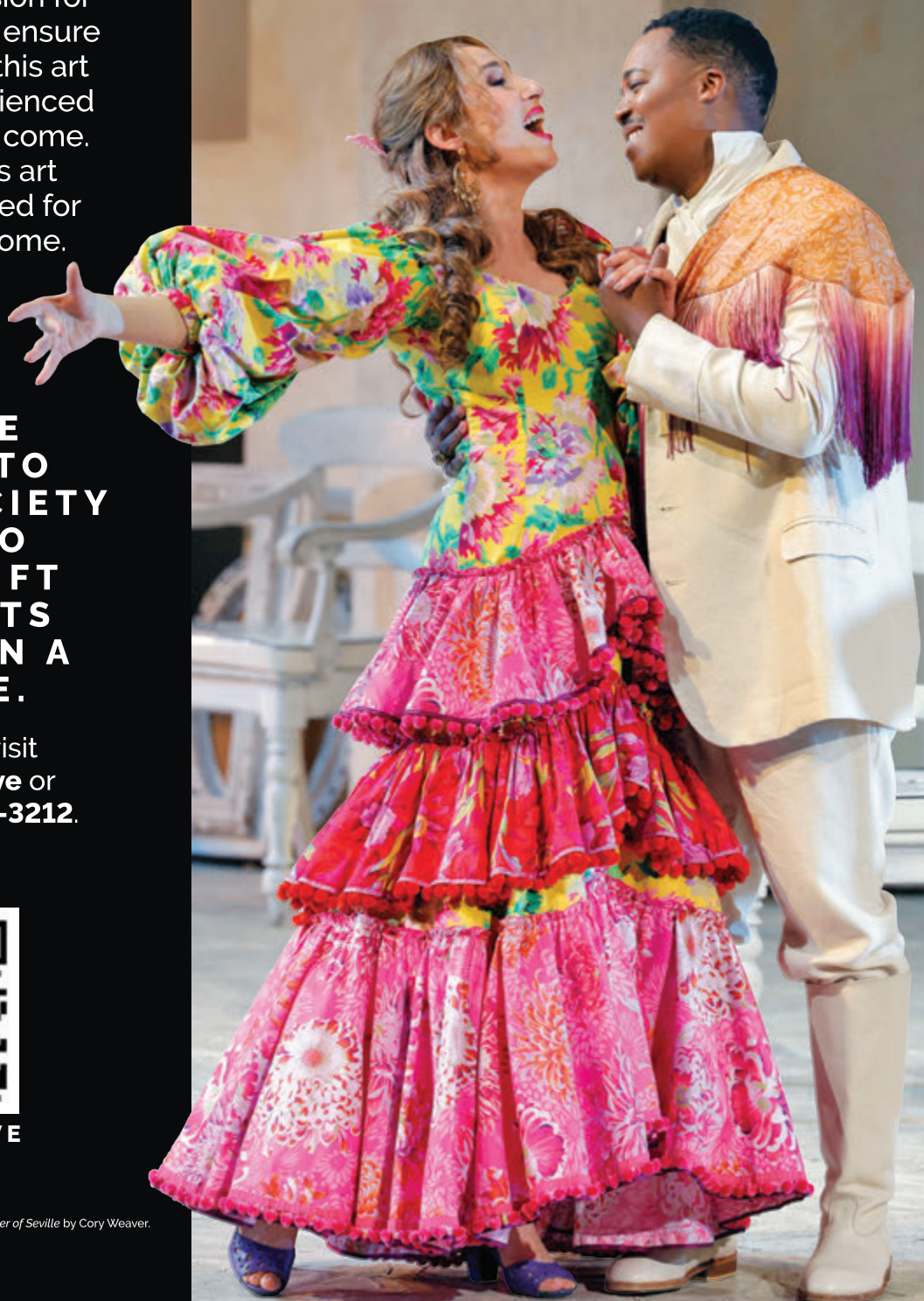
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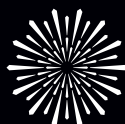


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Simon Boccanegra

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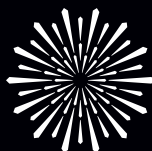
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Simon Boccanegra

Set in Genoa during a period of bitter conflict between the city's ruling patricians and its rising popular class, *Simon Boccanegra* is both an intimate family tragedy and a political drama about power, revenge, and the possibility of reconciliation. Forbidden love, a missing child, and decades of bitterness become inseparable from the fate of the republic itself.

Before the opera begins, Simon Boccanegra has earned fame as a daring seafarer whose victories against Genoa's enemies have made him a hero to the people. He has also fallen in love with Maria, daughter of the powerful aristocrat Jacopo Fiesco. Their relationship defies the rigid boundaries of class and, when they have a child together, Fiesco refuses to recognize Boccanegra as a worthy husband for his daughter. While being confined by her family, Maria dies, and her infant daughter disappears. Holding Boccanegra responsible for the destruction of his house, Fiesco swears revenge.

Urged by his supporters to seek the office of doge, Boccanegra reluctantly enters politics. To Genoa's populace, his election promises a new kind of leader capable of challenging aristocratic privilege. Boccanegra hopes his new authority might also heal old wounds, but when he offers Fiesco reconciliation, the elder nobleman refuses unless his missing granddaughter is returned. Before either man can make a move, Boccanegra discovers Maria's body, as the city gathers to celebrate his election win.

Twenty-five years later, the idealism of Boccanegra's early rule has given way to the burdens of governing a divided republic. To preserve order, he has exiled rivals and confiscated the property of powerful families, including the Grimaldis. Fiesco, living under an assumed name, continues to gather support among the nobles to overthrow the doge.

The past returns in the form of Amelia Grimaldi, a young woman raised by the Grimaldi family who believes herself an orphan. In truth, she is the long-lost daughter of Boccanegra and Maria, rescued and adopted after disappearing in infancy. When Boccanegra recognizes her as his child, the discovery transforms both his private life and his public purpose, replacing years of grief with the possibility of renewal.

From that moment, Boccanegra looks increasingly toward reconciliation rather than retribution. He blesses Amelia's love for the young nobleman Gabriele Adorno, whose family has also suffered under his rule. But some

others remain captive to old resentments. Among them, Paolo, an ambitious political operative who once helped elevate Boccanegra to power. He has become the architect of a growing conspiracy.

As the political crisis deepens, we see the conflict between Boccanegra and Fiesco embodying two irreconcilable responses to the past. Fiesco remains bound by honor and the conviction that old wrongs demand vengeance. Boccanegra, once an outsider who rose through ability rather than birthright, has come to believe that Genoa's future depends upon forgiveness, compromise, and unity.

Only as the conspiracy culminates in Paolo poisoning Boccanegra is the final truth revealed: Amelia is recognized as Fiesco's granddaughter, restoring the family both men believed to be lost forever. Their reconciliation comes at the end of a lifetime marked by grief, yet it offers the next generation a chance to move beyond the divisions that consumed their elders. As he dies, Boccanegra names Adorno as his successor, leaving the republic—and his family—with the hope of a more peaceful future.

First performance: Venice, Teatro La Fenice; March 12, 1857;
Premiere of revised version: Milan, Teatro alla Scala;
March 24, 1881

First performance in the United States: New York,
Metropolitan Opera; January 28, 1932

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 1, 1941,
the Company's 19th season

Simon Boccanegra has been performed in 7 previous seasons.
For information about past casts and productions, visit
archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 8 principals, 78 chorus, 4 supernumeraries; **90 total**

Orchestra: 2 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes, 2 clarinets
(1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 5 horns, 2 trumpets,
3 trombones, 1 tuba, 1 timpani, 2 percussion, 1 harp, 40 strings
(12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses);
63 total

Banda: 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 percussion, 1 harp; **6 total**



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Matthew Piatt
Fabrizio Corona

Diction
Nelson Calzi
Fabrizio Corona

Supertitles
Philip Kuttner

Assistant Director
Roy Rallo

Stage Manager
Jennifer Harber

Assistant Stage Managers
Anna Reetz
Collette Berg
Rosie Burns Pavlik

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Technical Supervisors
Erik Walstad
Shannon Dodson*

Costume Supervisor
Jai Alltizer

Hair and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2026 • 8 PM
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16 • 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 • 2 PM
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 • 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25 • 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27 • 2 PM

Simon Boccanegra

Opera in a prologue and two acts by **Giuseppe Verdi** (revised 1881 version)

Libretto by **Francesco Maria Piave**, revised by **Arrigo Boito**

Based on the play *Simón Bocanegra* by **Antonio García Gutiérrez**

(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Paolo Albani **Aleksey Bogdanov**

Pietro **Gabriel Natal-Báez†**

Simon Boccanegra **Amartuvshin Enkhbat**

Jacopo Fiesco **Christian Van Horn**

Amelia Grimaldi **Eleonora Buratto***

Toni Marie Palmertree (*September 27*)

Gabriele Adorno **Joshua Guerrero***

Amelia's Servant **Stella Hannock**

Captain of the Guard **Christopher Jackson**

Soldiers, Sailors, People, Senators, Courtiers of the Doge

* San Francisco Opera debut † Current Adler Fellow

PROLOGUE

ACT I

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

The performance will last approximately two hours and fifty minutes with one intermission.

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

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be reseated.

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.



Engraving by Paul Destez showing the Council Chamber scene from Verdi's revised *Simon Boccanegra* at Paris' Théâtre-Italien in 1883. / ALAMY

Boccanegra Reborn

**AFTER THE TROUBLED 1857 PREMIERE OF HIS
SIMON BOCCANEGRA, VERDI REMAKES AN OLD SCORE
INTO A LATE-CAREER PLEA FOR PEACE.**

BY REBECCA SCHMID

When Verdi turned his attention to revising *Simon Boccanegra*, in 1879, Italy had won the fight for independence nearly two decades ago. The composer was also firmly established on the international stage, having long left behind what he called his “galley years” cranking out operas with little pause. Yet no other work of his had been so criticized as *Boccanegra*, his twenty-first stage work, when it premiered at the Venice theater La Fenice in 1857. Both the libretto by Francesco Maria Piave and Verdi’s score were deemed too gloomy and severe. The opera traveled throughout Italy and as far as Buenos Aires, yet Verdi was not content. While he had announced his retirement following his 1871 opera, *Aida*, he joined forces with Arrigo Boito to rework both score and text. Their revision, unveiled at Milan’s La Scala in 1881, transformed the troubled middle-period opera into the box-office success for which Verdi had hoped. Both in the years leading up to unification and in its aftermath, the story of *Simon Boccanegra* carried allegorical meaning. Verdi had played a passionate and active role in the Risorgimento, the movement for Italian independence that dominated the country’s politics and culture during the first half of the nineteenth century. The title character, drawn from Antonio García Gutiérrez’s play *Simón Bocanegra*, is based

the libretto with Boito, himself a composer with a progressive vision for Italian opera, opened new horizons for the mature Verdi. The revised score integrates sophisticated techniques and reflects Verdi’s awareness of French grand opera and the music dramas of Richard Wagner—particularly in the recurring orchestral motives that foreshadow or illuminate events. The partnership continued with *Otello* and, shortly thereafter, another Shakespearean drama, *Falstaff*, Verdi’s final opera.

The most significant addition Verdi and Boito made to *Boccanegra* arrives in the final scene of Act I, when the doge summons a council to establish peaceful relations with Genoa’s rival, Venice. This episode, as with much of the libretto, draws on a historic event. In 1344, after the Guelf faction returned to Genoa by military force, the doge created a committee representing commoners and aristocrats in equal number. Boccanegra is depicted as a mighty but merciful ruler, delivering a speech that became the opera’s new dramatic center. “Plebeians! Patricians!” he cries. “Heirs to a fierce history.” He then invokes the medieval Italian poet and humanist Petrarch, whose words had resonated during the movement for independence: “I weep for you, for the peaceful sun on your hillsides, where the olive branches bloom in vain ... and I cry ‘Peace!’ I cry ‘Love!’”

***“Reconciliation comes too late to save the ruler,
but not the world he leaves behind.”***

on a fourteenth-century historical figure. A corsair from Genoa who fought enemies at sea and rose to become the republic’s first doge, Simon Boccanegra reached across class lines to protect the interests of the aristocracy while placating the commoners, only to be fatally poisoned. In Verdi’s drama, he emerges as both hero and martyr in the struggle for Italian solidarity. Not unlike pre-unification Italy, Genoa is torn between rival political factions (the Guelfs and Ghibellines), papal and imperial allegiances, as well as conflict between its governing classes and the general populace.

The 1881 score makes the plot more immediate, bringing the main characters to life with greater depth and enriching the orchestra with color and variation. The collaboration on

As the Italian author Rodolfo Celletti notes, the words express the vision not just of Boccanegra but of Dante and Petrarch, of Verdi and Boito—“of all those who had dreamt over the centuries of unity, peace and brotherhood among the people of Italy.” Verdi’s political engagement extended beyond the theater, and he expressed his views in no uncertain terms. During the anti-Hapsburg uprising known as the *Cinque Giornate*, or Five Days of Milan, in 1848, he wrote to Piave from Paris: “The hour has sounded ... when the people want something there is no absolute power that can resist ... yes, in a few years or even a few months, Italy will be free, one.”

The “Chorus of Hebrew Slaves” from *Nabucco* would become the most famous emblem of the connection

An early 20th-century etching commemorating the centenary of Giuseppe Verdi's October 1813 birth showing the composer at the piano in collaboration with librettist Arrigo Boito. / ALAMY



between Verdi's operas and the Risorgimento, while works from the 1840s such as *La Battaglia di Legnano* and *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* were more even explicit vehicles for the nationalist movement. The composer believed, however, that the transition should not be enacted by force and instead take place under the guidance of a strong leader. For the Verdi scholar Philip Gossett, the council chamber scene in *Boccanegra* embodies this stance. The composer had represented his hometown of Busseto in a delegation requesting that the Duchy of Parma accede to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1859. Two years later, shortly after accepting an invitation to become a member of the first national parliament, he wrote of "the firm wish to work with all my power for the good, the well-being, and the unification of our country ... Fortune sends us a King who loves his people!" (the king in question is Victor Emmanuel II, the first ruler of a united Italy).

Throughout *Boccanegra*, not just the doge but his biological daughter, Maria (under the name Amelia Grimaldi), makes clear that only through love will it be possible to overcome bloodshed and come together under divine blessing. Amelia also personifies the need for reconciliation between classes. This goal is finally achieved when the doge blesses her union with the nobleman Gabriele Adorno, another enemy, and appoints him as his successor. But only over Boccanegra's dead body can his vision of friendship unfold. By the end of Act

II, the doge has drunk from a goblet poisoned by Paolo Albiani, who helps usher the title character to power in the prologue, only to conspire against him. In Act III, when Fiesco learns that "Amelia" is his granddaughter, he declares in tears that "the voice of heaven speaks" through the dying Boccanegra.

The mature Verdi illustrates the events with clarity and concision. A sliding motive in the strings represents the poison as it creeps through the doge's veins. After Boccanegra feels the effect and longs to "breathe the sweet air of the open sky," the strings shimmer under a trilling flute. "The seal!" he sings, the orchestra now accompanying him with oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and a horn. "Seeing it again brings me back to memories of triumphs ... Why did I not find a grave in its bosom?" Already in the 1857 score, imagery of the sea permeates the opera, evoking Boccanegra's life as a corsair, Genoa's maritime identity, and love of the homeland. In the revised version, as music historian András Batta has noted, the ocean acquires a new brightness. When conflict subsides, the waves grow calm: "Peace!" Amelia pleads to accompaniment from the full orchestra at the end of the council chamber scene, as the chorus looks at the doge and sings of a "soft wind that stills the troubled sea."

The unbreakable bond between father and daughter is a recurring theme in Verdi operas from *Luisa Miller* and *Rigoletto* to *Don Carlos* and *Aida*. A poignant exchange takes place at the end of the Act II of *Boccanegra*, when

Fiesco (Boris Christoff), Amelia (Renata Tebaldi), and Gabriele (Roberto Turrini) around the dying Simon Boccanegra (Leonard Warren) in San Francisco Opera's 1956 production. / ROBERT LACKENBACH



Simon Boccanegra opened San Francisco Opera's 2008–09 season with Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the title role. / TERRENCE MCCARTHY



Amelia stops Gabriele from killing the doge, declaring: “I swear that the love uniting us is holy.” Upon the revelation that she is Boccanegra’s daughter, a trio unfolds that the composer reworked for 1881 and, according to scholar James Hepokoski, stands as one of his “most beautiful short ensembles.” After Gabriele admits to his “jealous love,” Amelia prays to her dead mother, while the doge declares that his tomb “be the altar of Italian friendship.” In an example of Verdi’s ability to create dramatic tension through the simplest means, the orchestra falls silent, then shadows Amelia’s high note and the final melodies with the woodwinds.

In addition to Verdi’s gripping score, the cast of the first Milan performances in 1881 played a dynamic role in the work’s success. Verdi cultivated close working relationships with performers and responded to their strengths. While criticism of the 1859 performances in the first version at La Scala had largely been directed at the baritone Sebastiano Ronconi in the title role, the French baritone Victor Maurel rose to the vocal and dramatic challenges of the 1881 revision at the same theater. His abilities so impressed Verdi that he chose him to create the character of Iago in the 1887 premiere of *Otello* and cast him in the title role of *Falstaff* in its 1893 world premiere, both at La Scala. As Gabriele Adorno, the tenor Francesco Tamagno possessed a powerful upper register, and passages in the revision may have been tailored to his abilities. Verdi later snapped him up as the title character

of the first *Otello*. The Polish bass Eduard de Reszke, whose repertoire ranged from Gounod to Wagner, took on the role of Fiesco; although not a true *basso profondo*, his voice proved suited to the character’s unusually low range.

The revised *Boccanegra* traveled to Vienna by 1882 and Paris the following year, where both Maurel and De Reszke appeared. By the early twentieth century, with Verdi’s operas available in German translation, productions were mounted from theaters in Berlin and Stuttgart to Prague and Basel. In 1932, the Metropolitan Opera presented the work’s first North American staging, with a cast including Lawrence Tibbett and Ezio Pinza. In 1941, San Francisco Opera gave *Simon Boccanegra* its West Coast premiere, with Tibbett returning to the title role and Pinza as Fiesco. *Boccanegra* has thus outgrown its original reputation as a problematic work to become, in the words of the late scholar George Hall, “one of the composer’s finest achievements.” The opera is testament to Verdi’s artistic tenacity, personal ethics, and patriotic ideals. If *Falstaff* is Verdi’s laughing farewell, *Boccanegra* is his tearful plea to the Italian people—or humanity at large—that peace and love prevail over class struggle and political rivalry. 🌟

Rebecca Schmid, PhD, is the author of *Weill, Blitzstein and Bernstein: A Study of Influence and a faculty member at Webster Vienna Private University*. Her writings about opera have appeared in such publications as the *New York Times*, *Financial Times*, *Opera*, and *Opernwelt*.

Ahead of the Wave

CHRISTIAN VAN HORN
ON VERDI, STORYTELLING,
AND BUILDING
A CREATIVE LIFE
BEYOND THE STAGE

BY LOUISE T. GUNTHER

*“The only way
this career works
is if you are completely
obsessed with it.”*
—Christian Van Horn



KRISTEN LOKEN

When Christian Van Horn steps on stage in San Francisco as Jacopo Fiesco in *Simon Boccanegra* this month, it will mark another milestone in a lifelong quest. “I’ve worked a long time to sing the big Verdi roles,” says the bass-baritone from Rockville Centre, New York. “Those were my dreams. I had to sing a lot of Mozart and French repertoire before somebody let me do that. I got into some bel canto, and then the Verdi thing started to happen, and it fit me like a glove. He knew how to write for the singer, and he knew how to write so that you sang healthy. It’s Mozart, in a way, for adults.”

Fiesco epitomizes the flawed but deeply human characters Van Horn brings so movingly to life. In a recent Facebook post, he accompanied himself at the piano, captioning it “A lifetime of vengeance dissolves in one moment.” “My eyes tear up just thinking about this moment,” he wrote. “This is, for me, the most beautiful passage in all of the repertoire for my voice.”

Van Horn brings both the rich, rolling sound of a true bass and the rhythmic pulse to give Verdi’s expansive melodies momentum. “In all repertoire, either you are singing it or it’s singing you,” he says. “Staying ahead of it—staying on top of the wave—is your greatest bet. When it comes to Verdi, if you’ve heard the music once, you can sing it back. That’s not the hard part. It’s text in rhythm before anything else. The text has to be so second nature to you that you *are* ahead of the wave. Because the second anything starts to slow you down, and the slog begins, you pull the maestro back, and then they pull you back further, and you start this tug of war ... You’re not early; you’re in front of the beat, in front of the action, in front of the drama. You’d better be, because it can run you over.”

Van Horn builds his vivid, detailed characterizations from the bottom up—literally. “When I’m cracking a score for the first time—I’ve seen the work, I know the breadth of the character and how far he has to go—I start to think: What kind of shoes does he wear? How does he walk? How does he stand? That sets the tone for the quality of the timbre: Is this a sad person? An aggressive person? Is he both? What is his goal? And from there: rhythm, language.”

Language is a vital tool for Van Horn. “I have found singing in French, you get a larger color palette. That’s not to say that you can’t bring all the colors of the rainbow into the Italian language, but you’ve got five vowels. In French you’ve got more options to explore. So there’s more space to explore. It makes it more interesting from a singer’s standpoint.”

Despite his passion for Verdi, it is a French role, Massenet’s *Don Quichotte*, with which he identifies with most closely. “When I finally sang *Don Quichotte*—and I’m not a 90-year-old man—but I understood the things that happened to him. I understood believing that your life should be more important than it is. I understood embarrassment. I understood losing love. I understood falling short,” he says. “*Don Quichotte* wears [these emotions] on his sleeve. So I felt closest to this character. I loved playing it! Emotionally, it takes a toll. When the show was over, I had to leave by another door because I didn’t want to greet people. I just wanted to disappear.”

“When I was a kid, I related to Figaro [in Mozart’s *The Marriage of Figaro*] because I was young and in love and full of energy, and you could think you’re the smartest guy in the room when you’re not. It was easy to relate to him. Now I don’t quite understand that guy anymore.”

Life Between Roles

The singer’s life, he says, is not for the faint of heart. “The only way this career works is if you are completely obsessed with it. You have to give up everything. Whatever comforts humans lock into—home, family, Christmas, knowing that you’re never going to miss a birthday or a funeral—we give up all of that. And while you seek out the approval and the applause of strangers, most of your life is spent alone, and that’s the price.”

Van Horn is thrilled to be back at San Francisco Opera, where he made his Company debut in 2010 as the King in *Aida*. “It’s one of the few places where you walk in and feel like you’ve joined a family,” he says. “For people who constantly sleep in strange beds and wake up not sure where they are, San Francisco feels like home because they’re so happy you’re there. Companies sometimes forget that 10 months out of the year, we’re in a strange place. When you’re greeted like an old friend and the *first* thing they ask you is how you’re doing—not, ‘Are you ready to sing? We need you to do this, this, and this’—few places are nicer to work.”

San Francisco Opera audiences have loved Van Horn from the start. He speaks just as warmly of San Francisco audiences. “It’s an intelligent crowd,” he says. “A lot of places have to put on the greatest hits every year to keep their audience. In San Francisco I sang *Two Women*, *Les Troyens*, *Orlando*, *Billy Budd*. And the audience jumps right in!”

San Francisco Opera debut of Christian Van Horn in 2010 as the King in Verdi's *Aida*.
CORY WEAVER



Van Horn performed Offenbach's villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, 2013 / CORY WEAVER

In 2024, Van Horn, as Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen*, made his entrance on horseback. / CORY WEAVER



Beyond the Stage

During the pandemic, Van Horn launched *The CVH Podcast*. “I realized that I was talking to the audience in a performance,” he says. “This was a conversation we were having. Our lives and our artistry are interwoven with these characters that we play, and we have people that follow us and know us, and I wanted to connect with them. I made sure that whatever I did on the podcast, it would remain honest. I wasn’t going to paint a picture of some charmed life—although much of it is charmed—but I was going to talk about the realities of life in this business.” Guests have ranged from star singers to his son, Colter, but he notes, “Most of the time, it’s just me, and the response is nothing short of a miracle. It’s turned into the best marketing thing I ever did. I’m in the process of putting out a self-titled debut album, and the presales have been shocking because I’ve got this fan base that I talk to once a week.”

That album, he says, is “completely do-it-yourself. I’m the executive producer. I procured funding; I got the orchestra, the hall, the maestro. My hope is that I’m going to pave the way for other artists because the classical-music recording business is over. I think this will be a tiny

glimmer of hope for the future of classical recording—that it’s possible to do this on your own.”

The whole project is homegrown, right down to cover art created pro bono by one of his podcast fans. “Her name is Roxana Zegan, and she is an award-winning creative director. She had seen me at the Met, and she started listening to the podcast. We became friends, and I learned that she had made two album covers for a leading rock-and-roll band. I said, ‘Now Rox, I can’t afford you, but would you want to take a stab at the album cover?’ She was so excited! So you say DIY, but there are hundreds of people involved. It’s been exciting to see where the love and support come from.”

That love and support help balance the sacrifices. So does the work itself. “I get to be a storyteller,” says Van Horn. “I get to sing songs for a living. I don’t have a desk; I have a piano. If I don’t like my boss, I get a new one in three weeks. If I have a bad show, there’s tomorrow. The scenery keeps changing, and that keeps your brain and life active. This is a rare life that I’ve been offered, and shame on me if I don’t do it.” 🌟

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

“The Fiesco List”

BY JEFFERY S. MCMILLAN



“It’s a hell of a list,” remarked Christian Van Horn while looking over San Francisco Opera’s previous casts for *Simon Boccanegra* and pointing to the basses who sang the role of Jacopo Fiesco before him: “I mean, Pinza ... Christoff ... Siepi ... Ramey.... you’re not going to come up with four bigger names.”

Van Horn, who is one of the leading bass-baritones in the world today, is a student of opera history, and he finds inspiration in the paths blazed by his artistic forbears. For example, he can identify some famous singers of the past after hearing just a few notes or even a single note from a recording. What seems like an impressive parlor trick is a byproduct of his decades of close listening and a devotion to the craft of singing. “When I look at those names from San Francisco’s previous casts, I can hear their voices,” he says.

“I’m obsessed with the people who went before me,” Van Horn continues. “We didn’t have YouTube when I was in school, and streaming didn’t start really until 2005, so we went to the library or Tower Records. Siepi and Ramey were my biggest heroes. But I like that it’s my turn. I waited for my turn, and I’m 47, which is when you should be doing Verdi bass roles like Fiesco. I’ve been wishing for it since I was 23.”

Van Horn, who joins “the list” in 2026, offered commentary on the illustrious seven basses who sang Fiesco with San Francisco Opera before him.

EZIO PINZA (1941)

He made a ton of recordings, and my God, what an instantly recognizable voice that man had! I mean, he is the godfather for all of us. First, it was Fyodor Chaliapin, and then it was Pinza. After hearing him on records, I remember thinking, ‘okay, we don’t have to be the boring guy in the corner.’ Pinza showed that the bass absolutely can be the leading man.

BORIS CHRISTOFF (1956)

He has a timbre like no other. You always know it is Christoff because he sounds scary. The problem is he couldn’t ever take the Russian out of his sound. When you listen to Pinza sing French, it’s French, but he was not a French speaker. I heard Siepi sing some French stuff, and it was a little bit scandalous. But with Christoff he was just making up vowels that didn’t exist. It’s tough for me to get past that in the Italian repertoire like *Simon Boccanegra*. But if we’re listening to Christoff in *Boris Godunov*? All day long, you know. I love it!

GIORGIO TOZZI (1960)

Tozzi was a teacher in Indiana, and he taught a lot of my friends, including Kyle Ketelsen. Kyle was lucky enough to sing for him, but I never met the man.



Ezio Pinza in 1941 (with Frederick Jagel as Gabriele). / LAWRENCE MORTON



Boris Christoff as Fiesco, 1956. ROBERT LACKENBACH



Giorgio Tozzi in 1960 (with Giuseppe Zampieri as Gabriele). CAROLYN MASON JONES

MARTTI TALVELA (1975)

I don't know a lot about Talvela. He recorded plenty, but he was around during a time when we also had Nicolai Ghiaurov. If Ghiaurov was on a recording, that's the one I had.

CESARE SIEPI (1980)

When his singing days came to an end, Siepi threw down the smoke bomb like Méphistophélès in *Faust* and just disappeared. I never got to meet him, but I have spent my entire life aiming to get those long, endless phrases that Siepi had. He could keep spinning the line without letting go of the phrase; even if he had to stop for a breath, the phrase went all the way through. Siepi was the king of that, the absolute king. I've learned from singing all over the world that this is what gets the audience going more than anything else. Okay, they want to hear the high C's and the high Z's, but if you want to give the audience chills, it's that long phrase.

SAMUEL RAMEY (2000)

We all worshiped at the altar of Sam. Nobody had more recordings than Sam. Sam was vocally technically perfect. He had all the notes, and his coloratura was like a machine gun, like Marilyn Horne. Sam taught us what we should be able to do. The bar wasn't so high before Sam, and all of a sudden, he took those Handel pieces like *Rinaldo* and sang them for real. "Oh, we have to do it like that?" The days of lazy basses were over! And when you meet him and talk to him, he's incredibly humble. Sam was very encouraging to me and said, "Keep the fire burning." It probably meant nothing for him to say that, but it is very important to me.

VITALIJ KOWALJOW (2008)

I've heard him in San Francisco, at the Met, at the Bayerisch Staatsoper. The man's voice is so mature, and he had those high cheekbones so his whole voice ends up in the mask. It was like listening to Paata Burchuladze or something. You get a chill up the back of your neck because he sounds like an animal. The first time I heard Vitalij I realized I had a lot of work to do. A lot of these guys made me feel like I had to get to work, and that's good. 🌟

Public Relations Director and program editor Jeffery S. McMillan is a writer on opera and jazz.



The 6'8" Finnish bass Martti Talvela outside the Opera House in 1975.
KORI LOCKHART



Cesare Siepi portrayed Fiesco in 1981, a quarter century after his 1954 company debut. / ROBERT CAHEN



Fiesco (2000) was one of 16 roles Samuel Ramey sang with San Francisco Opera. / KEN FRIEDMAN



Vitalij Kowaljow (right) was Fiesco opposite the Simon Boccanegra of Dimitri Hvorostovsky in 2008.
TERRENCE MCCARTHY

Artist Profiles

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



EUN SUN KIM

(Seoul, South Korea)

Conductor

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Elektra*; *Parsifal*; *Rigoletto*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*;

Tristan und Isolde; *Idomeneo*; *Il Trovatore*; *Lohengrin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Fidelio*; *The Magic Flute*; *Tosca*; *Madama Butterfly*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eun Sun Kim: A Journey into Lohengrin* film

Recent and Upcoming: *Elegant Impressions* (Lincoln Center); *Manon* (San Francisco Opera); *Strauss in Concert* (San Francisco); *Das Rheingold* (San Francisco); *Turandot* (Paris Opera); *Tosca* (Berlin State Opera); Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* (Orchestre National de France); Helen Grime's Horn Concerto (Göteborgs Konserthus); Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* and Poulenc Gloria (Colorado Symphony); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Berlin); *Carmen* (Madrid's Teatro Real, Zurich Opera); *Madama Butterfly* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *La Bohème* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Vienna State Opera); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris); Verdi Requiem (Dutch National Opera); *Hänsel und Gretel* (Munich); concerts with Dresden Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, Berlin Philharmonic, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre de Paris, Orchestre National de France, Philharmonia Orchestra, Seoul Philharmonic, Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New York

Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Orchestre symphonique de Montréal, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra
Instagram: @eskconductor



AMARTUVSHIN

ENKHBAT

Baritone

(Sukhbaatar aimag
Khalzan, Mongolia)

Simon Boccanegra

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; title role of *Rigoletto*; *Opera in the Park*

Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Rigoletto* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Vienna, Hamburg, Trieste, London's Royal Ballet and Opera); title role of *Nabucco* (Bonn, Vienna, Berlin); Amonasro in *Aida* (Paris, Metropolitan Opera, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, London, Verona); Don Carlo in *Ernani* (Verona); title role of *Macbeth* (Munich); Giorgio Germont in *La Traviata* (Metropolitan Opera, Milan, Chicago, Berlin, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma Japan tour); Scarpia in *Tosca* (Metropolitan Opera, Milan, Vienna); Iago in *Otello* (Metropolitan Opera); Rodrigo in *Don Carlo* (Dresden); Don Carlo in *La Forza del Destino* (Milan, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* (Lyon, Genoa, London); Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Tonio in *Pagliacci* (Milan)



ELEONORA

BURATTO*

Soprano

(Mantua, Italy)

Amelia Grimaldi

Recent and

Upcoming: Title role

of *Madama Butterfly* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Vienna State Opera, Paris Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Baden-Baden Easter Festival, Berlin Philharmonic); Mimi in *La Bohème* (Metropolitan Opera, Vienna); title role of Giordano's *Marina* (Milan's Teatro Dal Verme); Desdemona in Verdi's *Otello* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala, Munich); Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* (Valencia's Les Arts, Milan, Rome's Teatro dell'Opera, Vienna); Verdi Requiem (Teatro Regio Parma, Philharmonie de Paris, Vienna's Musikverein, Madrid's Auditorio Nacional de Musica, Barcelona's Palau de la Música); title role of *Tosca* (Berlin State Opera, Metropolitan Opera, Munich, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Torre del Lago's Puccini Festival); Rossini's *Stabat Mater* (Chicago Symphony Orchestra); Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (Turin); title role of *Aida* (Verona); Elettra in *Idomeneo* (Vienna); New Year's Eve concert (Venice's La Fenice); Elisabeth de Valois in *Don Carlo* (Metropolitan Opera); Liù in *Turandot* (Metropolitan Opera); Belcanto concert (Pesaro's Rossini Opera Festival); title role of *Suor Angelica* (Vienna); Alice in *Falstaff* (Vienna, Semperoper Dresden); Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux* (Valencia); title role of *Maria Stuarda* (Valencia); title role of *Anna Bolena* (Valencia); Leonora in *Il Trovatore* (Hamburg State Opera); Rossini's *Messa di Gloria* (Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia); Donizetti Requiem (Bergamo); *A riveder le stelle* gala (Milan)
Instagram: @eleonora_buratto
Facebook: @eleonoraburattosoprano
X: @EleonoraBuratto



TONI MARIE PALMERTREE 
Soprano
(Fleetwood, Pennsylvania)
Amelia Grimaldi
San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Title role of *Madama Butterfly*; Nedda in *Pagliacci*; Liù in *Turandot*

Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Luisa Miller* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); recital (Gradus ad Parnassum); concert (Reading Symphony Orchestra); Maddalena in *Andrea Chénier* (Opera Delaware); Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Seattle Symphony); title role of *Madama Butterfly* (Metropolitan Opera, Princeton Festival, West Bay Opera, Palm Beach Opera); title role of *Tosca* (Princeton, Florida Grand Opera); Mimi in *La Bohème* (Delaware, Opera Baltimore); Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* (Arizona Opera); A Voice from Heaven in *Don Carlo* (Metropolitan Opera); Countess Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Delaware); Nedda in *Pagliacci* (Festival Opera New Zealand); Puccini Portraits concert (Delaware)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2016, 2017
Merola Opera Program: 2015



CHRISTIAN VAN HORN
Bass-Baritone
(Rockville Centre, New York)
Jacopo Fiesco
San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Escamillo in *Carmen*; Lindorf/Dr. Miracle/Dapertutto in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*; Fedor von Bock in Marco Tutino's *Two Women*; Timur in *Turandot*; Colline in *La Bohème*; Alidoro in *La Cenerentola*; Oroveso in *Norma*; Narbal in *Les Troyens*; Claggart in *Billy Budd*; 100th Anniversary Concert
Recent and Upcoming: Giorgio in

I Puritani (Metropolitan Opera); Escamillo in *Carmen* (Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, London's Royal Ballet and Opera); Méphistophélès in *Faust* (Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées); Philip II in *Don Carlo* (Dallas Opera); title role of *Bluebeard's Castle* (Canadian Opera Company, Chicago Symphony Orchestra); Timur in *Turandot* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Mozart Requiem (LA Phil at Hollywood Bowl); Four Villains in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Metropolitan Opera); Philippe II in *Don Carlos* (Paris Opera); title role of *Attila* in concert (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Nabucco* (Verona)
Instagram: @vanhorncvh
Facebook: @vanhorncvh



JOSHUA GUERRERO*
Tenor
(Las Vegas, Nevada)
Gabriele Adorno
Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Don Carlo* (Vienna

State Opera); *Madama Butterfly* (Vienna, Deutsche Oper Berlin, London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glyndebourne, Santa Fe Opera); *Carmen* (Rome's Teatro dell'Opera); *Il Trittico* (Paris Opera, Vienna, Amsterdam's Dutch National Opera); *Manon Lescaut* (Washington Concert Opera, Frankfurt Opera); recital (LA Opera); *Mefistofele* (Rome); concert with Andrea Carroll (San Diego Opera); *La Bohème* (Paris, London, San Diego, Canadian Opera Company); *Don Carlos* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Tosca* (Santa Fe, Amsterdam); *Macbeth* (Chicago); *Il Tabarro* (Salzburg); *Night at the Opera* (Orquestra Gulbenkian); Bel Canto Trio (tour); *La Traviata* (Washington National Opera); *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Houston Grand Opera); *Rigoletto* (Canadian Opera Company)
Instagram: @iamjoshuaguerrero



ALEKSEY BOGDANOV 
Baritone
(San Francisco, California)
Paolo Albani
San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Noble in *Lohengrin*; Count Monterone in *Rigoletto*

Recent and Upcoming: Telramund in *Lohengrin* (Dallas Opera); Lieutenant Horstmayer in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* (Atlanta Opera); Montano in *Otello* (Metropolitan Opera); Rachmaninoff's *Spring* (Houston Symphony, Clarion Choir); Rachmaninoff's *The Bells* (Santa Fe Symphony, Cathedral Choral Society); Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* in concert (The Florida Orchestra); First Nazarene in *Salome* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Alberich in *Götterdämmerung* (Atlanta Opera); Escamillo in *Carmen* (San Diego Opera); *Distant Worlds: Music from Final Fantasy* (Carnegie Hall); Donner in *Das Rheingold* (Pacific Symphony); The One-Eyed Man in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Metropolitan Opera); Capulet in *Roméo et Juliette* (Palm Beach Opera); Nick Shadow in *The Rake's Progress* (Glimmerglass Festival); Ethel Smyth's Mass in D (Cathedral Choral Society); Crespel/Luther in *Les Contes des Hoffmann* (Barcelona's Gran Theatre del Liceu); Jack Rance in *La Fanciulla del West* (Royal Swedish Opera); Scarpia in *Tosca* (Palm Beach Opera, Austin Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Arizona Opera); title role of *Rigoletto* (Nashville Opera, Central City Opera); Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* (Tulsa Opera); Amonasro in *Aida* (Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra); Sebastiano in Eugen d'Albert's *Tiefland* (Sarasota Opera); Shchelkalov in *Boris Godunov* (Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Symphony); Verdi Requiem (San Diego Symphony, Colorado Symphony); *Gurre-Lieder* (KBS Symphony Orchestra); Handel's *Messiah* (Richmond Symphony)
Merola Opera Program: 2009

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



GABRIEL NATAL-BÁEZ†
Baritone
(Toa Alta, Puerto Rico)

Pietro

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Ambrogio

in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Marcello in *Bohème*
Out of the Box

Recent and Upcoming: Enrico in excerpts from *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Merola Grand Finale); duet from Donizetti's *Il Campanello* (Schwabacher Summer Concert); Schwabacher Recital; Marullo in *Rigoletto* (Teatro Lirico d'Europa); Le Podestat in *Le Docteur Miracle*; Beaumarchais in John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* (Rice University); Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* (Rice); Explorer in Theo Chandler's *Breathe in Light*; *Songfest: A Grand Night for Singing* (Merola Opera Program); *Noche Española* concert

Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (2026)

San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2026

Merola Opera Program: 2025



CHRISTOPHER JACKSON†

Tenor

(Syracuse, New York)

Captain of the Guard

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Pony

Express Rider in *La Fanciulla del West*; Uncle Yakuside in *Madama Butterfly*; Prince of Persia in *Turandot*; Jeppo Liverotto in *Lucrezia Borgia*; First Priest in *Die Zauberflöte*; Backwoodsman in *Show Boat*; Giuseppe in *La Traviata*; Amelia's servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Messenger in *Il Trovatore*; Designer #3 in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*

Past Performances: Lt. B.F. Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* (New York City Opera); Anatol in *Vanessa* (NYCO); Calaf in *Turandot* (Festival Opera); Don José in

Carmen (Anchorage Opera)
Member of San Francisco Opera
Regular Chorus



STELLA HANNOCK†

Mezzo-Soprano

(Port Macquarie, Australia)

Amelia's Servant

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Giovanna

in *Rigoletto*; Designer #2 in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*

Recent and Upcoming: Second Bridesmaid in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (San Francisco Opera); Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito* (San Francisco Conservatory of Music); L'Enfant in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (SFCM); Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare* (SFCM); Guido in Handel's *Flavio* (SFCM); Véronique in Bizet's *Le Docteur Miracle* (SFCM); Prince Charming in *Cendrillon* (Sydney Conservatorium of Music)
Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus

Leclair's *Scylla et Glaucus* (Zürich); John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* (Munich); *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Rome)



KATHERINE M. CARTER

(New York, New York)

Revival Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Revival

Director of *La Bohème*

Recent and Upcoming: Director of *La Traviata* (Florentine Opera); *Jenůfa* (Sarasota Opera); *Agrippina* (The Juilliard School); *The Magic Flute* (Opera Carolina); *The Merry Widow* (Sarasota Opera); *Hansel and Gretel* (Annapolis Opera); Disney's *Frozen, the Musical* (Rose Theatre); *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Wolf Trap Opera); *La Bohème* (Aspen Music Festival, Houston Grand Opera at Miller Outdoor Theater); *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Manhattan School of Music); *Roméo et Juliette* (Manhattan School of Music, Indiana University); *Nabucco* (Canadian Opera Company); *La Rondine* (Manhattan School of Music); Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers* (Bard); Lisa Despain's *Song of the Nightingale* (On Site Opera); Massenet's *Thérèse* (Sarasota); Ravel's *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* and Viardot's *Cendrillon* (Carnegie Mellon University); *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (Sarasota); *La Clemenza di Tito* (Houston's Rice University); *Rinaldo* (Carnegie Mellon); *Carousel* (Bozeman's Intermountain Opera); Monet Hurst-Mendoza's *Torera* (Houston's Alley Theatre); Disney's *Descendants* (Omaha's The Rose Theatre); Danny K. Bernstein's *Far from Canterbury* (Tamworth's The Barnstormers Theatre); New York Festival of Song
Revival Director of *La Bohème* (Wolf Trap, Canadian Opera Company)
Intimacy Director of *Salome*, *Carmen*, *Don Giovanni*, John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* (Metropolitan Opera)
Instagram: @Katherine_M_Carter

Creative Team



CLAUS GUTH†

(Munich, Germany)

Original Director

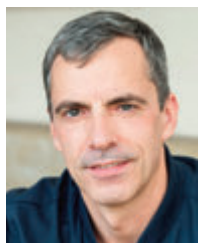
Recent and

Upcoming: *Jenůfa*

(London's Royal Ballet and Opera,

Metropolitan Opera); *Turandot* (Vienna State Opera); Mozart's *Mitridate* (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Salome* (Metropolitan Opera); Georg Friedrich Haas' *Bluthaus* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Brett Dean's *Of One Blood* (Munich, Santa Fe Opera); Pascal Dusapin's *Il Viaggio, Dante* (Aix-en-Provence Festival); *Doppelgänger* (New York's Park Avenue Armory); Rameau's *Samson* (Aix-en-Provence); Jean-Marie

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



CHRISTIAN SCHMIDT*

(Munich, Germany)

Production Designer

Recent and Upcoming:

Le Nozze di Figaro

(Madrid's Teatro Real); *Rigoletto* (Paris Opera); *Tristan und Isolde* (Zurich); *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Zurich); Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (Berlin State Opera); *Der Rosenkavalier* (Frankfurt Opera); *Daphne* (Frankfurt); *Aida* (Salzburg Festival); *La Forza del Destino* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera); *Saul* (Vienna's Theater an der Wien); *The Merry Widow* (Frankfurt); *Pique Dame* (Salzburg); Michael Jarrell's *Bérénice* (Paris); Verdi's *Otello* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); *Norma* (Hamburg State Opera); *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Hamburg); *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (Wiesbaden); *Orlando* (Vienna); *Rodelinda* (Frankfurt); *Rusalka* (Vienna); Chaya Czernowin's *Heart Chamber* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); Wagner's *Ring* cycle (Zurich); Mozart's *Mitridate* (Madrid); Verdi's *Stiffelio* (Vienna)

WOLFGANG GÖBBEL

(1953–2024)

(Ulm, Germany)

Original Lighting Designer

San Francisco Opera Highlights:

Lighting Designer of *Parsifal*; *Die Tote Stadt*

Original Lighting Designer of *Les Troyens*



JUSTIN A. PARTIER

(New York, New York)

Revival Lighting Designer

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Carmen*; *Cavalleria*

Rusticana/Pagliacci; Verdi Requiem; *Fidelio*; *Bohème Out of the Box* (2023); *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; 100th Anniversary Concert; *Pride Concert* (2025,

2026); *Idomeneo*; *Rigoletto* (2025)

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



JOHN KEENE

(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

Chorus Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Don Giovanni*; Bright

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

Recent and Upcoming:

Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*; *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*

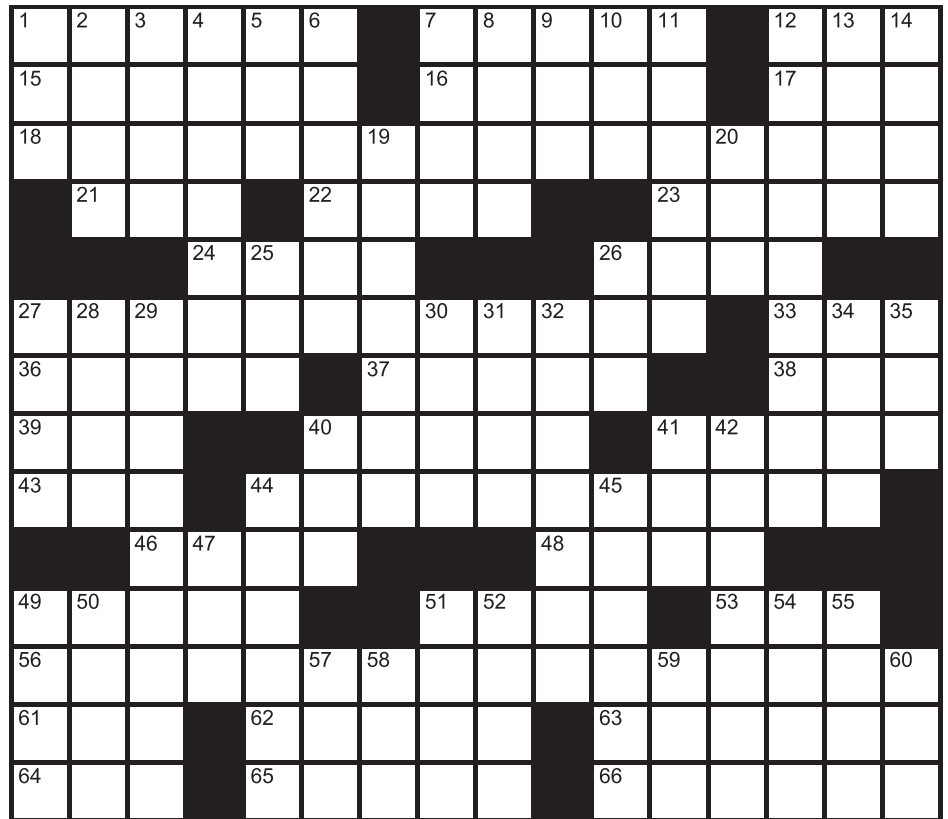
Recent and Upcoming: *Julius Caesar* (Marin Shakespeare Company); *The Cherry Orchard* (Marin Theatre); *Dracula* (SF Playhouse); *House of Bernarda Alba* (Oakland Theater Project)

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.

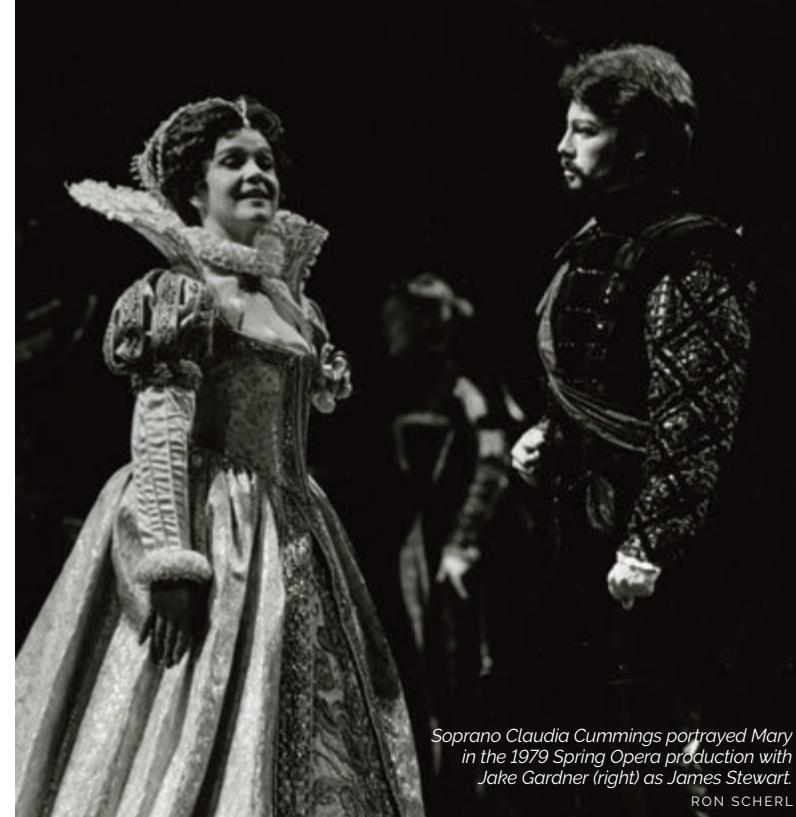
MS: Your music has such a strong theatrical instinct. Where does that come from?

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.



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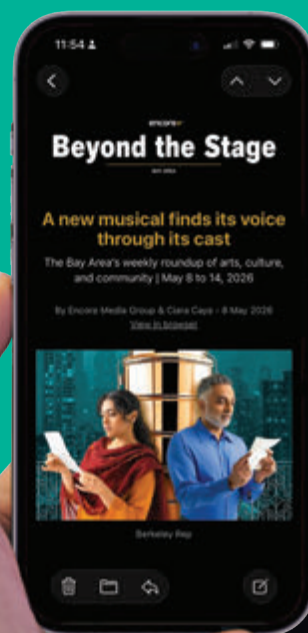
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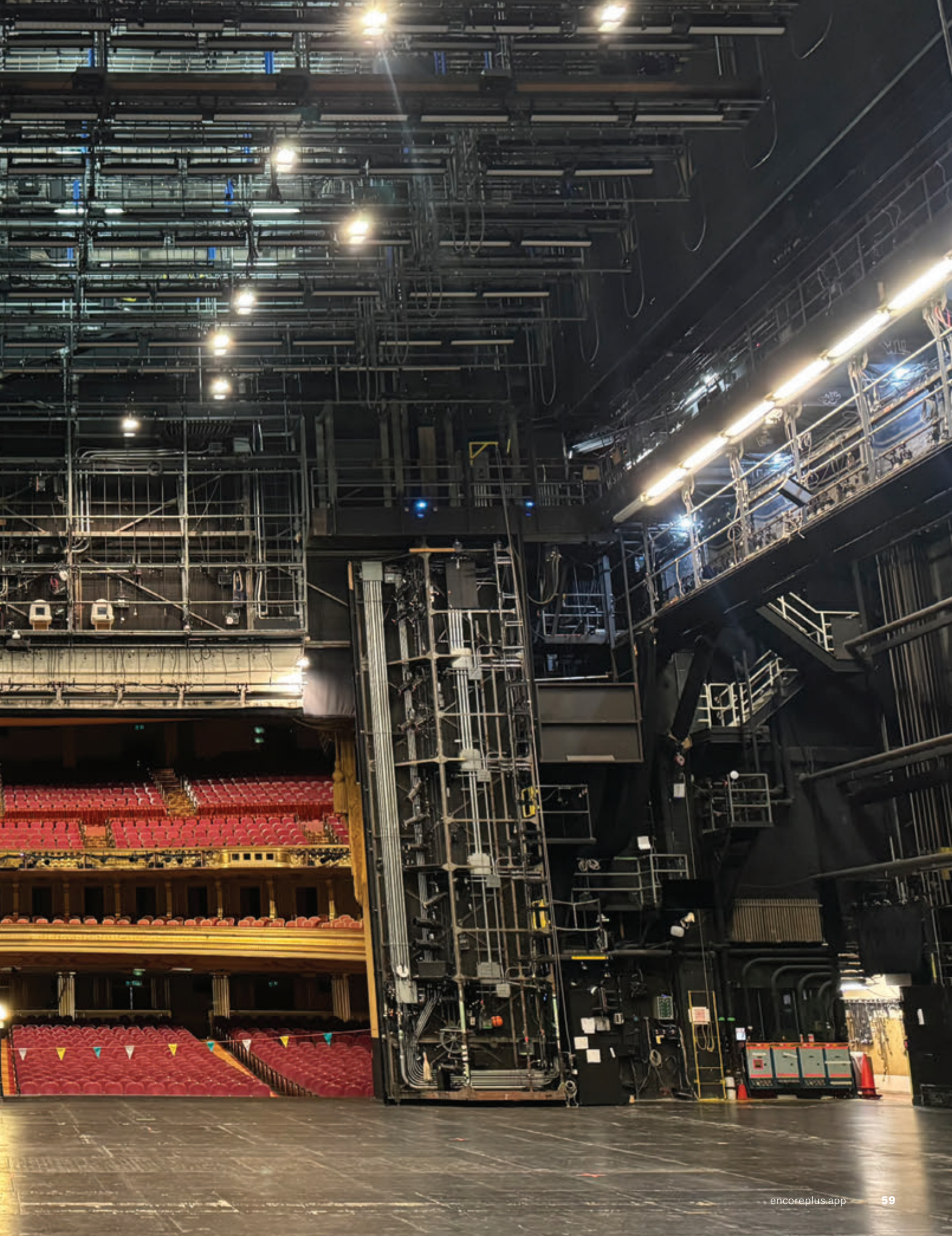
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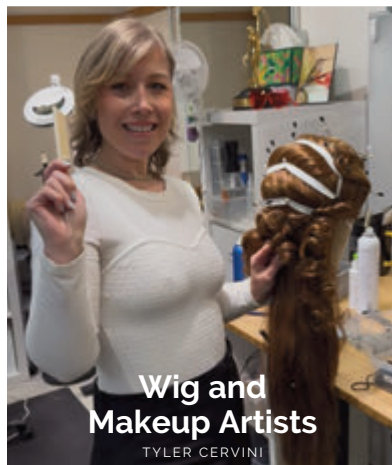
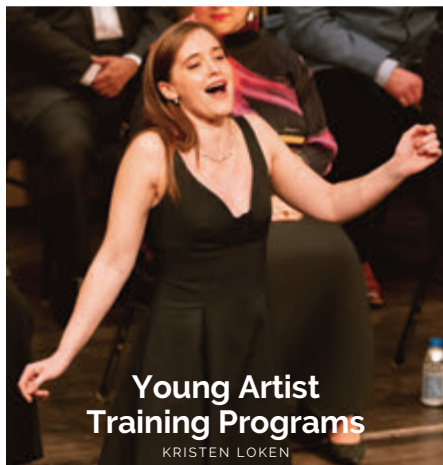
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Senior Production Supervisor
Manuel Gutierrez (27),
Production Coordinator
Robyn Marsh, *Costume Supervisor*
Sally Thomas (26), *Head Tailor*
Amy Ashton-Keller (32), *Head Draper*
Emma Lehman (11),

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 Kukielka
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
Sponsored by
Cathy & Howard Moreland
Shai Edberg



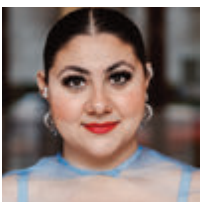
Tenor
THOMAS KINCH
Cardiff, Wales
Third-year Adler
Sponsored by
Shai Edberg
Neil & Elsa Pering



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



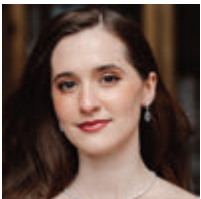
Pianist/Coach
JI YOUN LEE
Seoul, South Korea
Second-year Adler
Sponsored by
Lisa Erdberg & Dennis Gibbons
and an anonymous donor



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
Judith & John Renard



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

FRIENDS OF THE ADLERS

Chris & Jennifer Brahm
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Barbara B. Friede
Wilma S. Horwitz
Dr. Phyllis A. Kempner & Dr. David D. Stein
Nelda Kilguss & Diana Yee
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
Mr. Robert B. Mison
Paul Nordine
Bob & Terri Ryan
San Francisco Opera Guild/
East Bay Chapter
Ms. Cynthia Schreuder Kalev
Anonymous (2)

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The Diana Dollar Knowles Foundation
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in loving memory of Don Morgan
Deborah & Paul Sagues
TL Trust
Barbara L. Traisman

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Julie Dickson
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James A. Heagy, *in memory of* Jayne Heagy
Karen J. Kubin
Cathy & Howard Moreland
Peggy & Boyce Nute
Mr. David Todd Oldroyd &
Mr. Ronnie Genotti
Neil & Elsa S. Pering
Mr. & Mrs. John S. Renard
San Francisco Opera Guild
Jim & Gayle Tunnell
Anonymous, *in honor of* Louise Ciulla,
Robert Ciulla, & Ji Young Lee

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The Diana Dollar Knowles Fund
for Emerging Artists
Phyllis Edwards Scholarship Fund
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The Caramae Turner Hoffmann &
Frank Hoffmann Endowment Fund
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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

Theatrical Wardrobe Union, Local 784, I.A.T.S.E.
 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.
 Box Office and Front of House Employees Union, Local B-18



Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

FIRST VIOLIN

Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*
Maya Cohon, *Associate Concertmaster*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 Rodríguez
Principal
Viola



Joy Fellows
Associate Principal
Viola



Stephen Goist
Acting Assistant
Principal Viola



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



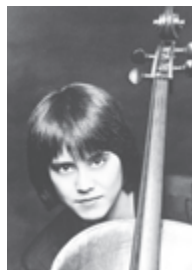
Lindan Burns
Viola



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



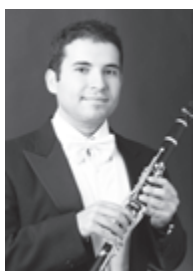
Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



Gabriel Young
Associate Principal
Oboe



Benjamin Brogadir
English Horn



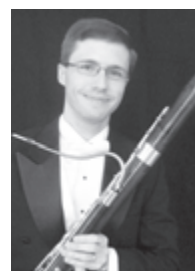
José González Granero
Principal Clarinet



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



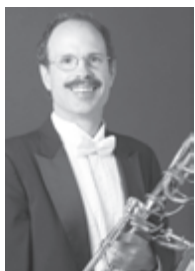
Scott Macomber
Trumpet



John Pearson
Trumpet



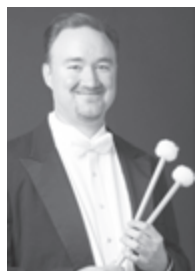
Michael Cox
Principal
Trombone



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



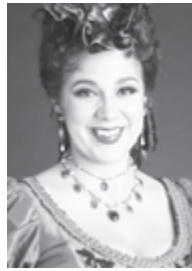
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Cheryl Cain
Soprano



Danielle Cheiken
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Sara Colburn
Soprano



Angela Eden
Soprano



Katherine Ivie
Soprano



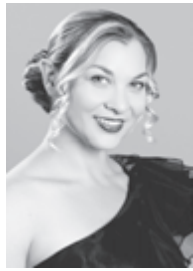
Crystal Kim
Soprano



Nadima Kombajyan
Soprano



**Josephine
YoonGeong Lee**
Soprano



Liesl McPherrin
Soprano



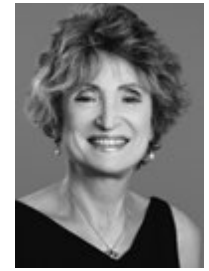
Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Soprano



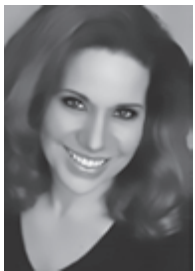
Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



Edith Dowd
Mezzo-Soprano



Stella Hannock
Mezzo-Soprano



Silvie Jensen
Mezzo-Soprano



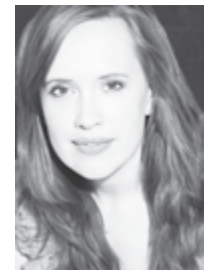
Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



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

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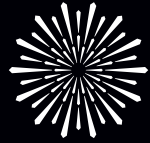
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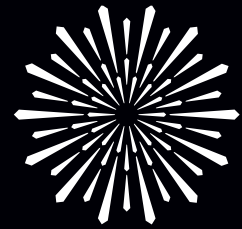
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Making Sense of the World

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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