

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

The Marriage of Figaro

BY WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

OCTOBER 31–NOVEMBER 29, 2026

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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

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AT A GLANCE AND OVERVIEW

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AT A GLANCE

The Marriage of Figaro

MUSIC BY **WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART**
LIBRETTO BY **LORENZO DA PONTE**

Structure: 4 acts, with two intermissions

Running time: 3 hours, 45 minutes

Language: Italian with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Figaro*, valet to the Count
- *Susanna*, fiancée of Figaro and maid to Rosina, the Countess
- *Cherubino*, a youth who is infatuated with the Countess
- *Rosina, the Countess*, lady of the house mortified by her husband's infidelity
- *Almaviva, the Count*, the philandering head of the house who pursues Susanna

The Marriage of Figaro had its world premiere in Vienna in 1786 and was the first of the three collaborations between Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, which included *Don Giovanni* (1787) and *Cosi fan tutte* (1790). Based on the revolutionary French play by Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro* features a masterful blend of comedic wit, humanist themes, and exquisite music that have led many to proclaim it to be among the most perfectly crafted works for the lyric stage. The opera was the first of Mozart's works to be staged by San Francisco Opera during the Company's 14th season in 1936.

The late Canadian director Michael Cavanagh's (1961–2024) production, unveiled here in 2019 as the inception of San Francisco Opera's multi-season Mozart–Da Ponte trilogy, sets the opera in an American manor house at the time of the nation's founding. It is fitting that the production returns during the United States' 250th anniversary year.

Listen for:
One don't-miss moment in the opera is "Sull aria … che soave zeffiretto," the Act III letter duet between Susanna and the Countess. As the two women conspire to trick Almaviva with an amorous invitation, their description of a gently flowing breeze, the fall of evening shadows, a pine-filled grove, etc., all set to Mozart's beguiling melody, has been seducing operagoers for more than two centuries. The duet also features memorably in *The Shawshank Redemption* (1994) when Andy Dufresne commandeers the prison's PA system.

STRAUSS IN CONCERT

Richard Strauss

BORN: JUNE 11, 1864. MUNICH, GERMANY
DIED: SEPTEMBER 8, 1949. GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN, GERMANY

***Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*, Op. 28** (1895)
(*Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche*)

Duration: 15 minutes

Sechs Lieder (1918, orch. 1933/1940)
(*Brentano Lieder*, texts by Clemens Brentano)

Duration: Approximately 20 minutes

Intermission

***Der Rosenkavalier* Suite** (2021)
Arranged by Philippe Jordan and Tomáš Ille

Duration: Approximately 35 minutes

Did you know?
The standard *Rosenkavalier* Suite, thought to have been arranged by conductor Artur Rodzinski in 1944, emphasizes the popular waltz music in Strauss' 1911 comic opera but makes little dramatic or logical sense in relation to the opera. In 2021, Swiss conductor Philippe Jordan worked with arranger Tomáš Ille on a commission from Radio France to create a new arrangement of music from the opera. The piece is nearly double the length of Rodzinski's suite and follows the opera's story chronologically. This new *Der Rosenkavalier* Suite receives its American premiere on Friday, November 7.



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WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Welcome to San Francisco Opera! It is such a pleasure to have you with us for Mozart's sublime comedy *The Marriage of Figaro* and a beautiful concert of the music of Richard Strauss, featuring Eun Sun Kim, the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, and soprano Adela Zaharia.

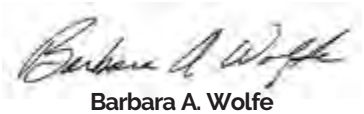
This production of *The Marriage of Figaro* marks the first return of the Mozart–Da Ponte trilogy that San Francisco Opera began in 2019. The production reflects the vision and genius of Canadian director Michael Cavanagh, who very sadly passed away in 2024 at the age of 62. In addition to the trilogy of *Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Don Giovanni*, Michael's productions with us included *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Susannah*, and *Nixon in China*. Shortly before his passing, he was awarded our highest honor, the San Francisco Opera Medal.

Michael conceived the trilogy to take place in an American manor house that transforms over a three-hundred-year period. *The Marriage of Figaro*, the first chapter, is set around the time of the American Revolution and the birth of a new country—a moment of new social structures, new ideologies, and new possibilities. It is a setting that beautifully captures both the exuberance and the poignancy of Mozart and Da Ponte's exquisite opera.

Looking ahead to another great multi-part operatic journey, we are excited that tickets are now on sale for the return of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* in June 2028. This promises to be an extraordinary experience: The first staged *Ring* Cycle anywhere in America since 2019. Anticipation is already building, and we encourage you to discover more on page 50 of this program book. We hope you'll be inspired to join us for this most epic of operatic adventures.

We're delighted to share these beautiful artistic experiences with you. Thank you for joining us at San Francisco Opera.

With warmest wishes,



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





Jack Calhoun
President
San Francisco Opera Association



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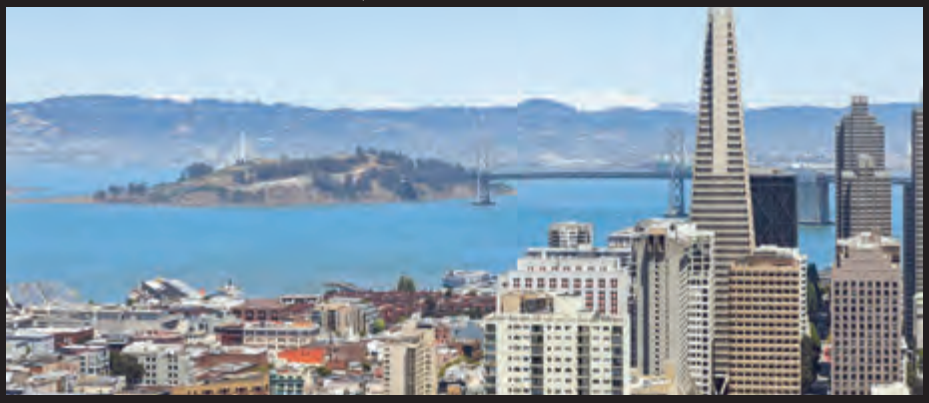
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Yannick Nézet-Séguin leads the **Vienna Philharmonic** (Mar 2–4) in three ravishing, Mahler-focused programs.



The one and only **Audra McDonald** (Mar 20) sings classics from Broadway and the Great American Songbook.



The English Concert (Apr 25) brings the tale of Alexander the Great's turbulent love triangle to life in *Alessandro*, featuring countertenor Christophe Dumaux and soprano Joélle Harvey.



YANNICK NÉZET-SÉGUIN

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

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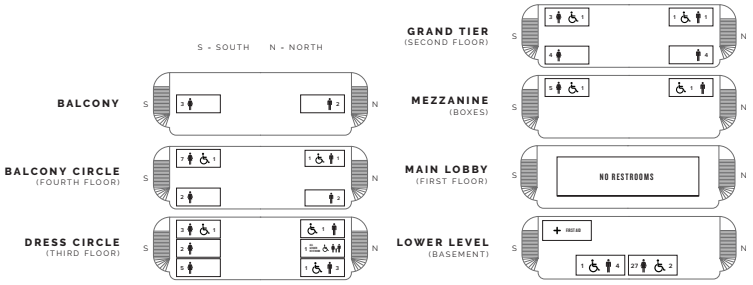
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As you leave the theater, be on the lookout for friendly community ambassadors in orange vests or coats on the front steps of the War Memorial Opera House. These ambassadors are there to assist you.



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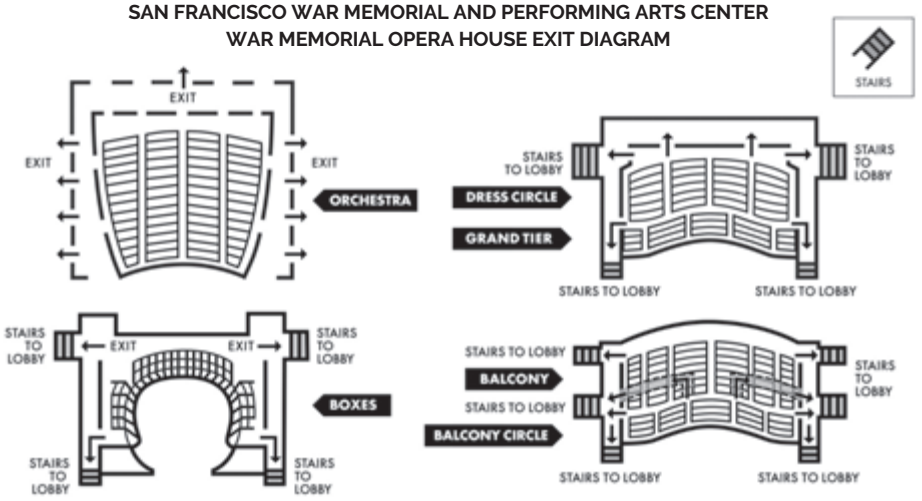
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PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, follow any lighted exit sign to the street. **WALK**, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons, proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.

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

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

Production Sponsor Spotlights



Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem (*The Marriage of Figaro* and *Strauss in Concert*)

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

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

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



Dianne Taube (*The Marriage of Figaro*)

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


DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Edmund W. & Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund (*The Marriage of Figaro*)

Company Sponsors since 2002, the Littlefield name became especially familiar to opera fans in 2006 when Jeannik Littlefield made her historic $35 million commitment to San Francisco Opera. (*The Marriage of Figaro* is the 31st production supported by the Littlefield Family.) In 1938, Jeannik was introduced to opera through a performance of *Carmen* while studying at Sorbonne University in Paris. Jeannik held a subscription for more than 40 years until her passing in 2013. Her daughter, Denise Sobel, continues her family's wonderful legacy of support as a dedicated benefactor of *Opera Ball* and production sponsor of *Das Rheingold*. The Littlefield Family was honored in November 2021 with the San Francisco Opera Guild's 2021 Crescendo Award alongside the announcement of Sobel's leadership support of San Francisco Opera's Department of Diversity, Equity, and Community. The Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Endowment Fund provides a permanent and unrestricted source of income for the Company.



Dr. William & Mrs. Bridget Coughran Jr. (*The Marriage of Figaro*)

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


DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jerome & Thao Dodson (*The Marriage of Figaro*)

"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.

Production Sponsor Spotlights



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Bernard & Barbro Osher (*The Marriage of Figaro*)

A native of Maine, Bernard Osher became involved with San Francisco Opera as a subscriber over 50 years ago, shortly after moving here from New York. He and his wife, Barbro, a native of Sweden, have supported every aspect of the Company's work, from artist appearances to production facilities to audience building programs. Established in 1977, The Bernard Osher Foundation has funded virtually every major arts organization in the area, including youth programs. Higher education initiatives include scholarships for community college students in California and Maine and for baccalaureate students at universities in every state and the District of Columbia; Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, serving adults on 125 campuses nationwide; and Osher Centers for Integrative Health at 10 of the nation's leading medical schools and at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. Bernard is a longstanding member of the Opera's Board of Directors, serving on the Chairman's Council. Barbro is Honorary Consul General of Sweden for California and serves as Chairman of the Board of the Osher Foundation. Together they recently established the Osher Audience of the Future Fund, which gives San Francisco Opera an incredible resource to connect art and audiences together in new ways, ensuring that the Osher Theatre (the War Memorial auditorium) remains a vibrant, energized, and full-to-the-rafters building in which to experience transformational opera.

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San Francisco Opera's 2026 production of *The Barber of Seville* by Cory Weaver

Bel Canto Legacy Society



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

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

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The Marriage of Figaro

OPERA IN FOUR ACTS BY WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
LIBRETTO BY LORENZO DA PONTE

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San Francisco Opera Production

OCTOBER 31; NOVEMBER 3, 7, 10, 13, 15, 18, 21, 27, 29, 2026

SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

The Marriage of Figaro

Everything in *The Marriage of Figaro* unfolds over the course of a single day: Figaro and Susanna's wedding day. Morning begins with the promise of celebration—and the threat that the marriage may never take place. From there, Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte send the household hurtling through schemes, reversals, disguises, jealousies, and revelations, carrying the action from bridal preparations to a moonlit reckoning in the garden.

Figaro is valet to Almaviva, the Count; Susanna is maid to Rosina, the Countess. Intelligent, resourceful, and in love, Figaro and Susanna should have little standing between them and the altar. Instead, Susanna reveals that the Count wants her for himself. Accustomed to the privileges of rank, Almaviva assumes he can pursue his servant's fiancée without consequence. Figaro resolves to outwit him, setting in motion a comedy in which those with the least formal authority repeatedly prove the most capable of using it.

Susanna is the surest strategist among them. She joins forces with Almaviva's neglected wife, Rosina, who still loves her husband but has grown painfully aware of his infidelities. Their goal is not simply to protect Susanna but to maneuver Almaviva into confronting his own behavior. Into their plans tumbles Cherubino, Almaviva's adolescent page, whose ardent infatuation with the Countess—and almost comically uncontrollable awakening to love—makes him less a conspirator than an unpredictable catalyst.

Figaro has another problem. Marcellina, the housekeeper, holds a contract requiring him to marry her if he cannot repay an old debt, and Dr. Bartolo, her ally and an old adversary of Figaro, supports her claim. What appears to be a serious threat to the wedding produces one of the opera's great comic reversals: Figaro discovers that Marcellina and Bartolo are his parents from whom he was separated in infancy. A prospective bride becomes a mother; an adversary becomes a father; the wedding party unexpectedly grows.

Around these central intrigues, Mozart and Da Ponte build an intricate architecture of disguises, concealed identities, overheard conversations, jealousies, and mistaken conclusions. The comedy can move at breathtaking speed, but Mozart's music prevents the characters from becoming mere pieces in a farce. Figaro's confidence gives way to insecurity. The Countess' sorrow coexists with hope. Susanna's wit never obscures her capacity for tenderness. Even the imperious Count is ultimately allowed the possibility of remorse.

This emotional complexity is especially vivid in Mozart's celebrated ensembles, where several characters can inhabit the same moment while perceiving it entirely differently. Their suspicions and desires overlap, collide, and accumulate, turning confusion itself into music of extraordinary clarity and momentum.

By nightfall, Susanna and the Countess bring the day's schemes to a denouement, exchanging clothes and drawing Almaviva into the garden. Figaro, briefly convinced that Susanna has betrayed him, is caught in the deception as well. When the disguises finally fall away, the Count finds himself publicly exposed. For once, rank offers no escape. He asks his wife for forgiveness.

She grants it.

This production is set in a recently built manor house at the birth of America. The house itself suggests a new world still under construction, as inherited ideas about class and authority begin to give way to something more uncertain—and more hopeful.

First performance: Vienna, Burgtheater, May 1, 1786, with the composer conducting

First performance in the United States: New York, Park Theatre, May 10, 1824, in Bishop's English-language version

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 9, 1936

The Marriage of Figaro has been performed in 19 previous seasons at San Francisco Opera. For information about past casts and productions, visit **archive.sfopera.com**

Personnel: 13 principals, 24 chorus; **37 total**

Orchestra: 2 flutes 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, 1 timpani, 1 fortepiano, 32 strings (10 first violins, 8 second violins, 6 violas, 5 cellos, 3 basses); **46 total**

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Musical Preparation
Bryndon Hassman
Ji Youn Lee†
Marika Yasuda
Fabrizio Corona

Diction
Fabrizio Corona

Supertitles
Clifford Cranna

Assistant Director
Morgan Robinson

Stage Manager
Darin Burnett

Assistant Stage Managers
Megan Coutts
Anna Reetz
Collette Berg

Intimacy Director
Maya Herbsman

Technical Supervisors
Lawren Gregory
Shannon Dodson

Costume Supervisor
Galen Till

Hair and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2026 • 7:30 PM
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3 • 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 • 7:30 PM
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10 • 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13 • 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15 • 2 PM
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 • 7:30 PM
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21 • 2 PM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27 • 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 • 2 PM

The Marriage of Figaro

Le Nozze di Figaro

Opera in four acts by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**
Libretto by **Lorenzo Da Ponte**

(Sung in Italian with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

Figaro	**Peter Kellner***
Susanna	**Slávka Zámečníková**
Bartolo	**Maurizio Muraro**
Marcellina	**Catherine Cook**
Cherubino	**Simone McIntosh**
Almaviva, the Count	**Thomas Mole**
Basilio	**Alek Shrader**
Rosina, the Countess	**Olivia Smith**
Antonio	**Philip Skinner**
Curzio	**Chance Jonas-O'Toole**
Barbarina	**Sofia Gotch†**
Bridesmaids	**Jesslyn Thomas**
	Stella Hannock

Servants, Laborers, and Staff of the Household

* San Francisco Opera debut † Current Adler Fellow

TIME AND PLACE: Late 18th century, Post-revolutionary times
The Almaviva Estate, under construction, Mid-Atlantic United States

ACT I: Rooms and Hallways of the Estate

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II: Rosina's Bedroom

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III: Rooms and Hallways of the Estate

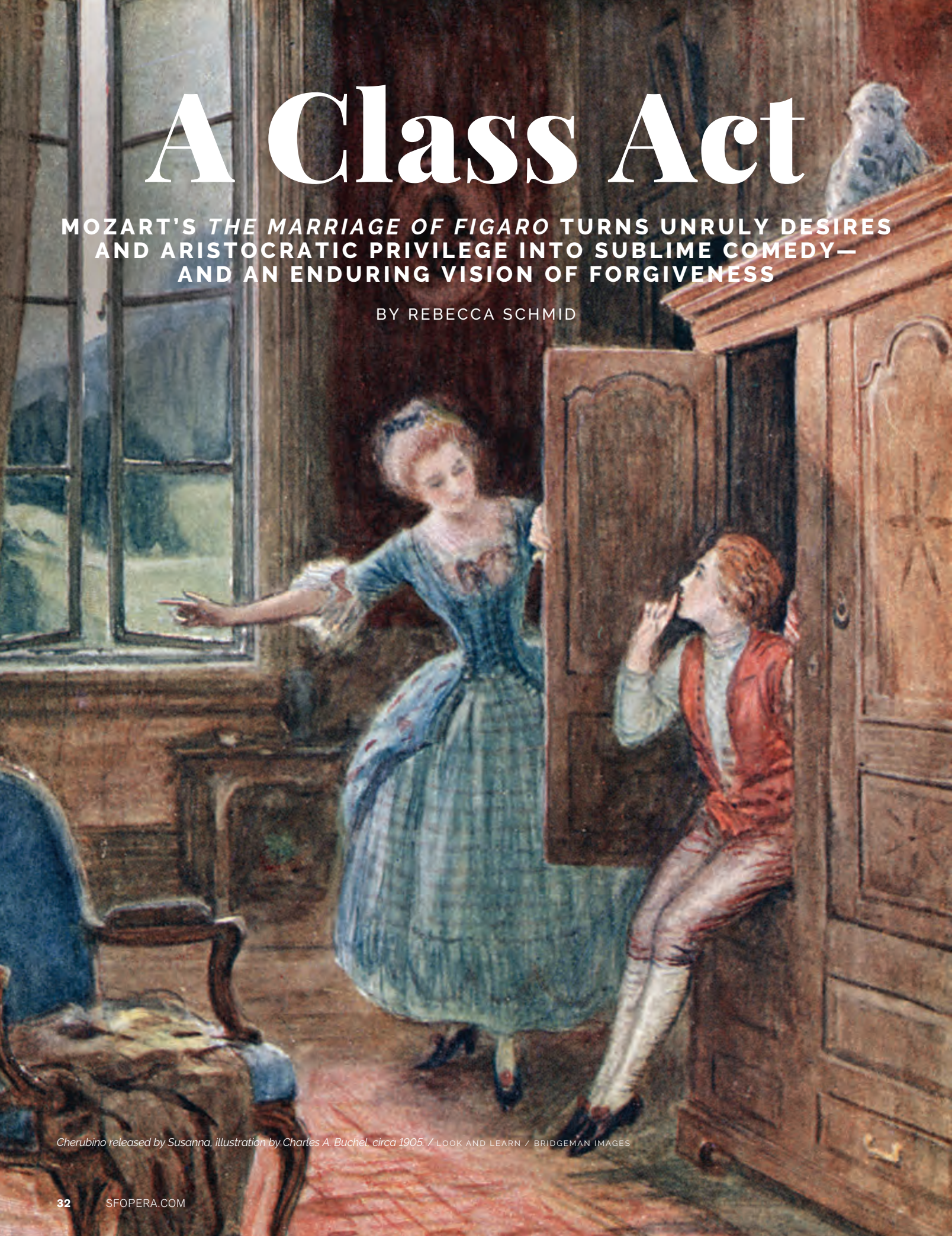
ACT IV: The Garden of the Estate

The performance will last approximately three hours and forty-five minutes with two intermissions.
Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.
Patrons who leave during the performance may not be reseated until intermission.
The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.
Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

A Class Act

MOZART'S *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* TURNS UNRULY DESIRES AND ARISTOCRATIC PRIVILEGE INTO SUBLIME COMEDY—AND AN ENDURING VISION OF FORGIVENESS

BY REBECCA SCHMID



Cherubino released by Susanna, illustration by Charles A. Buchel, circa 1905. / LOOK AND LEARN / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

With its lifelike characters, sublime music, and comic wit, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) has come to embody operatic perfection. When the composer approached the librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte about setting a provocative play by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais to music, the venture was risky. Work was underway in 1785, in a Vienna where Mozart had made his name as a piano virtuoso and composer. The Emperor Joseph II was a champion of reform, but there were limits to what he would tolerate onstage.

Beaumarchais' *La Folle Journée, ou Le Mariage de Figaro* (*The Mad Day, or The Marriage of Figaro*) took aim at aristocratic privilege. After years of resistance from Louis XVI's censors, it received its first public performance at Paris' Comédie-Française in 1784, five years before the French Revolution. The playwright, who also worked as a secret agent for the French crown, knew something about power. Joseph II, whose sister Marie Antoinette was queen of France, banned an intended Viennese performance of the play in 1785, although the German translation could still be printed. A servant getting the better of his master was evidently safer on the page than the stage.

Da Ponte's task was to make this troublesome material acceptable to the imperial theater without losing its spark. In his memoirs, he recalls assuring Joseph that he had removed passages that might cause offense. The opera nevertheless retains the friction between rank and merit. It channels Beaumarchais' politically charged comedy into a broader statement about the potential of love to reconcile humanity. The social order survives; the people at its summit have some learning to do.

Marriage Material

As the title indicates, the plot revolves around the imminent marriage of Figaro to Susanna, servants of Count and Countess Almaviva. The libretto places the Almaviva household near Seville (San Francisco Opera's production relocates it to an American manor house at the time of the nation's founding). There are several hurdles to overcome. The Count pursues Susanna despite having renounced the supposed feudal right to a servant bride's wedding night. Marcellina, meanwhile, claims Figaro must marry her to settle a debt—until the revelation that she is his mother. And the adolescent page Cherubino, a male character sung by a woman (a trouser role), is chasing after the neglected Countess.

Figaro and Susanna devise elaborate ruses to secure their wedding, while Susanna and the Countess plot to expose the Count's infidelity. The comedy reaches its height in the final act, when the women swap clothes and unsettle both men. Believing he has caught his wife with Figaro, the Count refuses every plea for pardon. Then the real Countess appears. The husband who would grant no mercy must ask for it himself. In one of opera's most stunning finales, she forgives him, and the ensemble rejoices that a day of torment has come to an end.

> ***"The heart makes a nobleman."***
> **—Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**
> **(in a letter to his father, June 20, 1781)**

Hearts and Minds

Beaumarchais' play is the second in a trilogy about the Almavivas, following *The Barber of Seville* (onstage at San Francisco Opera earlier this year), later immortalized by Gioachino Rossini, while the French composer Darius Milhaud set the final installment, *La Mère Coupable* (*The Guilty Mother*), to music in the 1960s. Mozart's *Figaro* stands in a class of its own thanks to a symbiosis of great minds. Da Ponte tightened the play to four acts and reduced its cast from 16 to 11 named characters while keeping the intricate plot largely intact. In his preface, he describes the collaborators' wish to keep the performers occupied, avoid monotonous stretches of recitative—the speechlike singing that carries dialogue—and give different passions different musical colors. The demands of adaptation could be productive: a speech might disappear, yet an aria could give a passing feeling unexpected weight. Rather than merely illustrating the play, the music creates its own dramatic pace, deciding when to hurry and when



Cherubino, the Count, Susanna, and Basilio. Liebig card circa late 19th- early-20th century.
LOOK AND LEARN / ROSENBERG COLLECTION / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

to let a character think. The Countess, in particular, gains an inner life that no synopsis can convey.

Mozart's score propels the action forward while lingering on moments of pathos. Where explicitly political text has been excised, the music can still speak. In "Se vuol ballare," Figaro imagines making the Count dance to his tune; the elegant dance rhythm gives his defiance a deceptively polite face. Mozart himself bristled at the equation of rank with worth. In a letter to his father dated June 20, 1781, he wrote, "The heart makes a nobleman."

The opera tests such distinctions in intimate encounters. Susanna is at once coquettish, submissive, and fully in control. Figaro runs the show from behind the scenes and has no problem duping the Count, but jealousy makes him misjudge his bride. The Countess, meanwhile, is more than a model of virtue. In "Dove sono," her memories of lost happiness open into a renewed hope of winning back her husband. The comedy has room for this stillness; its laughter matters more because something precious is at stake.

The ensembles bring these emotional worlds into collision. In the Act II finale, each arrival produces another explanation, another suspicion, another reversal; Mozart makes the gathering confusion sound inevitable. By the final scene, the effect is different. The Count's request for forgiveness briefly stills the machinery of intrigue. What follows depends on the answer of the woman he has wronged; love's power to reconcile becomes something we can hear in a single exchange.

Encore Trouble

Even getting the opera onstage required negotiation. Da Ponte recalls a dispute with the theater director, Count Orsini-Rosenberg, over the Act III dance, and credits an appeal to the emperor with saving it. *The Marriage of Figaro* premiered at Vienna's Burgtheater on May 1, 1786. The opera received a warm reception from the audience who showed an unmistakable appetite for encores. The Irish tenor Michael Kelly, who performed the comprimario roles of Basilio and Don Curzio, documents



Poster for first performance of Mozart's Figaro *at Burgtheater in Vienna, May 1, 1786.*
NPL - DEA PICTURE LIBRARY / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

in a memoir that "almost every piece was encored, which prolonged it nearly to the length of two operas." Joseph II responded by imposing restrictions on encores for Viennese theaters. Mozart and Da Ponte's new work closed after only nine performances and another Da Ponte collaboration, Vicente Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara*, overshadowed *The Marriage of Figaro* in Vienna.

Mozart's opera traveled to Prague, where it was a sensation, and its success led to the commission of *Don Giovanni*, a tragicomedy written with Da Ponte, which premiered there in 1787. *Figaro* returned to Vienna in 1789, with Mozart supplying a new aria for Susanna as a replacement for "Deh vieni, non tardar." Earlier performances in Italy—Monza (1787) and Florence (1788)—also included significant alterations to Mozart's score.

Figaro's later history is richer than a simple march from neglect to acclaim. San Francisco audiences heard the Metropolitan Opera's touring production of the opera in 1901, more than two decades before San Francisco Opera was founded. In 1934, the work opened the first Glyndebourne Festival in England under Fritz Busch. Two years later, it became the first Mozart opera to be staged by San Francisco Opera, with bass Ezio Pinza as Figaro. A comedy conceived for an imperial theater had found very different homes.

Today, the sight of a Count outsmarted by his servants is no longer taboo, but the opera's encounters between desire and responsibility remain disarmingly familiar. Its characters scheme, misunderstand, and wound one another; Mozart allows us to recognize them without reducing them to their failings. The promise of reconciliation that runs through the score is neither effortless nor guaranteed. For one extraordinary moment, however, the Countess makes it possible. A day spent trying to get the upper hand ends with someone choosing to open hers.

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.

Figaro, By Design

INSIDE THE GREAT AMERICAN HOUSE, ARCHITECTURE GIVES MOZART AND DA PONTE'S COMEDY ROOM TO MOVE—AND ITS SOCIAL TENSION SOMEWHERE TO LIVE.

BY LEILANI MARIE LABONG

When Mozart and librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte premiered *The Marriage of Figaro* in Vienna in 1786, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello—whose architectural drawings would later inspire the setting for San Francisco Opera's 2019 production, directed by the late Michael Cavanagh—was still unfinished across the Atlantic in Virginia. On our stage, *Figaro* unfolds inside a similarly unfinished Palladian manor dubbed the "Great American House," with parts rendered in 3D and others in 2D blueprints, the walls themselves emblazoned with graph paper—a dovetail of dimensional and drawn elements that set designer Erhard Rom likens to Leonardo da Vinci sketches, with their mingling of detailed images and mathematical musings. Rom finds "something magical" in "inviting the viewer to complete the picture."

This pending posture might suggest unfinished business or the act of becoming—both tantalizing prospects. And since the set also serves the other operas of the Mozart–Da Ponte trilogy, *Così fan tutte* (where the Great American House becomes a 1930s country club) and *Don Giovanni* (where it assumes dystopian decay), the architectural incompletion—or rather, the flexibility it affords—is precisely the point.

The point, but certainly no shortcut. From the perspective of the technical team, *Figaro*'s stripped-down set is hardly easier to mount. Before the Great American House could become theatrical architecture, the technical team essentially built it twice: first as detailed 3D computer models, then as



Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro *in 2019 with Jeanine De Bique as Susanna and Catherine Cook as Marcellina.* / CORY WEAVER

2D shop drawings specifying every measurement, bolt, framing member, and piece of hardware. The virtual house was exacting enough to determine whether a singer standing on any given part of the set could see the conductor.

A dozen stagehands and five 40-foot container trucks are required to haul its walls, columns, doors, and scaffolding out of storage in Modesto, loading them for the roughly 100-mile journey west toward San Francisco; pieces needing attention are diverted to the scene shop in Burlingame. Designed to come apart, fit back together, and journey long distances, the seven-year-old set—built from steel bases set on casters, then increasingly lighter materials as the architecture rises and cantilevers outward, like vertical walls framed in lightweight pine and large foam moldings—is bound to wear its intervening life on its quadrilled skin. "We built it well," says Scene Shop Foreperson John Del Bono. "It's big and heavy, but it still looks really good." Befitting a house perpetually in progress, he adds, "it constantly evolves."

The set traveled to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for a February 2026 production of *Così* and returned with some regular wear and tear, sending artists into "sculpting mode," as Director of Production Operations and Media Ryan O'Steen puts it, to re-carve the damaged Palladian foam profiles—the stepped cornices, toothy dentils, and grooves of fluted pilasters. Doors that had missed the walls' latest paint treatment also had to be darkened to match the blueprint-like architecture painted around them. Rom had controlled the original palette much as an architect might, supplying half inch–scale color elevations—signed, dated, and approved—for the artists to follow. Seven years later, matching paint on the Great American House was not so different from matching it on a real one.

Figaro is supposed to be a "pristine, brand-new work in progress," says O'Steen, so "every blemish stands out." The Great American House got its TLC from the scene shop just in time, but moving a production is an increasingly unpredictable business. O'Steen laments the "extensive delays in shipping lanes, domestic or international," that have previously gridlocked the Company's Mozart trilogy, despite the productions traveling only stateside. This season's *Mary, Queen of Scots* arrived from the United Kingdom only a week before it was needed—in other words, by the thread of her pleated ruff.

In *Figaro*, the architecture underway is a metaphor for a young country that had declared its independence in 1776 and was building its ideals, with neoclassical symmetry (paired doorways and pilasters), proportion (evenly spaced columns and wall panels), and alignment (cornices for days) adding figurative layers of balance and order. It's an architectural language Americans know from capitols and courthouses, banks and universities—buildings of authority and permanence. Yet for all its legacy, the unfinished house also offers a fresh slate for Figaro, the Count's valet, and his betrothed, Susanna, the Countess' maid. The opera opens with the lovebirds measuring out their marital quarters in Count Almaviva's manor, but the bride-to-be suspects its proximity to the Count's room is strategic: He has designs on her, despite having renounced the supposed feudal right that would give a lord access to his servant's bride on her wedding night.

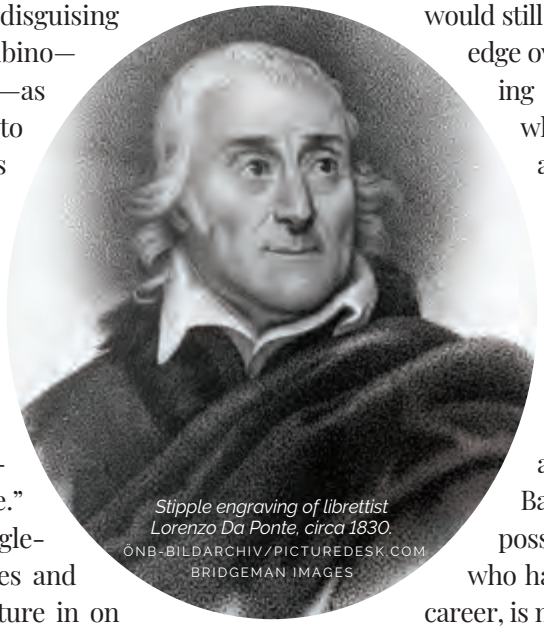
"Though the architecture may appear unfinished, its mechanical comings and goings are anything but."





Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, by Barbara Krafft, 1819.
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A scheming line in Figaro's Act I aria, "Tutte le macchine rovescerò"—"I'll overturn all his machinations!"—seems apropos not just of the protagonist's plans to sabotage his boss' plot but also of the servants flipping the household hierarchy. A comedy of such upstairs-downstairs maneuvering depends on a carefully constructed piece of theatrical—cue double entendre—machinery: Rom's rooms, doors, hiding places, passageways, and scaffolding architecturally support the hijinks, from Figaro sending an anonymous note about the Countess' supposed lover, to Susanna and the Countess disguising the lovestruck teenage page Cherubino—sung by a woman in a trouser role—as Susanna for a rendezvous meant to entrap the Count, to the Marcellina's attempt to marry Figaro under the terms of an old debt.



Stipple engraving of librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, circa 1830.
ÖNB-BILDARCHIV/PICTUREDESK.COM
BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

As Cavanagh once noted of the house he helped envision, "Within the walls of this place are hopeful, passionate, desperate, and determined people. They love, they hurt, and they persist. This illustrates perfectly the push and pull of human life." These love triangles and class entanglements involve identity-bending guises and shifty strategizing, with the architecture in on the mischief—a kitchen where Da Ponte specified none, a garden pavilion to swallow half the cast in Act IV, and, most importantly, doors.

The 20th-century French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote in his 1958 architectural study, *The Poetics of Space*, "The door is an entire cosmos of the half-open." Fitting for *Figaro*, where doors create comic tension by leaving characters privy only to part of the goings-on, depending on which side of the door—and the misunderstanding—they're on. The audience, of course, gets the wide-angle view on the dramatic irony, thanks to carefully plotted screens, entrances, wall positions, and sightlines. Rom pegs Act II as the most important door scene of all: Susanna and the Countess' scheme to disguise Cherubino is interrupted by the Count, and the frantic page hides in the Countess' closet; hearing someone stirring behind the locked door, the Count tries to force his way in—but no cigar. Stymied, he leaves with the Countess, locking all of the room's doors behind him and forcing a cornered Cherubino to escape through a different kind of portal—a window.

Needless to say, all of this door dramaturgy depends on a whole repertory of moving parts. Doorways are repurposed from one room to the next as the house transforms, while three door-punctuated walls can slide or descend into place—their cues newly rewritten for San Francisco Opera's upgraded automation system, though Del Bono and O'Steen would still bet on the crew's institutional knowledge over the latest software any day—allowing the comedy to carry on downstage while the walls conceal stagehands assembling the next scene behind them. Even the floor gets in on the act, with a custom trap for entrances and exits; Cherubino's getaway window, meanwhile, belongs to a bedroom wall that descends from above. Though the architecture may appear unfinished, its mechanical comings and goings are anything but. So while Bachelard mused about a cosmos of possibilities in the half-open door, Rom, who has designed a few *Figaro* sets over his career, is more down to earth: "You've just got to figure out the doors."

If only *The Marriage of Figaro* had an upgraded automation system to resolve the conflicts unfolding within the Great American House tidily, give or take a loose end or two. The Swiss philosopher Alain de Botton wrote in his 2006 book, *The Architecture of Happiness*, "Architecture may well possess moral messages; it simply has no power to enforce them." While the historicist details of the set may suggest a new political and social order in the works—one that challenges inherited privilege—the Count continues behaving like a feudal terror. He may have formally relinquished the privilege afforded him in the old ways, but he still sets his sights on Susanna—and spends much of the opera trying to keep pace with counterplots that pop up like Whac-a-Mole.

Formal and formidable, Palladian architecture stops short of enforcing the good behavior its mannered






Scenes from San Francisco Opera's production of The Marriage of Figaro *in 2019 showing the American manor house (Act I) and its garden (Act IV).* / CORY WEAVER

appearance might prescribe, but it sure as bricks can give unruly conduct somewhere to play out: a doorway matters in the story because someone might burst through it; a closet makes a difference because someone can disappear inside it; a screen can hide a lady from her lord while keeping the audience wise to the ruse. Even in the opera's final act, when the Countess forgives her husband his transgressions in an incredible display of generosity—but also self-possession—Rom notes, "We're left with the question: Is this really going to work out? Is he really going to change? We don't know. The stories are unfinished." Likewise, the most important thing about *Figaro*'s half-built Great American House is that it carries no promise of completion, only of becoming.

"A house is a place for people to live, and this house is one where modes of living are themselves also under construction," Cavanagh once mused. "Mistakes and missteps will be made. People can be hurt, dreams quashed, and treasured ways of life altered forever. But that's the price of progress. We win some, and we learn some."

Leilani Marie Labong is a San Francisco journalist who writes about architecture and design for Architectural Digest, Elle Decor, Bloomberg CityLab, *and the* San Francisco Chronicle. *She believes buildings, like people, are usually more interesting in progress. Read more of her work at leilanimarielabong.com or follow her on Instagram @leilanimarielabong.*



Artist Profiles

* San Francisco Opera Debut ♪ Role Debut ǂ Current Adler Fellow ◊ Adler Fellowship Graduate + Merola Opera Program Graduate



SEBASTIAN WEIGLE*
(Berlin, Germany)
Conductor
Recent and Upcoming: Schumann's *Scenes from Goethe's Faust* (Nikikai Opera Foundation); Rudi Stephan's *Die Ersten Menschen* (Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra); *Der Rosenkavalier* (Vienna State Opera); *Die Tote Stadt* (Vienna); *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna); engagements with Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Berlin State Opera, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Semperoper Dresden, Metropolitan Opera, Berlin Philharmonic, Hungarian National Philharmonic, Dallas Symphony Orchestra, Frankfurt Opera
Chief Conductor of the Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo



SLÁVKA ZÁMEČNÍKOVÁ
Soprano
(Vienna, Austria)
Susanna
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore*
Recent and Upcoming: Norina in *Don Pasquale* (Vienna State Opera); Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Vienna, Paris Opera, Berlin State Opera); Micaëla in *Carmen* (Vienna, Milan's Teatro alla Scala); Frasquita in *Carmen* (Vienna); Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Vienna); Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Vienna); Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna, Slovak National Theatre); Nannetta in *Falstaff* (Vienna, Stuttgart); Musetta in *La Bohème* (Vienna, Semperoper Dresden, Paris, Slovak National Theatre); Sophie in *Werther* (Vienna, Prague National Theatre); Marzelline in *Fidelio* (Vienna); Servilia in *La Clemenza di Tito* (Vienna); title role of *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (Vienna, Berlin); Euridice in *L'Orfeo* (Vienna); Adina in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Zurich Opera); title role of *La Traviata* (London Symphony Orchestra); Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Paris Opera); Prima Donna in *Prima la Mamma!* (Deutsche Oper am Rhein); Dircé in *Médée* (Berlin); Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Wiesbaden); Ilia in *Idomeneo* (Wiesbaden); First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Berlin); Miss Jessel in *The Turn of the Screw* (Berlin); The Voice of the Falcon in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Berlin); Chasseresse in Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* (Berlin)



PETER KELLNER*
Bass
(Vienna, Austria)
Figaro
Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Vienna State Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Komische Oper Berlin, Volksoper Vienna, Graz); Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (Vienna, Opéra de Normandie Rouen, Slovak National Theatre); Masetto in *Don Giovanni* (Vienna); Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* (Vienna); Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colón, London's Royal Ballet and Opera); Kecal in *The Bartered Bride* (Vienna); Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Vienna, Festival della Valle d'Itria); Colline in *La Bohème* (Vienna, Metropolitan Opera, London, Semperoper Dresden); Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette* (Vienna); Re di Scozia in Handel's *Ariodante* (Vienna); Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Vienna); King of Egypt in *Aida* (Vienna); Nightwatchman in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Vienna); Zuniga in *Carmen* (Vienna); Rocco in Ferdinando Paër's *Leonora* (Dresden); Don Alvaro in Rossini's *Il Viaggio a Reims* (Salzburg); Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Dresden); Vodnik in *Rusalka* (National Theatre Prague)



OLIVIA SMITH♪◊+
Soprano
(Penticton, B.C., Canada)
Rosina, the Countess
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Micaëla in *Carmen Encounter*; First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*; Chrisann Brennan in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; Voice of the Falcon in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Mimì in *Bohème Out of the Box*
Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Alcina* (Theater St. Gallen); Antonia in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (St. Gallen); Mrs. Hayes in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* (St. Gallen); New Year's concert (St. Gallen); Mimì in *La Bohème* (St. Gallen); Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* (St. Gallen); Helena in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen* (St. Gallen); Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* (Opera Philadelphia); Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (Opera Naples); scenes as Margarita Xirgu in Golijov's *Ainadamar* and Leïla in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* (Merola Opera Program); Governess in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* (Curtis Opera Theater); Marguerite in excerpts from *Faust* (Curtis Symphony Orchestra)
Ensemble member of Theater St. Gallen
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2023, 2024, 2025
Merola Opera Program: 2022
@oliviasmith.soprano



THOMAS MOLE♪
Baritone
(High Wycombe, UK)
Almaviva, the Count
San Francisco Opera Highlights: James Stewart, Earl of Moray in Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*
Recent and Upcoming: Title role of *Billy Budd* (Glyndebourne Festival); Harlequin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*

(Munich); Male Consort IV in Brett Dean's *Of One Blood* (Munich, Santa Fe Opera); Silvio in *Pagliacci* (Munich); *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk District* (English National Opera at BBC Proms); Ping in *Turandot* (Munich, Santa Fe); Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel* (Munich); Kuligin in *Káťa Kabanová* (Munich); Fiorello in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Munich); Mityukha in *Boris Godunov* (Munich); Guccio in *Il Trittico* (Munich); Third Nobleman in *Lohengrin* (Munich); Schobiack in *Le Grand Macabre* (Munich); Morales in *Carmen* (Glyndebourne, BBC Proms); Escamillo in *Carmen* (Opera Holland Park); Fauré Requiem (MusicAeterna); Second Prisoner in *Fidelio* (Glyndebourne); Wagner in *Faust* (Munich); Marullo in *Rigoletto* (Munich); Valentin in *Faust* (Munich)
Ensemble member of Munich's Bavarian State Opera



SIMONE MCINTOSH◊+
Mezzo-Soprano
(Vancouver, B.C., Canada)
Cherubino
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Offred Double in Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*
Recent and Upcoming: Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Hamburg State Opera, Scottish Opera); Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Hamburg); Hermia in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Florence's Teatro Maggio Musicale, Madrid's Teatro Real); Dodo McNeill in Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* (NPO Klassiek at Amsterdam's Muziekgebouw); Romeo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Hannover); Adalgisa in *Norma* (Bern); Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Scottish Opera); Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel* (Deutsche Oper am Rhein); Proserpina and Speranza in *L'Orfeo* (Zurich); Messiaen's *Harawi* (London's Wigmore Hall); Ugo d'Asti in Donizetti's *Dalinda* (Amsterdam's Concertgebouw); Karolka in *Jenůfa* (Cleveland Orchestra)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2019, 2020, 2021
Merola Opera Program: 2018
Instagram: @simonemcmezzo



MAURIZIO MURARO
Bass
(Como, Italy)
Doctor Bartolo
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Title role of *Don Pasquale*; Doctor Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
Recent and Upcoming: Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Metropolitan Opera, Berlin State Opera, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, London's Royal Ballet and Opera, Aix-en-Provence Festival, LA Opera); Doctor Bartolo in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Berlin); *La Fille du Régiment* (Metropolitan Opera); Mathieu in *Andrea Chénier* (Metropolitan Opera); Balducci in *Benvenuto Cellini* (Paris Opera); Simone in *Gianni Schicchi* (Paris); Sacristan in *Tosca* (London); Don Magnifico in *La Cenerentola* (Semperoper Dresden); Don Profondo in *Il Viaggio a Reims* (Dresden); *Don Giovanni* (Salzburg); Prince de Bouillon in *Adriana Lecouvreur* (Madrid's Teatro Real, Lyon Opera, Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées)



CATHERINE COOK◊+
Mezzo-Soprano
(Daly City, California)
Marcellina
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Over 350 performances in over 50 productions, including Jade Boucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; title role of Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*; Mrs. McClean in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*; Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress*; La Frugola in *Il Tabarro*; Arlene Kamen and Wang Tai-Tai in Stewart Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*; Annina in *Der Rosenkavalier*; Mother Bailey in Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*; Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Berta in *The Barber of Seville*; Mother Jeanne in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*
Recent and Upcoming: Jake Heggie's *Crossing Borders* (Music of Remembrance); Marquise in *La Fille du Régiment* (Opera Colorado); Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera); Mama in Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk Reimagined* (Opera Parallèle); Julia Child in Lee Hoiby's *Bon Appetit!* (Opera Parallèle); Tom Cipullo's *The Parting* (Music of Remembrance); Innkeeper in *Boris Godunov* (San Francisco Symphony); Zosia in Heggie's *Out of Darkness* (Music of Remembrance); Frau Peachum in *The Threepenny Opera* (West Edge Opera); Old Woman in *Candide* (Arizona Opera)
Professor of Voice at San Francisco Conservatory of Music
San Francisco Opera Medal (2022)
Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (1990)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 1991, 1992
Merola Opera Program: 1990
Instagram: @catherineacook



ALEK SHRADER♪◊+
Tenor
(Alva, Oklahoma)
Don Basilio
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Victorin in *Die Tote Stadt*; Arbace in *Idomeneo*; Nemorino in *L'Elisir d'Amore*; Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte*; Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; Emilio in *Partenope*; David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*
Recent and Upcoming: Alfredo in *La Traviata* (Opera Philadelphia); Tony in *West Side Story* (Rome's Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia); title role of *Candide* (Santa Fe Opera)
Winner of Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions (2007)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2008, 2009
Merola Opera Program: 2007



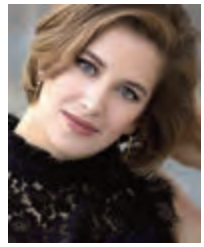
CHANCE JONAS-O'TOOLE+
Tenor
(Dallas, Texas)
Don Curzio
San Francisco Opera Highlights: A young servant in *Elektra*; Earl of Ruthven in Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*
Recent and Upcoming: Spoletta in *Tosca* (San Francisco Opera); David in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Deutsche Oper Berlin); Steersman in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Berlin); Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Berlin); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Berlin); Gastone in *La Traviata* (Berlin); First Jew in *Salome* (Berlin); *Anna Bolena* (Berlin); John/Angel 3 in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* (Berlin); Chekalinsky in *The Queen of Spades* (Berlin); John Little in Daniel Bernard Roumain's *We Shall Not Be Moved* (Pittsburgh Opera); Male Chorus in *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola Opera Program)
Merola Opera Program: 2022, 2023
@chance_jonasotoole_tenor



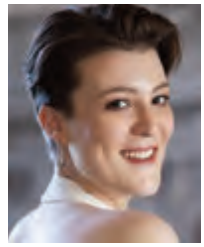
SOFIA GOTCH♪†+
Soprano
(Oakland, California)
Barbarina
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Klytemnestra's confidante in *Elektra*; Mary Beaton in Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*; Poussette in *Manon*; Musetta in *Bohème Out of the Box*
Recent and Upcoming: Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* (San Francisco Opera); Alice in *Le Comte Ory* (Merola Opera Program); Almirena in *Rinaldo* (Manhattan School of Music); Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* (MSM); La Fée in *Cendrillon* (MSM); Titania, the Fairy Queen, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (MSM); Sharp Ears, the Vixen, in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (MSM); soprano soloist in Mahler's Fourth Symphony (MSM Symphony Orchestra); high soprano soloist in Matthew Aucoin and Peter Sellars' *Music for New Bodies* (American Modern Opera Company, Aspen Music Festival & School)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship Program: 2026
Merola Opera Program: 2025



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



JESSLYN THOMAS
Soprano
(Daly City, California)
First bridesmaid
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Handmaid 3 in Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Page in *Lohengrin*; Sister Alice in *Dialogues des Carmélites*; First bridesmaid in *Le Nozze di Figaro*; Madrigalist in *Manon Lescaut*; Mrs. O'Malley in Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life*; A female traveler in *Manon*
Recent and Upcoming: Heitor Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 and Mozart's "Deh vieni, non tardar" (San Francisco Opera Orchestra); soprano soloist in Fauré Requiem (First Congregational Church of Palo Alto); Mahler's Fourth Symphony (UC Berkeley); Mozart's Mass in C Minor (UC Berkeley)
Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



STELLA HANNOCK♪
Mezzo-Soprano
(Port Macquarie, Australia)
Second bridesmaid
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Giovanna in *Rigoletto*; Designer #2 in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; Amelia's servant in *Simon Boccanegra*
Recent and Upcoming: 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

Creative Team



MICHAEL CAVANAGH
(1961–2024)
(Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada)
Production
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: John Adams' *Nixon in China*; Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*; *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Ana Sokolović's *Svadba-Wedding*; *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Così fan tutte*; *Don Giovanni*



SHAWNA LUCEY
(Houston, Texas)
Revival Director
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Director, *Tosca*; *La Traviata*
Recent and Upcoming: *Pirates of Penzance*; *Bluebeard's Castle* (Opera San José); *Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci* (San José); engagements with Dallas Opera, Theatre of St. Louis, LA Opera, Santa Fe Opera
General Director and CEO of Opera San José
@29flames



ERHARD ROM
(Seattle, Washington)
Set and Projection Designer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: John Adams' *Nixon in China*; Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*; *Lucia di Lammermoor*; *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Così fan tutte*; *Don Giovanni*
Recent and Upcoming: Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Don Giovanni* (Royal Swedish Opera); *Elektra* (Washington National Opera); *Fidelio* (WNO); *Macbeth* (WNO); *Ring* cycle (Atlanta Opera); *Rigoletto* (LA Opera, Dallas Opera); *Turandot* (Atlanta); Handel's *Semele* (Atlanta); *La Bohème* (Dallas)
Teaches design at Montclair State University, New Jersey



CONSTANCE HOFFMAN
(Oakland, California)
Costume Designer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Rigoletto*; Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*; *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Così fan tutte*; *Don Giovanni*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*
Recent and Upcoming: *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Boston Lyric Opera); *Guys and Dolls* (Lyric Opera of Chicago, Shakespeare Theatre Company); *La Bohème* (Santa Fe Opera); *Oklahoma!* (Glimmerglass Festival); John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* (Metropolitan Opera, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); *Tannhäuser* (Houston Grand Opera); *Così fan tutte* (LA Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Julius Caesar* (Opera Theater of Saint Louis); *Grimm Tales* (Ballet Austin); Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sadko* (Opera Slovenske Narodne Divadlo); *Rigoletto* (LA); *Don Carlo* (Washington National Opera)
Arts Professor and Area Head of Costume Design at the Tisch School of the Arts



JANE COX
(Dublin, Ireland)
Original Lighting Designer
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: *Le Nozze di Figaro*; *Così fan tutte*; *Don Giovanni*
Recent and Upcoming: For Broadway: *Appropriate*; *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*; *Macbeth*
Other: *Fidelio* (Washington National Opera); *The Boy* (Dublin's Abbey Theatre); *Minor Music* (Brooklyn Academy of Music)



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); *Simon Boccanegra*
Recent and Upcoming: *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



COLM SEERY
(Dublin, Ireland)
Choreographer
San Francisco Opera Highlights: Movement Director of John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*
Choreographer of *Madama Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *Il Trovatore*; *Partenope*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; *Rigoletto*; Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*
Revival Choreographer of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; *Andrea Chénier*; Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*
Dance Master of *Don Giovanni*; *Eugene Onegin*; *La Traviata*; *Orfeo ed Euridice*; *Lohengrin*; Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *L'Elisir d'Amore*
Recent and Upcoming: *Idomeneo* (Berlin State Opera); Britten's *Gloriana* (Madrid's Teatro Real); *Ariodante* (Vienna State Opera, Israeli Opera)
Associate Choreographer of *Andrea Chénier* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera)
Revival Choreographer of *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); *La Traviata* (Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu); *Manon* (Dallas Opera, Buenos Aires' Teatro Colón); *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne); *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Glyndebourne); *Rinaldo* (Glyndebourne)



JOHN KEENE
(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)
Chorus Director
San Francisco Opera Highlights: *Don Giovanni*; Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; *Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eugene Onegin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Orpheus and Eurydice*; *Madama Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *100th Anniversary Concert*; *Il Trovatore*; Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; *Lohengrin*; Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*; *The Elixir of Love*; *The Magic Flute*; Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*; *Un Ballo in Maschera*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; *Tristan und Isolde*; Beethoven's Ninth Symphony; *Carmen*; *La Bohème*; *Idomeneo*; *Rigoletto*; Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*; Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; *Elektra*; *Simon Boccanegra*; Thea Musgrave's *Mary, Queen of Scots*; *Manon*
Recent and Upcoming: *Tosca* (San Francisco Opera)
Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and San Francisco Conservatory of Music Voice Concerto Competition judge
Instagram: @keenejohn



MAYA HERBSMAN
(San Francisco, California)
Intimacy Director
San Francisco Opera Highlights: John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *La Traviata*; Poul Ruders and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*; *Parsifal*
Recent and Upcoming: Peter Brook's *La Tragédie de Carmen* (Merola Opera Program); *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Merola); *The Rape of Lucretia* (Merola)



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TRY THIS

No set yet. No costumes. Plenty to work with. In an early rehearsal for *The Marriage of Figaro*, director Shawna Lucey and mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook test the physical language of Marcellina while bass Maurizio Muraro (who made his San Francisco Opera debut as Doctor Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* in 2013 and returns to the character now in Mozart's *Figaro*) looks on. The exchange is the kind of rehearsal shorthand that turns notes on a page into multi-dimensional characters with histories, grudges, desires—and very strong opinions. For Cook, an Opera Medal recipient whose San Francisco Opera history stretches back to the early 1990s, Marcellina is familiar territory. Lucey's brilliance is making it feel newly discovered—for all of us.

—Jeanette Yu

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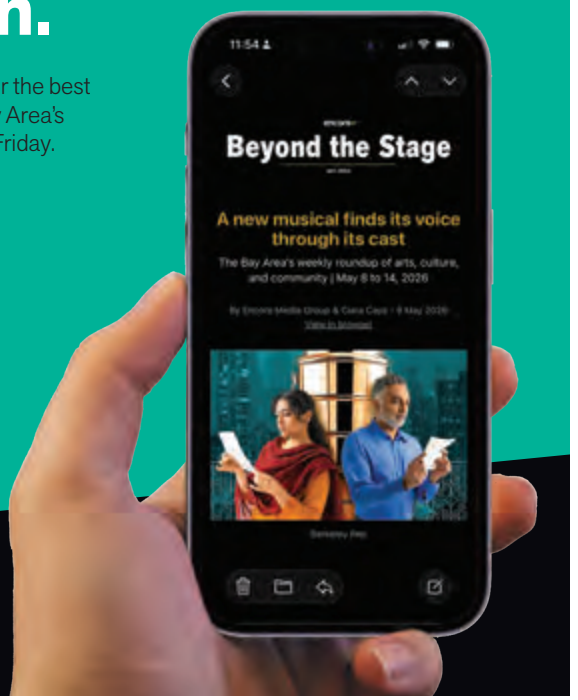
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—Mary Hoskins, soprano

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$15,000 Hero Circle

- Priority seating with your purchase of up to two *Ring* Cycle tickets in a premium section of your choice (subject to availability) without the tax-deductible portion of the ticket purchase. Tickets not included.
- Two vouchers for three *Ring* Cycle Final Dress Rehearsals with premium seating
- Valhalla Lounge access
- Invitation for two to a welcome dinner prior to your performance of *Das Rheingold*
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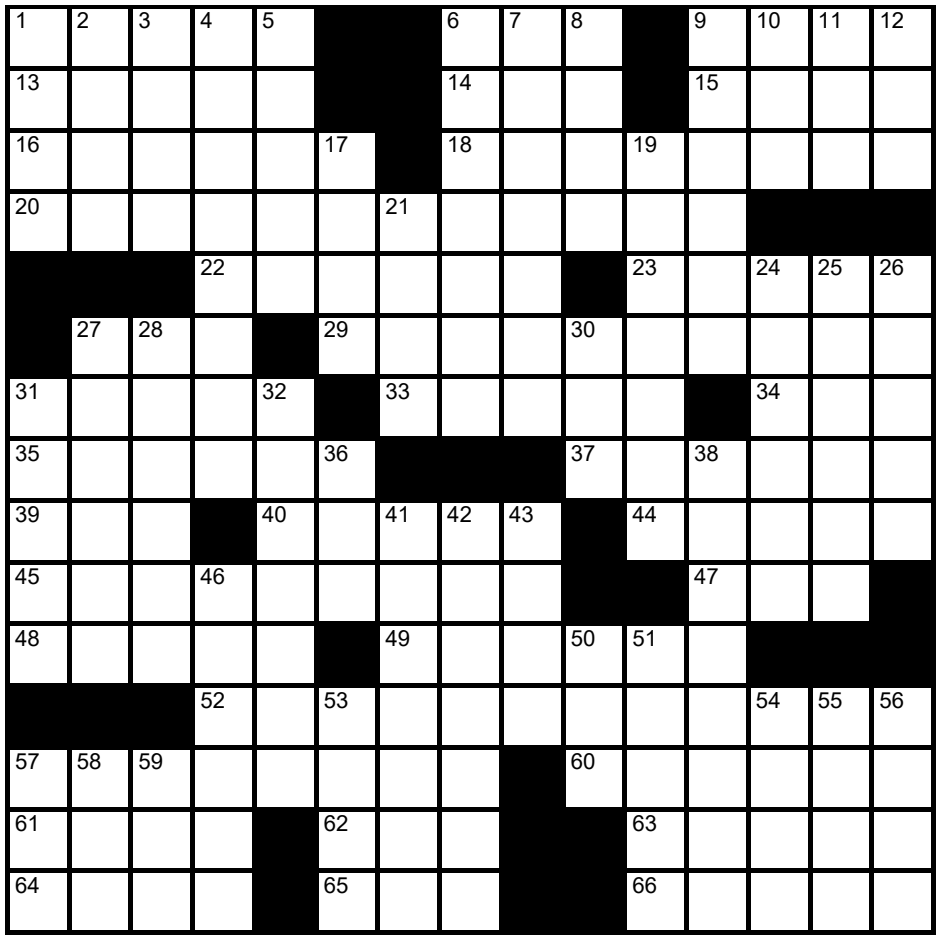
SADIE CHESLAK:

"It's an honor to sing my first Wagnerian role with San Francisco Opera. I have lofty dreams for myself, and the support I've felt from company leadership with this decision has helped me to dream even bigger. The world of Wagner is so vast—I've only just begun my journey, and I truly believe I'm in the right place to make this start. The artistic staff and leadership at San Francisco Opera have shared their firsthand experiences working on Wagner all over the world with me, and I'm so grateful to glean all I can from their knowledge of this repertoire. Singing this music, specifically Erda, is teaching me so much about my voice and what I am capable of. This music can feel a bit "off-limits" to young singers, but I've never felt more confident in my abilities than with the support of this dream-making company. This role is incredibly special to me, and I'm so honored to share it with the San Francisco Opera community."

SAN FRANCISCO
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Join the Ring Circle to support Sadie—and many of our incredible artists, artisans, and technicians—in their first *Ring* cycle.

Photo by Natalie Powers



ACROSS

1. Honda Civic, typically
6. Something you might trip on
9. Streetcar
13. Trailer, e.g.
14. "Eureka!"
15. Hawaiian dance
16. Gets a new pet, perhaps
18. Tourist's memento
20. Figaro's favorite classical composer?
22. Prioritizing on the battlefield
23. City near St. Petersburg
27. Mme., south of the Pyrenees
29. Susanna's favorite drink brand?
31. Canines, e.g.
33. Tropical mammal with a prehensile proboscis
34. Red Sox legend, familiarly
35. Undo, as a law
37. "Scarface"
39. Sun Devils' sch.
40. Lacking a talent for
44. __ Circus (ancient Roman arena)
45. Cherubino's favorite pop and country singer?
47. Blog feed inits.
48. Perspiration
49. Unleashes, as havoc
52. Count Almaviva's favorite bookseller?
57. Drink from a blender
60. Inhabitant of ancient Crete
61. Mark's replacement
62. Tolkien tree creature
63. Untrue
64. Word following Middle or Dark
65. In the past
66. Delight

DOWN

1. Relaxing retreats
2. Wagnerian goddess
3. Pioneering first-person shooter game
4. Cut off surgically
5. Observant person
6. Layered pasta dish
7. Strengthen, as defenses
8. Apply sloppily
9. Aries
10. Point in baseball
11. San Francisco comedian Wong
12. "Fuor del __" (Idomeneo aria)
17. Slender
19. Old hand
21. __ and switch
24. Moscone, Breed, Lurie, et al.
25. Keyboard instruments
26. Woodworking tools
27. Piece of playground equipment
28. Standing
30. Nervous mannerism
31. Ensnares
32. Organism's natural home
36. Once around the track
38. Type of ad or space
41. Emerging, as a realization
42. Go along with
43. Concert merch
46. No-no's
50. Texas __
51. Dinner utensil
53. Large flightless bird
54. Gaucho's weapon
55. Like Falstaff among Verdi's operas
56. Lover of Didon in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*
57. Mediterranean, e.g.
58. Coffee holder
59. Catan resource

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**



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DEC 11–12	Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*

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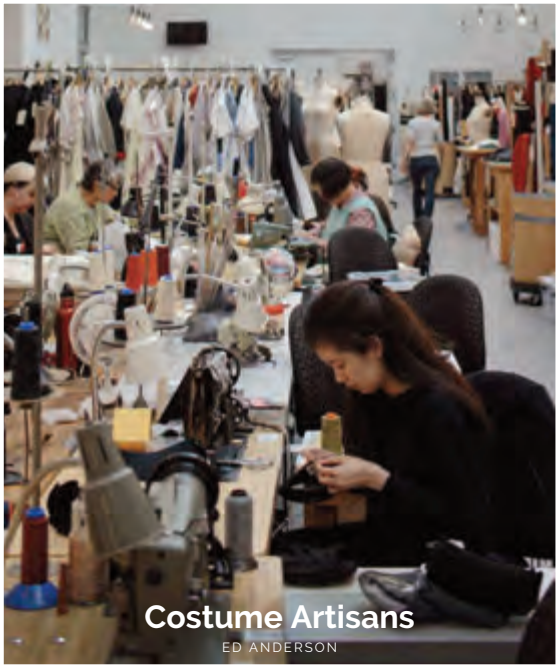
Photo: San Francisco Opera's 2026 production of *The Barber of Seville* by Cory Weaver.

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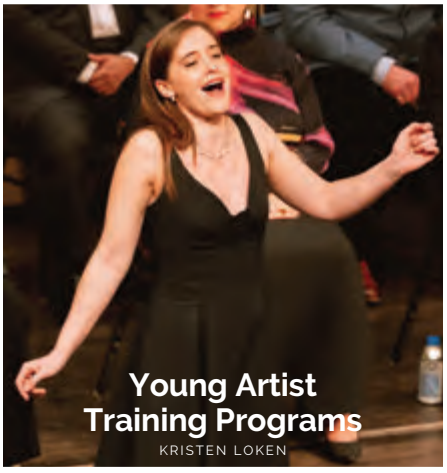
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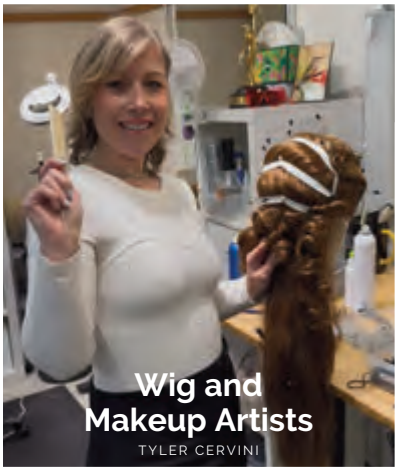
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Amber Loudermilk
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Leilani Norman
Lisa Patnoe (35)
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MARTY SOHL

In Memoriam

Each season, members of the San Francisco Opera family who we lost in the past year are honored in the program book. To read this year's *In Memoriam* feature, which includes beloved artists such as soprano Felicity Lott (pictured above as the Marschallin in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* in 1993), visit **sfopera.com/blog**.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE SOLUTION FROM PAGE 52

S	E	D	A	N			L	S	D		T	R	A	M
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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 Maria Rodrigues
Principal Viola



Joy Fellows
Associate Principal Viola



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Lindan Burns
Viola



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



Emily Liu
Viola†



Elizabeth Prior
Viola†



Sunny Yang
Principal Cello



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

† Season Substitute



Susan Kang
Flute↑



Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



Gabriel Young
Associate Principal
Oboe



Benjamin Brogadir
English Horn



José González Granero
Principal Clarinet



Junghwan Lee
Bass Clarinet



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



Shawn Jones
Bassoon/
Contrabassoon↑



Kevin Rivard
Principal
Horn



Phillip Palmore
Horn



Brian McCarty
Associate Principal
Horn



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Horn



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Utility Horn



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Principal
Trumpet



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Trumpet



John Pearson
Trumpet



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Trombone



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Percussion



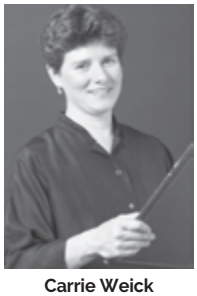
Victor Avdienko
Percussion↑



Eleanor Kirk
Principal
Harp



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian

Not pictured members: Joshua Choi (Clarinet)

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)*

↑ 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



William Lee Bryan
Baritone



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



John Fulton
Baritone



Harlan Hays
Baritone



Nikolas Nackley
Baritone



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Baritone



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Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



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Bass



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Bass

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Jamielyn Duggan



Brett Conway



Blanche Hampton



Coral Martin



Christopher Nachtrab



Chiharu Shibata



Marcos Vedovetto

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Hadleigh Adams+◊
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Zhengyi Bai+◊
Vitor Bispo#
Aleksey Bogdanov+
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Cheryl Cain*
Ryan Capozzo
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Caroline Corrales+◊
James Creswell+
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Amina Edris+◊
Amartuvshin Enkhbat
Alexandra Fitz Gibbon■
Alexa Frankian+┼
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Sofia Gotch+┼
Joshua Guerrero*
Patrick Guetti*
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Jongwon Han◊
Stella Hannock
Mary Hoskins+┼
Katherine Ivie
Christopher Jackson
Michael Jankosky
Silvie Jensen
Chance Jonas-O'Toole+
Peter Kellner*
Quinn Kelsey+
Crystal Kim
Thomas Kinch+┼
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Judit Kutasi
Eric Levintow*
Riccardo Massi*
Simone McIntosh+◊
Jana McIntyre+
Alexander McKissick
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Brian Mulligan
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Nikolas Nackley
Sarah Nadreau
Gabriel Natal-Báez+┼
Toni Marie Palmertree+◊
Andrew Thomas Pardini
Pene Pati+◊
Chester Pidduck
Robert Pomakov
Taylor Raven+
Brenton Ryan
B Schaubhut*
Chiharu Shibata■
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Philip Skinner+◊
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David Soar
Christopher Sokolowski*
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Falk Struckmann
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Colm Seery

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

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

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C. Michael Belle
William Lee BryanΩ
Cheryl CainΩ
Janet Campbell
Danielle Cheiken√
Alan Cochran
Sara Colburn
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Chester PidduckΩ
Laurel Cameron Porter
Jonathan Smucker
Whitney SteeleΩ
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Daniel Brakefield
Erich Buchholz
Daniel CilliΩ
Clare Demer
Phoebe Dinga
Spencer Dodd
Mélissa Dufort
Stephanie Feigenbaum
Margaret Genovese
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√ Chorus member on leave of absence
Ω Solo Role

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Maya Cohon, *Associate Concertmaster*Σ
Heidi Wilcox, *Assistant Concertmaster*
Mariya Borozina
Jennifer Cho
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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*
Julia Pyke, *Guest 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*

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Carrie Weick

√ Leave of absence
Σ Principal for one or more Fall season operas
↑ Season Substitute
⁂ Strauss Fall Concert

Corps Dancers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

Brett Conway↔
Jamielyn Duggan↔
Alexandra FitzGibbon▫
Blanche Hampton↔▪
Felipe León▫
Coral Martin↔
Micah Moch▫
Christopher Nachtrab↔
Chiharu Shibata↔▪
Marcos Vedovetto↔

↔ Tenured
√ Tenured Dancer on Leave of Absence
▫ Resident Corps
▪ Solo Role

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Domesticity and the Sublime: Humanism in Mozart and Strauss

BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK


CODY PICKENS

This month we feature two of my favorite composers, with Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and a concert of Richard Strauss, including the American premiere of a new suite from *Der Rosenkavalier*. It has always felt to me that there is a deep connection between Mozart and Strauss, Strauss picking up Mozart's legacy a hundred years later and carrying it forward.

The connection for me is in the depth of nuance that they bring to the individual: the dignity, agency, complexity, and sympathy with which they weave their characters. While Verdi is often concerned with the place of the individual in society, and Puccini takes us deep into the raw essence of human emotion, Mozart and Strauss focus on the fundamentals that connect us all: what it means to live a good life; how to navigate the complexities of love; how to approach death.

The connection between Mozart's Countess in *Figaro* and Strauss' Marschallin in *Rosenkavalier* is a particularly poignant one. Both are younger than often imagined: the Countess is in her mid-20s; the Marschallin is 32. Yet both already know the wistfulness of love's innocence being shattered. The Countess must come to terms with her husband's infidelity, but she does so by exhibiting the grace of forgiveness. The Marschallin recognizes that her young lover, Octavian, is finding lasting love with Sophie and lets him go with similar grace. In both, grace comes from an act of generosity.

There is, in both composers, a profound sensitivity to the at-once ordinariness and sublimeness of human experience. Both write with a certain domesticity (the autobiographical opera *Intermezzo* draws directly on Strauss' own marriage), but it's not a trivial domesticity. It is how each of us finds our way in the world: the trials by which we love more deeply; the mirrors that reveal our shortcomings; the moments when our priorities become clear.

I think of the simplicity of Pamina and Papageno's "Bei Männern" in *The Magic Flute* or Arabella and Mandryka's "Sie wollen mich heiraten" in *Arabella.* Neither is a heart-on-the-sleeve romantic outpouring. In fact, the *Flute* duet is not even between lovers. Both are simple song-like expressions of togetherness, with a domestic comfort that makes them even more poignant.

For both composers, the full potential of human experience is open to us all, not just heroes and heroines. Papageno and Papagena are blessed with happiness, as are Barak and his wife in Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Arabella chooses the introverted outsider, Mandryka, over her polished suitors. And, in *Figaro*, it is the servants (particularly Susanna) who bring the turbulent household to resolution, while finding the opera's most honest love.

For Mozart and Strauss, humanity is explored irrespective of class, power, or rank. We all love, yearn, fear, forgive, believe. And, in that is the humanism of Mozart and Strauss: a belief in the dignity and fullness of each individual human experience.

That humanism deepens in their later music: Mozart, with the beautiful simplicity of his *Ave verum corpus* and the music of Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*; and Strauss with the sublime acceptance of the finality of life in his *Four Last Songs* and the wistful exploration of life and art in his last opera, *Capriccio*.

In *Capriccio*, the Countess' soaring finale tries to make sense of music, poetry, life, and love. But there is no grand revelation. Rather, dinner is served and ambiguity remains.

In Mozart and Strauss, the final revelations tend not to be divine, but rather human. There is no Isolde-like transcendence. Mozart tends to find resolution through forgiveness; Strauss through acceptance. Rather than transporting us out of life, both composers return us to it: to forgiveness, acceptance, and deeply authentic and complicated love. And that is a very good way to end an opera. That is life.

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