SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS RICHARD WAGNER'S DIE WALKÜRE JUNE 10–30, WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

NINA STEMME, EVA-MARIA WESTBROEK, MARK DELAVAN AND CHRISTOPHER VENTRIS HEADLINE INTERNATIONAL CAST

CONDUCTED BY DONALD RUNNICLES AND DIRECTED BY FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT 415.864.3330 OR SFOPERA.COM

SAN FRANCISCO (May 21, 2010)—San Francisco Opera presents *Die Walküre*, the second installment of Richard Wagner's epic *Der Ring des Nibelungen (The Ring of the Nibelung)* beginning June 10 with five subsequent performances through June 30 at the War Memorial Opera House. Celebrated sopranos Nina Stemme and Eva-Maria Westbroek appear as Brünnhilde and Sieglinde respectively alongside baritone Mark Delavan as Wotan and tenor Christopher Ventris as Siegmund. Maestro Donald Runnicles conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Francesca Zambello directs her new production, which premiered at Washington National Opera in 2007.

Nina Stemme, whose portrayal of Senta in the Company's 2004 production of *The Flying Dutchman* garnered rave reviews, makes her role debut as *Die Walküre*'s Brünnhilde. Stemme has previously appeared as Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* in Cologne, Vienna, Helsinki, Naples and Stockholm, and she performed her first Brünnhilde in Vienna State Opera's 2009 production of *Siegfried*. The soprano will return to San Francisco Opera next summer to sing Brünnhilde in the Company's presentation of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. One of the biggest operatic stars of the Netherlands, Eva-Maria Westbroek makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Sieglinde in this production. Westbroek has previously appeared as Sieglinde with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and at the Salzburg, Bayreuth and

Aix-en-Provence Festivals; she will reprise the role next season in the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *Die Walküre* directed by Robert Lepage.

British tenor Christopher Ventris, who has starred in San Francisco Opera's productions of Wagner's *Parsifal* and *Der Fliegende Holländer*, returns to sing Siegmund. An acclaimed Wagnerian tenor, Ventris has performed the role of Siegmund at Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Cologne Opera, and he has previously appeared in the title role of *Parsifal* in London, Paris, Vienna and Bayreuth and the title role of *Lohengrin* in Madrid, Bologna, Dallas and Geneva. Former Adler Fellow Mark Delavan, whose Wotan in San Francisco Opera's *Das Rheingold* (2008) was hailed as "robust and commanding" by the *San Francisco Chronicle,* returns to the role in *Die Walküre*. Delavan recently performed Wotan in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* at Deutsche Oper Berlin with Maestro Runnicles and will return to sing the role in San Francisco Opera's 2011 presentation of Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle.

German mezzo-soprano Janina Baechle makes her U.S. operatic debut as Fricka in this production of *Die Walküre*. A regular artist at the Vienna State Opera, her many Wagnerian roles with that company have included Ortrud in *Lohengrin* and Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde* as well as Fricka and Erda in *Das Rheingold* and Fricka in *Die Walküre*. Bass Raymond Aceto returns to San Francsco Opera as Sieglinde's husband Hunding. He has previously appeared with the Company as the Bonze in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, the King of Egypt in Verdi's *Aida*, Pietro in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, and Banquo in Verdi's *Macbeth*.

Former San Francisco Opera music director and noted Wagnerian Donald Runnicles returns to San Francisco Opera to lead a world-class cast of soloists and the acclaimed San Francisco Opera Orchestra. San Francisco Opera Artistic Adviser and director Francesca Zambello gives this epic tale of a powerful god torn by conflicting loyalties a distinctly American touch in this theatrical and innovative production with sets by Michael Yeargan and costumes by Catherine Zuber. This production of *Die Walküre,* appearing for the first time in San Francisco after a successful debut at Washington National Opera, will be part of the complete *Der Ring des Nibelungen*—in addition to *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*—presented in three cycles in June-July 2011.

San Francisco Opera's Summer 2010 production of Wagner's *Die Walküre* will be recorded live at the War Memorial Opera House and will air on Classical 102.1 KDFC on Sunday, November 7, 2010 at 8 p.m. As program host, popular KDFC radio announcer Dianne Nicolini offers lively introductions to each opera with historic facts and brief plot synopses.

Sung in German with English supertitles, the six performances of *Die Walküre* are scheduled for June 10 (7 p.m.), June 13 (1 p.m.), June 19 (7 p.m.), June 22 (7 p.m.), June 25 (7 p.m.) and June 30 (7 p.m.), 2010.

San Francisco Opera Guild Panel Insight Discussion

San Francisco Opera Guild will present an Insight Panel Discussion featuring members of the cast and production team from *Die Walküre*. The discussion will take place on Monday, June 7 at 6 p.m. in the Herbst Theatre at the War Memorial Veterans Building (401 Van Ness Avenue). Insight panels are free for Opera members and $5 for the general public; tickets can be purchased at the door 30 minutes prior to the discussion.

Tickets and Information

Tickets for *Die Walküre* range from $15 to $360 each and may be purchased online at sfopera.com or from the San Francisco Opera Box Office either in person or by phone at (415) 864-3330. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the day of each performance; tickets are $10 each, cash only.

All performances will feature an informative Opera Talk by San Francisco Opera Head of Music Staff John Parr. Talks begin fifty-five minutes before each performance in the orchestra section of the War Memorial Opera House and are presented free of charge to patrons with tickets for the corresponding performance.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue at Grove Street. Patrons are encouraged to use public transportation to attend San Francisco Opera performances. The War Memorial Opera House is within walking distance of the Civic Center BART station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49 and the F Market Street. For more public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmuni.com.

Casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about *Die Walküre* and San Francisco Opera's 2010 summer season, please visit sfopera.com.

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The Ring is made possible, in part, by the Edgar Foster Daniels Foundation, Roberta and David Elliott, Kristina Flanagan, Mary and Nicholas Graves, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, The Bernard Osher Endowment Fund, Betty and Jack Schafer and two anonymous sponsors. Additional support provided by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Mrs. Edmund W. Littlefield, and Bernard and Barbro Osher. San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by a grant from Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. Wells Fargo is San Francisco Opera's Season Sponsor. San Francisco Opera is proud to recognize its corporate partners: United Airlines, the Official Airline of San Francisco Opera, and Chevron, fueling great performances everywhere.

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2009-10 Season Sponsor

DIE WALKÜRE: **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

* San Francisco Opera Debut ♪ Role Debut † Current Adler Fellow ● OperaVision performance

DIE WALKÜRE by Richard Wagner

Co-production with Washington National Opera

PRODUCTION NEW TO SAN FRANCISCO
June 10● (7 p.m.), **13●** (1 p.m.), **19●** (7 p.m.), **22** (7 p.m.), **25** (7 p.m.), **30** (7 p.m.), **2010**

Libretto by the composer
First performance: Munich, June 26, 1870
First San Francisco Opera performance: November 4, 1935
Most Recent San Francisco Opera performance: June 1999
Approximate running time: four hours and 30 minutes, with two intermissions
Sung in German with English supertitles

Cast:

Brünnhilde	**Nina Stemme♪**
Sieglinde	**Eva-Maria Westbroek***
Fricka	**Janina Baechle***
Siegmund	**Christopher Ventris**
Wotan	**Mark Delavan**
Hunding	**Raymond Aceto**
Gerhilde	**Wendy Bryn Harmer***
Helmwige	**Tamara Wapinsky**
Ortlinde	**Molly Fillmore**
Waltraute	**Daveda Karanas**
Rossweise	**Priti Gandhi***
Siegrune	**Maya Lahyani†**
Grimgerde	**Pamela Dillard**
Schwertleite	**Suzanne Hendrix***

Production Team:

Conductor	**Donald Runnicles**
Director	**Francesca Zambello**
Associate Director	**Christian Räth**
Set Designer	**Michael Yeargan**
Costume Designer	**Catherine Zuber**
Lighting Designer	**Mark McCullough**
Projection Designer	**Jan Hartley**
Choreographer	**Lawrence Pech**

Opera Guild Insight Panel Discussion
Monday, June 7, 6 p.m.
Herbst Theater, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

This press release and downloadable 2010 summer season photographs are available at **sfopera.com/press**. For further press information, please contact:

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

NINA STEMME (*Brünnhilde*) made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2004 as Senta (*Der Fliegende Holländer*) and appeared later that season in a concert in honor of Donald Runnicles's fiftieth birthday. She recently performed Brünnhilde (*Siegfried*) with the Vienna State Opera, a role that she reprises with that company this season, and she will make her *Ring* cycle role debut as Brünnhilde with the Company in the summer of 2011. A former winner of the Plácido Domingo Competition and finalist of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition, the Swedish soprano regularly sings with the world's leading opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Paris Opera; the Vienna State Opera; Frankfurt Opera; Zurich Opera; Stockholm's Royal Opera; Madrid's Teatro Real; and the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona. Roles in her extensive repertoire include Rosalinda (*Die Fledermaus*), Amelia (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Countess Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Katerina (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), Tatiana (*Eugene Onegin*), Marguerite (*Faust*), Agathe (*Der Freischütz*), and the title roles of *Madama Butterfly, Tosca, Manon Lescaut, Jenůfa, Aida, Arabella, Rusalka,* and *Ariadne auf Naxos.* Her Wagner repertoire includes Eva (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser*), Elsa (*Lohengrin*), Sieglinde (*Die Walküre*), and Isolde (*Tristan und Isolde*). Recent and upcoming engagements include Isolde, Senta, and Rusalka with Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and at Covent Garden (for which she received a Laurence Olivier Award); the title role of *Salome* in Madrid; and Ariadne at the Met. Stemme was appointed a Swedish Royal Court Singer in 2006 and is a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Music; she was awarded the "Litteris et Artibus" medal by H.M. the King of Sweden in 2008. Her broad discography includes recordings of *Tristan und Isolde* with Plácido Domingo (EMI), *Der Fliegende Holländer* (Chandos), Zemlinsky's *Der König Kandaules* (Andante), an all-Strauss album (*Four Last Songs* and final scenes from *Salome* and *Capriccio,* EMI), and a lieder album (Phaedra); Stemme can be seen on DVD recordings of *Aida, Tristan und Isolde, Der Rosenkavalier,* and *Jenůfa.*

Baritone **MARK DELAVAN** (*Wotan*) made his role debut as Wotan in San Francisco Opera's 2008 production of *Das Rheingold*, a role that he sings throughout the presentation of Company's new *Ring* cycle. The Merola Opera Program alumnus and former Adler Fellow has appeared with the Company in fifteen productions ranging from Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* to Puccini's *Tosca*. His recent credits include Iago (*Otello*) and Michele (*Il Tabarro*) with Los Angeles Opera; Amonasro (*Aida*) at both the Metropolitan Opera and Spain's Bilbao Opera; Scarpia (*Tosca*) at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and Munich's Bavarian State Opera; Germont, Thoas (*Iphigénie en Tauride*), Alfio (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Giorgio Germont (*La Traviata*), and Count di Luna (*Il Trovatore*) at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Jokanaan (*Salome*) at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu; the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Atlanta Opera; Jack Rance (*La Fanciulla del West*) at Danish National Opera; and Carlo Gérard (*Andrea Chénier*), Tomsky (*The Queen of Spades*), and Alfio at the Met. No stranger to the German dramatic repertoire, he has sung the Dutchman at New York City Opera and Opera Pacific; Amfortas (*Parsifal*) at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Jokanaan at Berlin State Opera and New York City Opera; Altair (*Die Aegyptische Helena*) at the Santa Fe Opera; and the Spirit Messenger (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*) at the Met. Delavan is a past winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. His recent engagements include the title role of

Falstaff with Pittsburgh Opera; Amonasro with Atlanta Opera; and Scarpia and Wotan (*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*) with Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Dutch soprano **EVA-MARIA WESTBROEK** (*Sieglinde*) makes her San Francisco Opera debut in a role she has performed with the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and at the Salzburg, Bayreuth, and Aix-en-Provence Festivals. From 2001 to 2006 Westbroek was a member of the Stuttgart State Opera, where she performed the title role of *Tosca,* Carlotta (Schreker's *Die Gezeichneten*) and Desdemona (*Otello*); the company awarded her with the title *Kammersängerin* in 2006. Career highlights include the title role of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at Covent Garden and in Paris and Amsterdam; Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser*) and the Empress (*Die Frau ohne Schatten*) with Paris Opera; Minnie (*La Fanciulla del West*) at Covent Garden and in Amsterdam; Leonora (*La Forza del Destino*) at La Monnaie in Brussels; the title role of *The Merry Widow* at La Scala; Amelia (*Un Ballo in Maschera*) at Frankfurt Opera; and Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) in Munich. Westbroek is a graduate of The Hague's Royal Conservatory and a former winner of the Angelica Catalani Competition and the Santa Maria Ligure Competition. Recent and upcoming engagements include Chrysothemis (*Elektra*) in Munich and Brussels; Amelia (*Un Ballo in Maschera*) in Dusseldorf; Cassandre (*Les Troyens*) in Amsterdam; and Sieglinde with the Metropolitan Opera.

Born in London, British tenor **CHRISTOPHER VENTRIS** (*Siegmund*) made his U.S. debut with San Francisco Opera in 2000 in the title role in *Parsifal* and has subsequently returned to the Company as Sergei (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*) and Erik (*Der Fliegende Holländer*). He made his operatic debut at the Glyndebourne Festival as Váňa Kudrjáš (*Kát'a Kabanová*), followed by Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*), Števa Buryja (*Jenůfa*), Janek (*The Makropulos Case*), and guest appearances at Opera North and English National Opera. Highlights of recent seasons include Parsifal at the Vienna State Opera, Seattle Opera, the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and in Barcelona, Hamburg, and Santiago, Chile; Siegmund (*Die Walküre*) in Cologne, Naples, Venice, and the Vienna State Opera; Erik at Flemish Opera; Max (*Der Freischütz*) at La Scala and in Berlin and Cologne; Sergei in Geneva, Brussels, Madrid, Barcelona, London, Amsterdam, and Buenos Aires; Števa Buryja at the Metropolitan Opera and Flemish Opera; Florestan (*Fidelio*) with Washington National Opera; the title role of *Peter Grimes* in Barcelona and Zurich; and the title role of *Lohengrin* with the Dallas Opera, where he received the 2007 Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year Award for his interpretation of this role. Ventris also recently sang Parsifal in a new acclaimed production by Stefan Herheim at the Bayreuth Festival.

German mezzo-soprano **JANINA BAECHLE** (*Fricka*) makes her U.S. operatic debut with San Francisco Opera this season. A regular artist at the Vienna State Opera, her many roles with that company have included Ortrud (*Lohengrin*), Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*), Herodias (*Salome*), Mistress Quickly (*Falstaff*), Hedwige (*Guillaume Tell*), and Eboli (*Don Carlos*), among others. Prior to her work with the Vienna State Opera, Baechle was a member of the Hannover State Opera, where she performed Amneris (*Aida*), Countess Geschwitz (*Lulu*), Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*), and Fenena (*Nabucco*). Other recent and upcoming engagements include Brangäne with Dresden's Saxon State Opera and in Toulouse as well as Mistress Quickly at Hamburg State Opera. An active concert artist, Baechle has performed with the New York Philharmonic and the Vienna Philharmonic, among others. Her recent solo recordings include *Chanson Grises,* featuring songs by Hahn, Milhaud, Boulanger, and Zemlinsky as well as a recording of songs by Liszt.

RAYMOND ACETO (*Hunding*) made his San Francisco Opera debut as Monterone in the 1997 production of *Rigoletto*. The American bass returned to the Company as the Bonze (*Madame Butterfly*), the King of Egypt (*Aïda*), Pietro (*Simon Boccanegra*), Zuniga (*Carmen*), and Banquo (*Macbeth*). His recent career highlights include Scarpia (*Tosca*) and Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) at Houston Grand Opera; Daland (*Der Fliegende Holländer*) at New Orleans Opera; Zaccaria (*Nabucco*) at the Metropolitan Opera and San Diego Opera; Escamillo (*Carmen*) at Los Angeles Opera; and Lodovico (*Otello*) at the Dallas Opera. He has also appeared as the Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) with the Metropolitan Opera and Houston Grand Opera; and Walter (*Luisa Miller*), Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), and Fafner and Fasolt (*Das Rheingold*) with Dallas Opera. His international career highlights have included Don Basilio (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) and Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Ramfis (*Aïda*) at Vienna State Opera and the Arena di Verona; Escamillo at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, the Arena di Verona, and Deutsche Oper Berlin; Loredano (*I Due Foscari*) at the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels; Ferrando (*Il*

Trovatore) at Royal Opera, Covent Garden and the Teatro Real in Madrid; and Jacopo Fiesco, Ramfis, and Raimondo Bidebent (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) at Deutsche Oper Berlin.

Recipient of the 2009 San Francisco Opera Medal, **DONALD RUNNICLES** served as music director and principal conductor of San Francisco Opera from 1992 to 2009. He first led the Company in two *Ring* cycles in 1990 and has since conducted more than sixty productions here, including the world premieres of Adams's *Doctor Atomic* and Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*; the West Coast premiere of Wallace's *Harvey Milk*; and the North American premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*. Upon leaving the Company last season, he has since become the general music director of Deutsche Oper Berlin and chief donductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. This summer will be his fifth season as music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival, and he continues to serve as principal guest conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Maestro Runnicles regularly conducts at the BBC Proms and the Edinburgh Festival, and he has appeared repeatedly as guest conductor at the Bayreuth, Salzburg, and Glyndebourne Festivals, as well as at the Vienna State Opera. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, Runnicles studied at St. John's College, Cambridge and the University of Edinburgh. He began his career as a *répétiteur* in Mannheim, becoming general music director at Freiburg State Theater in 1989. He made his North American debut in 1988 conducting Berg's *Lulu* at the Metropolitan Opera, becoming San Francisco Opera's music director four years later. Esteemed throughout the world for his interpretations of German romantic repertory, Maestro Runnicles regularly conducts the Berlin Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra and London Symphony Orchestra, and has been a guest conductor with many of the world's most distinguished orchestras and opera companies throughout his career. His broad discography includes vocal and symphonic works ranging from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and highlights of Wagner's *Ring* cycle to Mozart's Requiem, Wallace's *Harvey Milk*, and Gluck's *Orfée et Eurydice*. Runnicles was named Officer of the British Empire in 2004.

San Francisco Opera Artistic Adviser **FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO** (*Director*) began her long association with the Company in 1983 as assistant stage director for *Ariadne auf Naxos* and has since been involved in eighteen productions here. The Company produced the first installment of her new *Ring* cycle, *Das Rheingold,* in 2008 and will present the complete cycle in 2011. Among Zambello's most recent operatic productions are the world premiere of *An American Tragedy, Cyrano,* and *Les Troyens* for the Metropolitan Opera; *Porgy and Bess* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen* for Washington National Opera; *La Bohème* at London's Royal Albert Hall; *The Fiery Angel* for the Bolshoi Theatre; *Salome* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Carmen, Don Giovanni* and *The Tsarina's Slippers* at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and *Boris Godunov, War and Peace, Billy Budd* and *William Tell* at the Paris Opera. Recently appointed general and artistic director for Glimmerglass Opera, Zambello was awarded the title of *Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* by the French government for her contribution to French culture and the Russian Federation's medal for service to culture. Her latest theater projects have included *Showboat* at Royal Albert Hall and Carnegie Hall; a new musical, *Rebecca,* for Vienna's Raimund Theater; *Tibet Through the Red Box,* a new play by David Henry Hwang for the Seattle Children's Theatre; *The Little Prince* with Oscar-winning composer Rachel Portman; and *Napoleon* in London's West End. Zambello also recently directed *The Little Mermaid* for Disney on Broadway and *The Little House on the Prairie,* by Rachel Portman and Rachel Sheinkin, currently on a national tour.

CHRISTIAN RÄTH (*Associate Director*) made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2008's *Das Rheingold*, and he serves as associate director for the entire *Ring* cycle in 2011. A native of Hamburg, Germany, he has worked on the directorial teams of major opera houses throughout the U.S. and Europe, collaborating on productions such as *Roméo et Juliette* and *Of Mice and Men* at Houston Grand Opera; *Luisa Miller* at the Teatro Réal de Madrid; *Billy Budd* at Paris Opera and Royal Opera, Covent Garden; *Porgy and Bess* and *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at Lyon Opera; and *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Das Rheingold* at Bilbao Opera. He directed revival productions of *Il Trovatore* and *West Side Story* at the Bregenz Festival and *Platée* at the Santa Fe Opera. Recent projects include *Siegfried* at Washington National Opera and *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Deutsche Oper Berlin.