SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS MASSENET'S *WERTHER*, SEPTEMBER 15–OCTOBER 1, WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

RAMÓN VARGAS AND ALICE COOTE STAR IN NEW PRODUCTION PREMIERE

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT (415) 864-3330 OR SFOPERA.COM

SAN FRANCISCO (August 30, 2010)—San Francisco Opera presents *Werther*, Jules Massenet's French opera based on Goethe's novel, at the War Memorial Opera House opening September 15 with five subsequent performances through October 1. Mexican tenor Ramón Vargas appears in the title role alongside mezzo-soprano Alice Coote as Charlotte. This new co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago, directed by Francisco Negrin and designed by Louis Désiré, debuts in San Francisco and is led by French conductor Emmanuel Villaume. These performances mark the return of *Werther* to the War Memorial Opera House stage after an absence of 25 years and only the fifth time it has been presented in the Company's 88-year history.

Bringing one of his signature roles to San Francisco Opera, renowned lyric tenor Ramón Vargas appears in the title role of *Werther*, the story of a poet who cannot bear the pain of unfulfilled love. Ramon Vargas has previously sung Werther at opera houses in Vienna, Monte-Carlo, Los Angeles and Mexico City. Other recent credits include the title role of *La Damnation de Faust* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at the Metropolitan Opera; Riccardo in *Un Ballo in Maschera* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and Rodolfo in *Luisa Miller* at Vienna State Opera. Vargas made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1999 as Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and last appeared with the Company as Nemorino in 2008's *L'elisir D'amore*.

Acclaimed British mezzo-soprano Alice Coote returns to San Francisco Opera as Charlotte, a role she recently sang at Frankfurt Opera and Opera North in the U.K. Of her April 2010 solo recital at the Herbst Theater, the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote: "The prevailing pleasure of the evening came in the singer's emotional acuity, an uncanny way of bending her distinctive, mahogany-luster voice to the precise character of a song." Coote's two highly praised previous appearances at San Francisco Opera include Ruggiero in 2002's *Alcina* and Idamante in 2008's *Idomeneo*.

Soprano Heidi Stober makes her San Francisco Opera debut singing the role of Charlotte's sister Sophie for the first time. She has recently performed more than ten roles at Deutsche Oper Berlin including Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Stober will return to San Francisco Opera as Susanna in three performances of *Le nozze di Figaro* in October 2010. Baritone Brian Mulligan recently made his role debuts as Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) with English National Opera and returns to San Francisco Opera to appear as Charlotte's betrothed Albert for the first time. Mulligan recently appeared as Valentin in the Company's Summer 2010 production of *Faust* and will return this season in *Madama Butterfly* and *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Bass-baritone Christian Van Horn sings the role of the Bailiff following his Company debut as the King of Egypt in *Aida*; he will also appear this season as the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*. Tenor Robert MacNeil makes his role debut as Schmidt; he will return this season as Don Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Adler Fellows Susannah Biller and Austin Kness complete the cast as the lovers Kätchen and Brühlmann, respectively.

Massenet's opera, which is based on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, was last presented at the War Memorial Opera House in 1985. This new co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago, directed by stage director Francisco Negrin and designed by Louis Désiré, is a psychologically intriguing take on this timeless story. The production debuts in San Francisco and is conducted by French conductor Emmanuel Villaume; the San Francisco Opera Chorus is led by Ian Robertson.

Sung in French with English supertitles, the six performances of *Werther* are scheduled for September 15 (7:30 p.m.), September 18 (8 p.m.), September 22 (7:30 p.m.), September 26 (2 p.m.), September 28 (8 p.m.), and October 1 (8 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 *Werther*. The discussion will take place on Monday, September 13 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 Massenet's *Werther* are priced from $20 to $360 and may be purchased at www.sfopera.com or through the San Francisco Opera Box Office [301 Van Ness Avenue (at Grove Street), 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.

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 *Werther* and San Francisco Opera's 2010–11 season, please visit sfopera.com.

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Company Sponsor Mrs. Edmund W. Littlefield and John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn are proud to support *Werther*.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos provided by Music Exchange.

2010–11 Season Sponsor
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WERTHER: **PRODUCTION INFORMATION**

WERTHER by Jules Massenet

Co-production with Lyric Opera of Chicago

NEW PRODUCTION PREMIERE
September 15 (7:30 p.m.)**, 18•** (8 p.m.)**, 22•** (7:30 p.m.)**, 26•** (2 p.m.)**, 28** (8 p.m.)**; October 1** (8 p.m.)**, 2010**

Libretto by Édouard Blau, Paul Milliet and Georges Hartmann
Approximate running time: 2 hours, 30 minutes with one intermission
Sung in French with English supertitles

First Performance:	Vienna, February 16, 1892
First SFO Performance:	November 22, 1935
Most Recent SFO Performances:	October 1985

Cast:

Werther	**Ramón Vargas**
Charlotte	**Alice Coote**
Sophie	**Heidi Stober*♪**
Albert	**Brian Mulligan ♪**
The Bailiff	**Christian Van Horn ♪**
Schmidt	**Robert MacNeil ♪**
Kätchen	**Susannah Biller†*♪**
Brühlmann	**Austin Kness†♪**

Production Team:

Conductor	**Emmanuel Villaume**
Director	**Francisco Negrin***
Production Designer	**Louis Désiré***
Lighting Designer	**Duane Schuler**
Chorus Director	**Ian Robertson**

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

Opera Guild Insight Panel Discussion
Monday, September 13, 6 p.m.
Herbst Theater, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

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This press release and downloadable 2010-11 Season photographs are available at sfopera.com/press

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Tenor **RAMÓN VARGAS** (*Werther*) returns to San Francisco in one of his favorite roles, which he has sung at the Vienna State Opera, Madrid's Teatro Real, and in Monte Carlo and Mexico City. Vargas made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1999 as Riccardo (*Un Ballo in Maschera*) and went on to perform Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) later that season; he most recently appeared as Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*) in 2008. He has appeared in leading roles in virtually all the world's major opera houses: La Scala (Alfredo in *La Traviata,* Edgardo, and the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*); the Vienna State Opera (title roles of *Roberto Devereux* and *Don Carlos*, Leicester in *Maria Stuarda*, Nemorino, Edgardo, Lensky in *Eugene Onegin,* Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette,* Rodolfo in *La Bohème*); Royal Opera, Covent Garden (Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni,* Alfredo, the Duke of Mantua, Rodolfo, Riccardo); Paris Opera (the Duke of Mantua, Alfredo, the title role of *Idomeneo*, Rodolfo in *Luisa Mille*r, Riccardo); the Metropolitan Opera (the title roles of *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Faust, Romeo et Juliette,* Lensky, the Duke of Mantua, Count Almaviva in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia,* Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola,* Nemorino, Rodolfo, and Foresto in *Attila*); the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires (Fernand in *La Favorite*) and many others. Recent engagements also included his debut as Des Grieux (*Manon*) in Vienna, where he also appeared as Werther; Don Carlos, Rodolfo (*Luisa Miller*), and Giasone in the new production of Mayr's *Medea in Corinto* in Munich; Riccardo in Paris, Covent Garden, and the Met; Rodolfo (*Luisa Miller*) at Paris Opera; and Idomeneo for his debut at the Salzburg Festival. The Grammy Award nominee's broad discography includes several solo albums as well as recordings of *Werther, I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Falstaff* and others. He can be seen on DVD in the Met's *La Bohème* (EMI) and *Eugene Onegin* (Decca), as well as La Scala's *La Traviata* (Decca) and *Don Carlos* from Vienna. Upcoming engagements include Gabriele Adorno (*Simon Boccanegra*) at the Met; Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) in Rome and Barcelona; Riccardo, Don Carlos, and the Duke of Mantua in Vienna; and Hoffmann (*Les Contes D'Hoffmann*) and Faust (*Mefistofele*) at La Scala.

Mezzo-soprano **ALICE COOTE** (*Charlotte*) made her San Francisco Opera debut as Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina* in 2002 and returned in 2008 as Idamante (*Idomeneo*). In demand throughout Europe and the U.S., she recently performed Sesto (*La Clemenza di Tito*) at Lincoln Center's *Mostly Mozart Festival,* English National Opera, and Frankfurt Opera; Nerone (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) at the BBC Proms and the Glyndebourne Festival; Sesto (*Giulio Cesare in Egitto*) with English National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, and in Rome; Hansel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) with the Met; the title roles of *Carmen* and *Ariodante* with English National Opera; and Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*) with Seattle Opera and Los Angeles Opera. The British mezzo studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, the Royal Northern College of Music, and the National Opera Studio. She is a past winner of the Brigitte Fassbaender Award for Lieder Interpretation and the Decca Kathleen Ferrier Prize. Equally at home on the concert stage, Coote has performed a wide range of

repertoire, from oratorios by Bach and Handel to the works of Mahler, Debussy, and Britten with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic, among others. Her discography includes Walton's *Gloria* (Chandos), *The Choice of Hercules* (Hyperion), and *Orfeo* (Virgin Classics); following the critical success of her recital disc of Schumann and Mahler for EMI, she has recently signed a recording contract with that label. Recent and upcoming engagements include Charlotte and Marguerite (*La Damnation de Faust*) with Frankfurt Opera; Maffeo Orsini (*Lucrezia Borgia*) and the Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) with Bavarian State Opera; Octavian with Deutsche Oper Berlin; and Hänsel at Royal Opera, Covent Garden, the Glyndebourne Festival, and the Met.

Making her San Francisco Opera debut this season, American soprano **HEIDI STOBER**'s (*Sophie*) engagements this season include Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Oscar (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Nanetta (*Falstaff*), and Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) with Deutsche Oper Berlin; Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*) with St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; Atalanta (*Xerxes*) with Houston Grand Opera; and Morgana (*Alcina*) in Santiago, Chile. A graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, her credits with that company include Blonde (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Drusilla (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Xenia (*Boris Godunov*), Susanna, Norina (*Don Pasquale*), The Rose (Portman's *The Little Prince*), and La China in the world premiere of Catán's *Salsipuedes*. Stober's other career highlights include Poppea (*Agrippina*) with New York City Opera, Tigrane (*Radamisto*) with the Santa Fe Opera, Aminta (*Il Re Pastore*) with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Leila (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) at Opera Colorado.

American baritone **BRIAN MULLIGAN** (*Albert*) made his San Francisco Opera debut as Marcello (*La Bohème*) in 2008 and returned this past summer as Valentin (*Faust*). Recent notable engagements include Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*) and Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) with Edward Gardner conducting at English National Opera; Prometheus (*Die Vögel*) and Melot (*Tristan und Isolde*) with James Conlon at Los Angeles Opera; Marcello at Houston Grand Opera and at New York City Opera; Zurga (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) at Opera Colorado; Ford (*Falstaff*) under Seiji Ozawa at the Saito Kinen Festival in Japan; Fiorello (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) at the Metropolitan Opera; and the title role of *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Grand Opera, and at the Ravinia Festival. Concert engagements include *A Sea Symphony* with the Cleveland Orchestra, *Paulus* with the Houston Symphony, *Judas Maccabaeus* at Los Angeles Opera, and the world premiere of *Songs for Adam* by James Primosch with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Andrew Davis. A graduate of the Juilliard School, Mulligan is the recent winner of a Richard Tucker Career Grant and the George London Prize, and he was the first place winner of the 2006 International Belvedere Vocal Competition in Vienna.

Currently in his debut season with San Francisco Opera, American bass-baritone **CHRISTIAN VAN HORN** (*Bailiff*) also sings the King of Egypt (*Aida*) and the Bonze (*Madama Butterfly*) this fall. His recent roles with Bavarian State Opera include Colline (*La Bohème*), Oroveso (*Norma*), the Speaker (*Die Zauberflöte*), the Bonze (*Madama Butterfly*), and roles in *Carmen, Idomeneo, Lucrezia Borgia,* and *Elektra*. A graduate of Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Center, his roles with that company include Nourabad (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) and Brander (*La Damnation de Faust*). Van Horn's other career highlights include the title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Stuttgart, Colline at Los Angeles Opera, as well as creating the roles of *Karenin* (*Anna Karenina*) with Florida Grand Opera in, which he reprised for Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and the Emperor (*Tea: A Mirror of the Soul*) at Santa Fe Opera. This

season he makes his debuts at Portland Opera as Timur (*Turandot*) and Boston Lyric Opera as Claudio (*Agrippina*), and he returns to Munich as Colline.

EMMANUEL VILLAUME recently completed his tenth season as the Spoleto Festival USA's music director and was recently appointed music director of the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra in Ljubljana and chief conductor of the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra in Bratislava. He made his San Francisco Opera debut in 1999 leading performances of *Madama Butterfly.* Villaume has appeared on the podium of the Metropolitan Opera (*Madama Butterfly, Samson et Dalila, Carmen*); the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann, La Rondine*); Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Samson et Dalila, Manon, The Merry Widow*); Washington National Opera (*La Rondine, Norma, Le Cid, Les Contes d'Hoffmann, Lucia di Lammermoor*); Los Angeles Opera (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann, La Rondine, La Grande Duchesse du Gérolstein*); the Santa Fe Opera (*Carmen*); the Dallas Opera (*Faust, Le Nozze di Figaro*); Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (*La Rondine, Faust*); Cologne Opera (*La Bohème, Werther*); Paris Opera (*Rigoletto*); Hamburg State Opera (*Der Fliegende Holländer*); Toulouse Opera (*Mignon*); Bonn Opera (*La Fanciulla del West*); Tokyo Bunka Kaikan (*Der Rosenkavalier*); Montreal Opera (*La Vie Parisienne*); Marseilles Opera (*Pelléas et Mélisande, Carmen, Norma*); Nice Opera (*Faust*); Monte Carlo Opera (*La Périchole, Werther*); and the Klangbogen Festival in Vienna (*Don Quichotte, Goya*). Born in Strasbourg in 1964, Villaume began his musical education at the Strasbourg Conservatory and continued his studies in Paris, where he received degrees in literature, philosophy, and musicology.

Making his San Francisco Opera debut, **FRANCISCO NEGRIN** (*Director*) has earned considerable public success and international acclaim for more than two decades. Several of his opera productions have now been revived many times and also filmed for television (*Una Cosa Rara*, *Venus*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, two different *Giulio Cesare*, *Norma* and *Partenope*). His earlier production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* for the Australian Opera, is available DVD and CD and won five separate Australian Green Room Awards, including those for best director and best production. The director's newer *Giulio Cesare* won the Reumert award (available on DVD from Harmonia Mundi), and his *Orlando* at Covent Garden was nominated for two Laurence Olivier Awards, including best production of the year. Born in 1963, Francisco Negrin studied cinematography before moving into opera, initially as an assistant director. His experience has taken him to most of Europe and America's major stages and festivals, as well as to Australia's major opera companies, including *Orlando* with Royal Opera, Covent Garden; *Agrippina* and *Alceste* at the Santa Fe Opera; *La Clemenza di Tito* and *Norma* at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu; *I Puritani* in Amsterdam; and the world premiere of Ruder's *Kafka's Trail* in Copenhagen. Recent and upcoming engagements include *I Puritani* in Geneva and Athens, *Rinaldo* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and *The Cunning Little Vixen* in Copenhagen.

LOUIS DÉSIRÉ (*Production Designer*), making his San Francisco Opera debut in 2010, has created sets and costumes for opera companies throughout Europe and North America, including Paris Opera, Théâtre du Capitole in Toulouse, Opera Ireland, Verona's Teatro Filarmonico, the Teatro Regio in Turin, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Copenhagen's Royal Opera, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, New York City Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, among others. In 2007, Désiré made his debut as a stage director with *Werther* at the Teatro Colón. Recent and upcoming projects include *Un Ballo in Maschera* in Nice (stage direction and production design); *Francesca da Rimini* in Buenos Aires, Athens, and Monte Carlo (stage direction and production design); *Rigoletto* in Orange, France; *Dialogues des Carmélites, I Due Foscari* (stage direction and

production design), and *Elektra* in Buenos Aires; *I Puritani* in Geneva; *L'Arbore di Diana* in Barcelona and Madrid; *Una Cosa Rara* and in Valencia; and *Macbeth* in Monte Carlo.