



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL'S *ORLANDO*
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, JUNE 9–27**

Director Harry Fehr's Bold Production Sets Baroque Opera in World War II London

**Cast of Five Leading Handel Singers Make Role Debuts Under the Baton of
English Conductor Christopher Moulds in His First Company Engagement**



Sasha Cooke; Heidi Stober; Christina Gansch; Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen; Christian Van Horn

Tickets available at sfopera.com and (415) 864-3330

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 6, 2019) — San Francisco Opera presents George Frideric Handel's *Orlando* in a bold production by director **Harry Fehr** that updates the setting to World War II London during the Blitz. English conductor **Christopher Moulds** makes his Company debut leading the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and a cast of five leading Handelian artists, each of whom is singing their roles for the first time. Handel's rarely performed work of love and madness will be presented June 9–27 at the War Memorial Opera House.

Fehr's production sets *Orlando* in a British military hospital during the Second World War where the hero is a Royal Air Force pilot suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. As in the source material, the troubled Orlando navigates feelings of jealousy and rage when confronting his former lover, Angelica, who has since become romantically involved with Medoro, who, in turn, is the object of Dorinda's affection. The magician Zoroastro, here a physician in the hospital, helps Orlando overcome his mental anguish and find peace after wartime. Featuring sets and costumes designed by **Yannis Thavoris**, projections designed by **Andrzej Goulding**, original lighting design by **Anna Watson** and revival lighting by **Tim van 't Hof**, Fehr's staging was first mounted by Scottish Opera and later by the Welsh National Opera.

Orlando requires five virtuosic singers who can portray the drama's richly drawn characters while also singing Handel's thrilling yet demanding vocal music. San Francisco Opera's cast is headed by mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke** as Orlando. Known for her "poise, radiance and elegant directness" (*Opera News*) in a wide repertory, Cooke's recent triumphs include creating the role of Laurene Powell Jobs in Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* at Santa Fe Opera in 2017, a portrayal which she will reprise with San Francisco Opera in June 2020, and Goffredo in Handel's *Rinaldo* at Carnegie Hall with Harry Bicket and The English Concert. She has previously performed Medoro in *Orlando* at London's Barbican Hall and now takes on the opera's title role with San Francisco Opera.

Following acclaimed performances as Zdenka in Strauss' *Arabella* earlier this season, soprano **Heidi Stober** returns to the War Memorial Opera House stage as Angelica. Fast-rising countertenor and second-year Adler Fellow **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen**, who has scored successes in 2019 with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, American Bach Soloists and San Francisco Ballet, makes his mainstage debut as Medoro. In her premiere American engagement, Austrian soprano **Christina Gansch** is Dorinda. Bass-baritone and 2018 Richard Tucker Award-winner **Christian Van Horn** is the story's *deus ex machina*, Zoroastro.

Orlando premiered in London in 1733, the first of three operas Handel created using plots drawn from Ludovico Ariosto's Renaissance epic *Orlando Furioso*. Inspired by the Italian classic's magical events, Handel's trio of works—*Orlando*, *Ariodante* and *Alcina*—are among the composer's finest for the opera stage. English musicologist and Handel scholar Winton Dean once hailed *Orlando* as "musically perhaps the richest of all Handel's operas." The bravura mad scene in Act II requires the artist in the title role to negotiate multiple metric shifts as the mood and intensity build.

In commemoration of the tercentenary of Handel's birth, San Francisco Opera presented *Orlando* in 1985 with renowned mezzo-soprano Marilyn Horne in the title role. The cast also featured Valerie Masterson as Angelica, Ruth Ann Swenson as Dorinda, Jeffrey Gall as Medoro and Kevin Langan as Zoroastro. This San Francisco Opera premiere, one of the earliest stagings of *Orlando* in the United States, was conducted by the late Sir Charles Mackerras in a production by John Copley.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles, the five performances of *Orlando* are scheduled for June 9 (2 p.m.), June 15 (7:30 p.m.), June 18 (7:30 p.m.), June 21 (7:30 p.m.) and June 27 (7:30 p.m.), 2019.

EDUCATION AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Opera on the Couch: *Orlando*

Sunday, June 9, 2019, 20 minutes after the performance

Books Inc., Opera Plaza, 601 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Jeanne Harasemovitch and Milton Schaefer of the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis lead a lively discussion exploring the themes in Handel's *Orlando* from a psychological perspective. The discussion

begins at Books Inc. in Opera Plaza immediately following the June 9 performance. The discussion is free and open to the public.

“Meet Orlando and Medoro,” CD Signing

Saturday, June 15, 2019 immediately after the performance

War Memorial Opera House lobby

Immediately following the June 15 performance of *Orlando*, **Sasha Cooke** and **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** will sign copies of their recent recordings. Cooke’s newest releases include a recital disc with Music@Menlo, Berlioz with the San Francisco Symphony and the Grammy Award-winning recording of *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*. Nussbaum Cohen will sign copies of his solo debut recording of arias by Gluck, Handel and Vivaldi with the American Bach Soloists led by Jeffrey Thomas, which is scheduled for release on July 1 but will be available as a pre-release exclusive to San Francisco Opera audiences.

San Francisco Opera Guild Previews: *Orlando*

June 3–5, 2019

Bruce Lamott, director of the Philharmonia Chorale, the professional chorus of Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, will give a series of Opera Preview lectures June 3–5 about Handel’s *Orlando*. Presented by San Francisco Opera Guild Chapters throughout the Bay Area and the San Jose Opera Guild, each 90-minute lecture provides in-depth insight into the opera’s history, composer, story and music. For schedule and locations, visit sfopera.com/discover-opera/education/community-programs/opera-previews/Orlando-opera-preview/.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Orlando* are priced from \$26 to \$398. A \$2 facility fee is included in all Balcony sections. All other sections include a \$3-per-ticket facility fee. For tickets, visit sfopera.com, call (415) 864-3330 or visit the San Francisco Opera Box Office at 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco. Box Office hours: Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the morning of each performance. Standing room tickets are \$10 each, cash only and limited to two tickets per person. Casting, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change.

Each presentation of *Orlando* at the War Memorial Opera House features a 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk by scholar and Philharmonia Chorale Director Bruce Lamott. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance.

OperaVision screens, suspended from the ceiling of the balcony section at select performances, provide close-up and mid-range ensemble shots in high-definition video; English subtitles appear at the bottom of each screen. OperaVision is made possible by the Koret-Taube Media Suite. Visit sfopera.com for OperaVision dates.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue, 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 further information about public transportation and parking, visit sfopera.com/plan-your-visit/directions-and-parking.

Van Ness Construction: Due to construction for the SFMTA Van Ness Improvement Project, vehicles are unable to pick-up and drop-off at 301 Van Ness Avenue, and bus lines 47, 49 and 90 may experience travel delays. Please use the white loading zone at 450 Franklin Street (behind the Opera House) for rideshare pick-up and drop-off. We suggest planning extra time.

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ORLANDO CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut **American Opera Debut ♪Role Debut †Current Adler Fellow •OperaVision Performance

ORLANDO by George Frideric Handel
Production New to San Francisco Opera

June 9[•] (2 p.m.), **15[•]** (7:30 p.m.), **18** (7:30 p.m.), **21** (7:30 p.m.), **27[•]** (7:30 p.m.), **2019**

War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94012

Scottish Opera production

Libretto adapted anonymously from Carlo Sigismondo Capece's *L'Orlando ovvero La gelosa pazzia*, based in part on the epic *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto

Edition by Clifford Bartlett used by arrangement with Early Music Company Ltd.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

Approximate running time: 3 hours and 20 minutes, including two intermissions

First performance: London; January 27, 1733

First SFO performance: September 14, 1985

Most recent SFO performance: 1985 Season

Cast:

Orlando

Sasha Cooke ♪

Angelica

Heidi Stober ♪

Dorinda

Christina Gansch ** ♪

Medoro

Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen †* ♪

Zoroastro

Christian Van Horn ♪

Creative Team:

Conductor

Christopher Moulds*

Director

Harry Fehr**

Production Designer
Original Lighting Designer
Revival Lighting Designer
Projection Designer

Yannis Thavoris*
Anna Watson*
Tim van 't Hof*
Andrzej Goulding*

San Francisco Opera Orchestra

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OperaVision, high-definition projection screens featured in the upper Balcony level, is made possible by the Koret/Taube Media Suite.

Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards and Winery is the official wine sponsor of San Francisco Opera.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos provided by Piedmont Piano Company.

Orlando is made possible, in part, by: Bernard and Barbro Osher; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, through the Emerging Stars Fund; and Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund.



2018–19 Season Sponsor



High-resolution, downloadable photos of Handel's *Orlando* and artist headshots are available at sfopera.com/press. For cast biographies, visit sfopera.com/orlando.

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