



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

CHORUS AND DANCE MANAGER JIM MEYER AWARDED SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MEDAL



Jim Meyer (center) receives San Francisco Opera Medal, with members of *Aida* cast on December 6, 2016: Raymond Aceto (Ramfis), San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock, Meyer, Leah Crocetto (*Aida*), George Gagnidze (*Amonasro*), Chorus Director Ian Robertson, Brian Jagde (*Radames*). Photo: Drew Altizer; Jim Meyer. Photo: J.B. Higgins; Meyer in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, 1974; In Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2008

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (December 7, 2016) — At the conclusion of last night's final performance of Verdi's *Aida*, San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock presented the Company's Chorus and Dance Manager and member of the Opera Chorus, Jim Meyer, with the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor. Meyer has sung with the San Francisco Opera Chorus for 43 years and served as the Company's Chorus and Dance Manager since 1990. With Tuesday's performance, Meyer's 72nd appearance in *Aida*, he retires from his duties as a regular chorus member, but will continue serving in his administrative role.

Shilvock said: "I have had the pleasure of working very closely with Jim during my time at San Francisco Opera and I know he will always go the extra mile, always have the best interests of the Company deep in his heart and always act with great care and compassion for everyone here. He deeply respects the integrity of the art form and the collective work it takes to bring great art to life. Jim embodies the spirit of San Francisco Opera in a powerful way. It is a privilege to present him with the Opera Medal and formally acknowledge his exemplary contributions."

Meyer moved to San Francisco in 1972 after vocal studies in New York with Lawrence Stayer and Eleanor Steber. He auditioned for the San Francisco Opera Chorus two years later and made his Company debut in a 1974 performance of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* that starred soprano Leontyne Price. It is estimated that Meyer has appeared in nearly 3,000 performances of over 150 operas with San Francisco Opera and Spring Opera. Meyer's repertory of solo roles with the Company include M. Javelinot in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, a Sailor in Britten's *Billy Budd*, a Gondolier in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda*, and named roles in Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Offenbach's *La Perichole*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Verdi's *Falstaff*.

In 1988, San Francisco Opera Chorus Director Ian Robertson invited Meyer to create the position of Chorus Manager for the Company, the first such position in the United States. In 1990, his responsibilities were extended to include dance and he became Chorus and Dance Manager. Robertson said: "Every day of my 30 years as Chorus Director at San Francisco Opera, I've had the privilege of working with Jim Meyer. As a gifted artist and proud chorister, he will be sorely missed and I thank him for his talents over these years. As a dedicated and inspirational partner as Chorus Manager—whose advice, guidance and cool head have helped propel this chorus to world renown—I thank him, too, and I am more than grateful that he will continue in this role."

In his 43 years as a chorister and staff member, Meyer has worked under four of the Company's chorus directors and all of its music directors and general directors, with the exception of Company founder Gaetano Merola. During Meyer's tenure, the Opera Chorus was the subject of the 1992 Academy Award-winning, feature-length documentary *In the Shadow of the Stars*, and has been featured in numerous telecasts and releases on DVD and Blu-ray.

Inaugurated in 1970 by former General Director Kurt Herbert Adler, the San Francisco Opera Medal is awarded at the discretion of the Company for artistic integrity, collegiality and distinguished service to San Francisco Opera. Meyer joins an august company of past recipients which includes sopranos Dorothy Kirsten and Joan Sutherland, mezzo-sopranos Frederica von Stade and Susan Graham, tenor

Plácido Domingo, baritone Thomas Stewart, conductors Donald Runnicles and Sir Charles Mackerras, directors John Copley and Francesca Zambello, Chorus Director Ian Robertson, and, most recently, soprano Renée Fleming.

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For further press information, photographs of the San Francisco Opera Medal presentation and images of Jim Meyer in costume for several operas over his 43-year career in the San Francisco Opera Chorus, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

San Francisco Opera Communications:

Jon Finck (415) 565-6472 / jfinck@sfopera.com

Julia Inouye (415) 565-6430 / jinouye@sfopera.com

Jeffery McMillan (415) 565-6451 / jmcmillan@sfopera.com

Teresa Concepcion (415) 565-6470 / tconcepcion@sfopera.com