



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA UNVEILS NEW PERMANENT PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION
*LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS: THE GLORY OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA,
PAST AND PRESENT***

**Two Galleries in the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera Celebrate the
Company's 94-Year History with 135 Images from the
Edward Paul Braby San Francisco Opera Archives**

**Exhibition Marks the Beginning of Celebrations for the
San Francisco Opera Centennial in 2022**



David Gockley Gallery of black and white images; Philippe Sly as Ormonte in *Partenope*. ©Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera
Hume Family Gallery of color photography ©Scott Wall/San Francisco Opera

SAN FRANCISCO (August 22, 2016)—San Francisco Opera announces the installation of a new, permanent photography exhibition *Looking Through the Lens: The Glory of San Francisco Opera, Past and Present*. Located in the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera, the exhibition features 135 photos drawn from the newly formalized Edward Paul Braby San Francisco Opera Archive collections. Many of the photographs in the exhibition have never before been published, displayed or seen by anyone outside of the Company staff and archive volunteers. The retrospective marks the beginning of the Company's public celebration of San Francisco Opera's Centennial in 2022.

The exhibition was curated and assembled by San Francisco Opera Director of Communications and Public Affairs Jon Finck. “During the early design phase of the Wilsey Center for Opera, I approached then-General Director David Gockley with the idea of installing two photography galleries, one in black and white the other in color, and received his unwavering support of this public archival project,” said Finck. “Photographs were then found, identified, selected and digitally restored over an 18-month period. Working with me were volunteers from the archival division led by Ann Farris and Barbara Rominski, the Communication Department staff and a team of local and national archival experts, including ACT 3 Partners.” He continued, “The images are breathtaking and they capture those special moments that communicate why opera is so extraordinary. I’m proud of the exhibition and grateful that as a Company, we can offer the public this glimpse into the amazing artistry of San Francisco Opera.”

The exhibition spans two gallery spaces beginning in the south corridor with the David Gockley Gallery. Featuring 58 black and white prints, the images present the iconic moments and artists of San Francisco Opera’s earliest years under the direction of founder Gaetano Merola and, later, Kurt Herbert Adler whose administrations (Merola 1923-1953; Adler 1953-1981) led the Company through its first 58 years. In the north corridor, the Hume Family Gallery illustrates the invention and stagework of San Francisco Opera’s recent decades in 77 color images of cherished artists in distinctive roles, unforgettable scenes from the War Memorial Opera House stage, and images that honor the Company’s orchestra, chorus, dancers and supernumeraries.

Highlights of the David Gockley Gallery include striking black and white images of Italian diva Claudia Muzio as Tosca in the 1932 performance that opened the War Memorial Opera House, the Company’s spectacular first production of *Turandot* in 1927 with Hungarian soprano Anne Roselle in the title role and legendary Wagnerian soprano Kirsten Flagstad and tenor Lauritz Melchior on stage in a 1935 performance of *Die Walküre*. Portraits of the American baritone Lawrence Tibbet as Baron Scarpia in *Tosca*, American soprano Leontyne Price in her Company debut as Madame Lidoine in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, in her United States debut, as the Marschallin in *Der*

Rosenkavalier and photographs from many early performances reveal the artistry of photographers Lawrence B. Morton, Robert Lackenbach and others.

A unique gem from the collection—and the centerpiece of the Gockley Gallery—shows the entire company at the Civic Auditorium after the October 6, 1923 performance of *Andrea Chénier* during the Company's inaugural season. In the specially formatted, extra-wide photograph by Geo F. Courser, Merola and his wife Rosa are seated with the cast—including stars soprano Bianca Saroya, tenor Beniamino Gigli and baritone Alfredo Gandolfi, in their costumes—and the entire San Francisco Symphony who performed with the Company at the time, along with the nascent company's staff, crew and members of the Board of Directors.

The images in the Hume Family Gallery cover more than three decades of San Francisco Opera history and bring the narrative up to the present in vibrant color. Highlights include images of Plácido Domingo in *Cyrano de Bergerac*, Renée Fleming in *Rusalka*, Nina Stemme in *Siegfried* and Nadja Michael in *Salome* and memorable moments from the Company premieres of Glass's *Satyagraha* and Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt*; United States premiere productions of Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* and Reimann's *Lear*; and world premieres including Adams's *Doctor Atomic* and Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter*, among others. Each dramatic moment is captured in vivid detail by contemporary photographers Cory Weaver, Robert Cahen, Ken Friedman, Terence McCarthy, Larry Merkle, Ron Scherl, Marty Sohl and others.

The Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera occupies 38,000 square feet on the fourth floor of the 1932 Beaux Arts-designed Veterans Building adjacent to the War Memorial Opera House. The Wilsey Center, which opened in February 2016, provides space for the Company's costume studio, administrative offices, the Edward Paul Braby San Francisco Opera Archives, exhibition galleries, and two unique venues: the John M. Bryan Education Studio and the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater.

Looking Through the Lens is free and open to the public Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The research collections in the Edward Paul Braby San Francisco Opera Archives are administered

by the Company's Director of Archives Barbara Rominski, Archives Associate Ann Farris, and a team of 19 archives volunteers. For more information, contact the Archives at archive@sfopera.com. To learn more about San Francisco Opera's history, visit the online performance archive database at archive.sfopera.com.

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The Hume Family Gallery is made possible through the generosity of the Hume Family under the direction of Leslie & George Hume.

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To obtain further press information, including a selection of images from the permanent exhibition *Looking Through the Lens*, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

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