IN CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD PREMIERE OF JOHN ADAMS’ GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PARTNERS WITH CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS TO PRESENT AN ARRAY OF EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS EXPLORING THE OPERA AND ITS HISTORICAL SETTING IN THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE AN ALL-DAY SYMPOSIUM
OCTOBER 28, TAUBE ATRIUM THEATER

WORLD PREMIERE OF GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST
NOVEMBER 21–DECEMBER 10, WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 13, 2017) — San Francisco Opera announces educational events in connection with John Adams’ Girls of the Golden West, which receives its world premiere at the War Memorial Opera House on November 21. With a libretto drawn from historical sources by director Peter Sellars, this new work from the composer of Nixon in China and Doctor Atomic explores the true and often brutal stories of pioneers on California’s Gold Rush frontier.

In support of the premiere, “the most eagerly anticipated new opera of the season” (New York Times), San Francisco Opera and other leading cultural institutions will present an array of public events and
exhibitions from September through December, including Works & Process previews at the Guggenheim Museum in New York City and a multidisciplinary symposium at San Francisco’s Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera. *Girls of the Golden West* ancillary activities range from discussions with the opera’s creators and cast to examinations of the work’s rich historical setting and sources, especially the California history classic *The Shirley Letters*, a collection of 23 letters by Louise Clappe penned under the name “Dame Shirley” describing the rugged conditions and clash of cultures in the gold mining camps from 1851 to 1852.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock said: “I am so excited by the fact that the world premiere of John Adams’ *Girls of the Golden West* is happening right here in San Francisco, just 200 miles from the mining camps of the High Sierra. We want this work to be a lens through which the community can engage in our region’s rich and tumultuous history. We are delighted to be collaborating with a number of Gold Rush authorities, historical organizations and the opera’s creators in presenting an extensive schedule of public engagement opportunities surrounding *Girls of the Golden West*, opportunities that we hope will allow people to delve deep into this extraordinary new work.”

**WORKS & PROCESS: GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST, SEPTEMBER 21 and 22**

As part of its Works & Process series, the New York Guggenheim will host previews of *Girls of the Golden West* on September 21 and 22 in the museum’s Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Peter B. Lewis Theater. In an evening of conversation and music, composer John Adams and librettist/director Peter Sellars will discuss their newest collaboration with San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock and set designer David Gropman. Musical selections from the new opera will be performed by mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges and soprano Hye Jung Lee, accompanied by pianist John Churchwell. Bridges and Lee are both members of the world premiere cast and will perform the roles of Josefa Segovia and Ah Sing, respectively.

**GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST AND GOLD RUSH SYMPOSIUM, OCTOBER 28**

The *Girls of the Golden West* and Gold Rush Symposium on October 28 in the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater at the Wilsey Center for Opera will offer opportunities for enrichment and deeper engagement with the opera and its historical setting during the California Gold Rush. This all-day forum of inquiry and discovery will include scholarly lectures, roundtable discussions and musical performances. Check-in begins at 9 a.m. and is followed by a morning session conversation with composer John Adams, librettist/director Peter Sellars and San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Kip Cranna about *Girls of the Golden West*.

Symposium sessions will also feature historians and experts discussing a range of topics, from the role of women during the Gold Rush to cultural conflicts in the mining communities. San Francisco Opera
Dramaturg Kip Cranna moderates discussions with Gary Kamiya (author and San Francisco historian), Mark McLaughlin (author and geographer), Christopher O’Sullivan (Adjunct Professor, San Francisco State), Marlene Smith-Baranzini (“Dame Shirley” expert and annotator of The Shirley Letters) and Mary Volmer (writer and St. Mary’s College faculty). The symposium concludes with a musical history of the era, featuring performances of original miner and pioneer songs performed by Theatre Comique led by pianist Corey Jamason.

OTHER ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES

A myriad of Girls of the Golden West supplementary activities will be offered in collaboration with cultural and educational institutions around the Bay Area. On October 30, the Commonwealth Club will feature Peter Sellars and Matthew Shilvock in conversation about the new opera with Anne Smith, co-chair of the Commonwealth Club’s Arts Forum. This public event and podcast will be held at the San Francisco institution’s new permanent home at 110 The Embarcadero along the downtown waterfront.

“I hope this finds you well”: Letters from the California Gold Rush, an exhibition of historic first-hand accounts of the Gold Rush written on illustrated letter sheets, will be on view at The Society of California Pioneers in The Presidio from September 30 through December 17. Ongoing public exhibitions at the headquarters of Levi Strauss & Co. (1155 Battery Street; visit The Vault) and Wells Fargo (420 Montgomery Street) in downtown San Francisco provide further opportunities to learn about the history of California.

In a special collaboration with the San Francisco Public Library, The Shirley Letters—one of the key historical sources Adams and Sellars drew upon for the opera—will be the Library’s “On the Same Page” book club selection for November/December. Additionally, on November 28 the Main Library will host a free, public discussion about Dame Shirley with historical scholars and members of the Girls of the Golden West cast moderated by Kip Cranna.

Gold Rush-era artifacts from the collections of the California Historical Society, Levi Strauss & Co., Museum of Performance + Design and The Society of California Pioneers will be on view within the War Memorial Opera House foyer from November 4 through December 10. Items will include letter-sheets, textiles and garments, tools and other historical ephemera preserved by the Bay Area’s foremost historical institutions.

San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild will also present an Insight Panel discussion with the opera’s creators and members of the cast on November 9 at the Herbst Theatre and Opera Preview lectures offered by Guild Chapters around the Bay Area November 13–15. Company Dramaturg Kip Cranna and librettist/director Peter Sellars will present pre-performance talks before
each presentation of *Girls of the Golden West* at the War Memorial Opera House (the December 7 Pre-Opera Talk will be presented by only Kip Cranna). After the final performance on December 10, a post-performance “On the Couch” discussion will be held at Books, Inc. in Opera Plaza to examine the opera from a psychoanalytic perspective.

San Francisco Opera has assembled an exceptional and diverse cast for the world premiere of *Girls of the Golden West*, including *Julia Bullock* (Dame Shirley), *Davóne Tines* (Ned Peters), *J’Nai Bridges* (Josefa Segovia), *Ryan McKinny* (Clarence), *Paul Appleby* (Joe Cannon), *Hye Jung Lee* (Ah Sing), *Elliot Madore* (Ramón), *Lorena Feijóo* (Lola Montez). *Grant Gershon* will conduct the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus. *Peter Sellars* directs the production, which features set designed by *David Gropman*, costumes by *Rita Ryack*, lighting by *James F. Ingalls*, sound design by *Mark Grey* and choreography by *John Heginbotham*. The opera is a co-production led by San Francisco Opera in partnership with The Dallas Opera and Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam.

Sung in English with English supertitles, *Girls of the Golden West* is scheduled for eight performances at the War Memorial Opera House: November 21 (7:30 p.m.), November 24 (7:30 p.m.), November 26 (2 p.m.), November 29 (7:30 p.m.); December 2 (7:30 p.m.), December 5 (7:30 p.m.), December 7 (7:30 p.m.) and December 10 (2 p.m.), 2017.

**GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST ANCILLIARY EVENTS CALENDAR**

**WORKS & PROCESS**

San Francisco Opera: *Girls of the Golden West* by John Adams
Thursday, September 21 and Friday, September 22 at 7:30 p.m.
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City

Composer John Adams and librettist/director Peter Sellars discuss their newest collaboration with San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock and set designer David Gropman as part of the Guggenheim’s Works & Process series. Highlights from *Girls of the Golden West* will be performed by mezzo-soprano J’Nai Bridges and soprano Hye Jung Lee, accompanied by pianist John Churchwell. Bridges and Lee are both members of the world premiere cast and will perform the roles of Josefa Segovia and Ah Sing, respectively. Tickets are $20–40. For tickets and more information, visit Guggenheim.org.
THE SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA PIONEERS
“I hope this finds you well”: Letters from the California Gold Rush
September 30 to December 17, 2017
101 Montgomery Street in The Presidio, San Francisco

Far from home and often homesick, forty-niners wrote letters to loved ones describing both the challenges and the rewards of their new life in California. This exhibition of rare, first-person narratives written on illustrated letter sheets provides a nuanced understanding of life during the Gold Rush by revealing the hopes, dreams and fears of the pioneers. Admission is free. For more information, visit californiapioneers.org.

GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST AND GOLD RUSH SYMPOSIUM
Saturday, October 28, 2017, 9:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Taube Atrium Theater in the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera
Veterans Building (4th Floor), 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

San Francisco Opera invites you to delve deep into the world of John Adams’ Girls of the Golden West with a day-long, multidisciplinary symposium featuring panel discussions, lectures and music of the Gold Rush. Tickets are $45. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/goldenwest or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

Symposium Schedule
Doors Open & Check-In (9–9:30 a.m.)

Session I (9:30–10:45 a.m.): Girls of the Golden West, The Opera
San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Kip Cranna moderates a discussion with composer John Adams and librettist/director Peter Sellars about the creation of their newest operatic collaboration.

Break (10:45–11:00 a.m.)

Session II (11–12:15 p.m.): Dame Shirley and Life during the California Gold Rush
Lectures and a panel discussion exploring the California Gold Rush and one of its most eloquent and unflinching chroniclers, Louise Clappe, whose letters from the mines under the pen name “Dame Shirley” were published as The Shirley Letters, one of the main sources for the new opera.
Participants: Dame Shirley expert Marlene Smith-Baranzini and local historian Gary Kamiya. Moderated by Kip Cranna.

Lunch Break (12:15–1:30 p.m.) – Attendees are encouraged to explore the surrounding neighborhood of Hayes Valley for lunch or bring their own.
Session III (1:30–3 p.m.): Women, Culture and Politics in the Gold Fields
The discovery of gold in 1848 and subsequent migration of people from around the world to California fostered stories of heroism and collaboration, but the competition and harsh conditions also led to tensions along racial lines. Scholars will explore this critical period in the state’s history from different perspectives, including the Gold Rush experiences of women and immigrant miners.
Participants: geographer and historian Mark McLaughlin, historian Christopher O’Sullivan and writer Mary Volmer. Moderated by Kip Cranna.

Break (3–3:15 p.m.)

Session IV (3:15–4 p.m.): A Musical History of the Gold Rush
Many of the gold miners related their moving and sometimes heart-breakings stories in song. Theatre Comique, co-directed by Corey Jamason and Eric Davis, will provide a musical history of the period and performances by tenor James Hogan and baritone Radames Gil with Jamason at the piano.

Closing Remarks (4 p.m.)

COMMONWEALTH CLUB
Girls of the Golden West: In Conversation with Peter Sellars and Matthew Shilvock
Monday, October 30 at 12 p.m.
110 The Embarcadero, San Francisco

The prestigious Commonwealth Club will host a public conversation and podcast about Girls of the Golden West at their new location on the San Francisco waterfront. The Commonwealth Club’s Art Forum co-chair, Anne Smith, will interview the opera’s librettist/director Peter Sellars and San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock about the creation of this exciting new work set in the Sierra Nevada during the Gold Rush. For more information, visit commonwealthclub.org or call (415) 597-6705.

GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST INSIGHT PANEL
November 9, 2017 at 6:30 p.m.
Herbst Theatre, Veterans Building, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild present a rare glimpse into the creative process that goes into bringing this exciting new work to life on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House. Join the opera’s creators and members of the cast and creative team for a lively panel discussion
followed by a Q&A session. The Insight Panel is free for San Francisco Opera members and students with a valid student ID; $5 for the general public. Pre-registration and tickets are available via Eventbrite; tickets also available at the door. For more information, visit sfopera.com/insights.

WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE
November 4—December 10, 2017
301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

Gold Rush-era artifacts from the collections of the California Historical Society, Levi Strauss & Co., Museum of Performance + Design and The Society of California Pioneers will be on view within the Opera House lobby from November 4 through December 10. Items will include letter-sheets, textiles and garments, tools and other historical ephemera preserved by California’s leading historical institutions. San Francisco Opera ticket-holders may view the exhibits during matinee and evening performances. For more information, visit sfopera.com/goldenwest.

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Every other month, San Francisco Public Library chooses a literary work with the intention of getting San Franciscans citywide to read and discuss the same book. Throughout November and December, the book club selection will be Louise Clappe’s The Shirley Letters (Heydey Edition, 2001). Join others in the community in exploring a literary gem and essential document of California history.

Tuesday, November 28 at 6 p.m. A Conversation about Dame Shirley and Her Letters
Koret Auditorium, Main Library, 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco

On Tuesday, November 28 the Public Library will host a discussion about the book and Girls of the Golden West with Dame Shirley scholars and members of the cast of the opera moderated by San Francisco Opera dramaturg Kip Cranna. The event is free. Additional exhibits, Hands on History, Films and Read Alike book lists will be also available at the Library. For more information, visit sfpl.org.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS
November 13–15, 2017
Company Dramaturg Kip Cranna will give a series of Opera Preview lectures on *Girls of the Golden West*. Presented by Guild Chapters throughout the Bay Area and in partnership with San Jose Opera Guild, each 90-minute presentation provides in-depth insight into the opera’s historical sources, creators, story and music. Information can be found at sfopera.com/previews.

- Marin Chapter – November 13, 7:30 p.m. at The Redwoods, 40 Camino Alto, Mill Valley (Admission: $10)
- San Francisco Chapter – November 14, 12 p.m. at Koret Auditorium, San Francisco Public Library (Admission: Free)
- Peninsula Chapter – November 14, 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, 1140 Cowper Street, Palo Alto (Admission: $10)
- San Jose Opera Guild – November 15, 10 a.m. at Addison-Penzak JCC Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road, Suite 201, Los Gatos (Admission: Free to San Jose Opera Guild and JCC members. $10 for general public)
- East Bay Chapter – November 15, 8 p.m. at Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette (Admission: $10)

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**OPERA ON THE COUCH: GIRLS OF THE GOLDEN WEST**

**December 10, 2017 at 5:30 p.m.**

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

Immediately after the December 10 matinee performance of *Girls of the Golden West*, an “Opera on the Couch” discussion led by Milton Schaefer, PhD and Reyna Cowan, PsyD, LCSW from The San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis, will offer a psychological perspective of the opera. Admission is free.

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Tickets for *Girls of the Golden West* are priced from $26 to $398 and may be purchased at sfopera.com, the San Francisco Opera Box Office at 301 Van Ness Avenue and by phone at (415) 864-3330. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the day of each performance; standing room tickets are $10 each, cash only, and limited to two tickets per person.

Each presentation at the War Memorial Opera House features an informative 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain and free of charge to patrons with tickets for the corresponding performance, each *Girls of the Golden West* Pre-Opera Talk will be presented by San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Kip Cranna.
San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by The Dolby Family, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Ann and Gordon Getty, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey and Barbara A. Wolfe.

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Girls of the Golden West is made possible, in part, by: John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn; Jane Bernstein & Bob Ellis; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, through the Emerging Stars Fund; and an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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For more information about Girls of the Golden West, please visit sfopera.com/goldenwest. For information about ancillary events, visit sfopera.com/ggwevents. To obtain further press information and download photos, visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

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