



FINAL PHASE OF SAN FRANCISCO BALLET AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S
PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE SEAT UPGRADE
PROJECT RESCHEDULED FOR FALL/WINTER 2020

NEW SEATS AND IMPROVED SIGHTLINES WILL ENHANCE
PATRON EXPERIENCE IN THE HISTORIC THEATER AND
IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OPTIONS FOR PATRONS



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 15, 2020) – San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera, in collaboration with the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, are pleased to announce that the previously planned seat replacement project originally scheduled for summer 2021 will now take place over a 14-week period between September 2020 to January 2021 during the continuing COVID-19 venue closure this year. This is the final phase of seat replacements within the War Memorial Opera House, the historic Beaux-Arts theater that serves as home to both companies as well as a venue for numerous

Bay Area and visiting organizations. For this final phase of the project, all seats in the Orchestra, Grand Tier, and Dress Circle sections of the War Memorial Opera House will be replaced, improving comfort and sightlines in the auditorium. The creation of new accessible seating areas is also included in this final phase, furthering the organizations' commitment to maximizing accessibility for all patrons.

While preserving the historic integrity, beauty, and acoustics of this cultural landmark, improvements in the theater will include new custom seats, replacing the seats original to the 1932 building (maintenance on these seats over the years has included reupholstering and some renovation to the Orchestra section chairs). The new seats, designed to reflect the aesthetics of the Opera House, will have greater leg room, be positioned at a more comfortable height, and will reflect the latest in ergonomic support.

Sightlines to the stage from the Orchestra section will be improved by the new seat design and a subtle staggering of seats along the center aisle of the theater. Improved viewing options for patrons with disabilities and patrons using wheelchairs will be offered with the creation of new accessible seating areas in the left and right Orchestra sections of the house (in addition to existing center rear Orchestra accessible seating). Additional upgrades include new pathway lighting and flooring upgrades.

This is the third and final phase of the current War Memorial Opera House seat upgrade initiative, which began in summer 2013 with the replacement of chairs in the Box level of the theater. Balcony and Balcony Circle seats were replaced in summer 2015. The seat replacement project is funded by proceeds accumulated from a facility fee ranging from \$1 to \$3 per ticket based on seating section for San Francisco Ballet (effective November 2013) and San Francisco Opera (effective January 2014). This final phase of the project will cost approximately \$3.53 million. The City of San Francisco is funding architectural and design services and accessibility upgrades related to the project. The continued enhancement of the patron experience in the Opera House is a priority for both the Ballet and the Opera, and future facility fee funds will be used for ongoing patron-focused facility upgrades.

The project is being managed by the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center in partnership with San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera, with planning and design facilitation by theater consultants The Shalleck Collaborative and San Francisco Public Works. The Shalleck Collaborative's other projects in the area include The Strand Theater for A.C.T., San Francisco Conservatory of Music's Bowes Center, and improvements to Berkeley Rep's Peet's Theatre. Montreal-based Ducharme Seating, a company with expertise in historical theaters, is manufacturing the seats and working with general contractors Bevilacqua & Sons. Ducharme's work can be seen in venues such as the David H. Koch Theater in New York's Lincoln Center, Academy of Music and Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia, Cincinnati Music Hall, and The Royal Alexandra in Toronto. Ducharme Seating is committed to manufacturing products with minimal environmental impact and is both FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. Threshold Acoustics is engaged to consult on the acoustic impact of the seating upgrade and installation.

For a complete FAQ on the seat upgrade project, visit [LINK](#).

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO BALLETT

San Francisco Ballet, long recognized for pushing boundaries in dance, has enjoyed a long and rich tradition of artistic "firsts" since its founding in 1933, including performing the first American productions of *Swan Lake* and *Nutcracker*, as well as the first 20th-century American *Coppélia*. SF Ballet is one of the three largest ballet companies in the United States and currently presents

more than 100 performances annually, both locally and internationally. The mission of SF Ballet is to share its joy of dance with the widest possible audience—in its community and worldwide—and to provide the highest caliber of dance training in its School. Under the direction of Helgi Tomasson, the Company has achieved an international reputation as one of the preeminent ballet companies in the world.

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

San Francisco Opera has been recognized as one of the world's leading opera companies since its founding in 1923. The Company remains a vital artistic institution through its mainstage programming, renowned artist training programs and repertory-expanding commissions, including John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and *Girls of the Golden West*, Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and Bright Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Under the leadership of General Director Matthew Shilvock, San Francisco Opera continues to pioneer new approaches to producing large-scale opera in the 21st century and create impactful, reciprocal connections with the community. In 2021, Music Director Designate Eun Sun Kim becomes San Francisco Opera's fourth music director and will carry the Company through its 2022–23 centennial and into the future.

Photo caption: Courtesy of SF Opera and SF Ballet // Conceptual rendering of new seating, for illustrative purposes only, and may not be exactly as shown.

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