



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

About San Francisco Opera

Since its founding in 1923, San Francisco Opera has been recognized as one of the world's leading opera companies. Its mission is to bring together growing audiences to experience opera's transformative power. Under the leadership of General Director Matthew Shilvock, the Company's seventh general director, 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.

San Francisco Opera's first two general directors, Gaetano Merola and Kurt Herbert Adler, regularly conducted performances during the Company's first six decades. In 1985, Sir John Pritchard was appointed San Francisco Opera's first music director (1985–1989), and he was followed by Donald Runnicles (1992–2009) and Nicola Luisotti (2009–2018). Music Director Designate Eun Sun Kim will become the Company's fourth music director with the launch of the 2021–22 Season, carrying San Francisco Opera through its centennial season (2022–23) and into the future.

San Francisco Opera inaugurated its permanent home, the War Memorial Opera House, in 1932 with Puccini's *Tosca* starring legendary soprano Claudia Muzio. The Company further established its role as a driving force in the opera world with the creation of the Merola Opera Program and San Francisco Opera Center (which oversees an annual class of resident artists, the Adler Fellows), along with innovative initiatives such as *Opera at the Ballpark*, a series of live opera simulcasts to the videoboard at the home of the San Francisco Giants, and the annual *Opera in the Park* concert.

San Francisco Opera has a distinguished history of fostering new operas through commissions, co-commissions and presenting the world premieres of many contemporary classics, including Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Bright Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber* and John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and *Girls of the Golden West*. Additionally, the Company has given the first American performances of many significant repertory works like Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*.

Many of the art form's greatest international artists made their American opera debuts with San Francisco Opera, including singers Piotr Beczala, Mario Del Monaco, Tito Gobbi, Birgit Nilsson, Leonie Rysanek and Renata Tebaldi; conductors Valery Gergiev, Charles Mackerras and Georg Solti; and

directors Jean-Pierre Ponnelle and Harry Kupfer. Many artists have made important role debuts on the War Memorial Opera House stage, from Leontyne Price portraying Aida for the first time in 1957 to Nina Stemme singing Brünnhilde in her first complete *Ring* cycle in 2011.

In 2019, Mr. Shilvock announced the creation of the Department of Diversity, Equity and Community to support the institution's commitment to education, diversity, equity and inclusion. Since 1939, the San Francisco Opera Guild continues to live up to its motto—"Giving Voice to Potential"—through its award-winning education programs to more than 64,000 students each year.