



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD INAUGURATES 80TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
WITH MARCHESA FASHION SHOW AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF
*OPERA BALL 2019: THE CAPULETS' MASKED BALL***



Opera Guild President Mary Poland (center) with *Opera Ball* co-chairs Jane Mudge and Elizabeth Birka-White; Marchesa designer Georgina Chapman; Fashion Show at Neiman Marcus Union Square. ©Drew Altizer Photography

***Opera Ball* Co-Chairs Elizabeth Birka-White and Jane Mudge with
Opera Guild President Mary Poland Unveil Details for Masquerade Gala,
Inspired by Charles Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*, Celebrating
San Francisco Opera's New Season Opening September 6, 2019**



Opera Ball. ©Drew Altizer Photography; Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. ©Alain Hanel/Opéra de Monte-Carlo

For tickets sfopera.com/operaball2019 and (415) 565-3204

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 30, 2019) — San Francisco Opera Guild launched its 80th season celebrations on Thursday, May 16, with *Marchesa*, a fashion show featuring the Marchesa Fall 2019 collection, at Neiman Marcus Union Square in San Francisco. A prominent event of the new anniversary season will be *Opera Ball*, one of the premier philanthropic events on the West Coast. Presented in partnership

with San Francisco Opera, *Opera Ball 2019: The Capulets' Masked Ball* will celebrate the opening of San Francisco Opera's 97th Season on September 6 with a festive evening featuring dinner, a masquerade ball and the opening night performance of Charles Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. The co-chairs for *Opera Ball 2019* are **Elizabeth Birka-White** and **Jane Mudge**. Honorary chairs for the event are **John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn** and **Diane B. Wilsey**.

The May 16 Marchesa fashion show, presented by the Opera Guild and Neiman Marcus Union Square, took place at the landmark store in the heart of San Francisco's downtown district and featured a special appearance by Marchesa designer **Georgina Chapman**. Co-chairs for the event were **Francesca Amann**, **Maya Meux** and **Toni Wolfson**. San Francisco Opera Guild President **Mary Poland** and her husband, **Bill Poland**, sponsored the sold-out fashion show, which was attended by 210 guests.

Mary Poland said: "In 1939, San Francisco Opera Guild was formed by 12 women who, by raising the necessary funds to underwrite a student matinee performance of *Madama Butterfly*, set into motion an organization committed to bringing the experience of opera to everyone. Today, the Guild is a diverse group of professionals driven by that same mission. Our education programs influence the lives of 50,000 Northern California children every year, and our events such as *Marchesa*, *Opera Ball* and *An Evening on the Stage*, which punctuate the musical and philanthropic seasons in San Francisco, support San Francisco Opera. This anniversary season we relish the opportunity to look back on past accomplishments, but we also view the Guild's eight decades of doing this important work as a mandate to continue and expand our impact within the community."

The marquee event of the Opera Guild's 80th season celebrations is *Opera Ball 2019: The Capulets' Masked Ball*. On September 6, beginning at 5 p.m. in the foyer of the Beaux Arts-designed War Memorial Opera House, masked guests will gather for a festive cocktail reception. The masqueraders will then parade to a tented pavilion at 6 p.m. for an elegant dinner by **McCalls Catering & Events**. Inspired by the Italian gardens of Verona where William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Gounod's French opera both take place, event designer **J. Riccardo Benavides** will create an outdoor setting inside the pavilion. Following dinner, the 750 *Opera Ball* patrons will return to the Opera House for the 8 p.m. curtain of *Romeo and Juliet*, Gounod's romantic masterpiece featuring tenor Bryan Hymel and soprano Nadine Sierra as the young lovers. *The Capulets' Masked Ball* will continue after the opera in the pavilion with cocktails, sweet and savory bites and dancing. Additional *Opera Ball 2019* details will be announced later.

Opera Ball 2019 co-chairs Elizabeth Birka-White and Jane Mudge said: "*Opera Ball* is a long-standing celebration of each new season of thrilling Opera performances. We are honored to co-chair the Ball this year, the 80th Anniversary of San Francisco Opera Guild. In working on the creative concept for the Ball, it is our wish that guests experience the celebratory spirit of our anniversary. Bring your masks and enjoy an unforgettable evening of elegance, excitement and mystery."

Opera Ball brings together local and national corporate, political, civic and charitable leaders all committed to the cause of music education and the transformative experiences San Francisco Opera presents on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House. Proceeds benefit the community initiatives and education programs of the Opera Guild which reach 50,000 students in 200 classrooms around Northern California each year.

San Francisco Opera's 2019–20 Season opens September 6 with Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet*. Distinguished by rapturous duets and brilliant, show-stopping arias, the romantic French work returns to the repertory of San Francisco Opera after a 31-year hiatus in the acclaimed staging by Opéra de Monte-Carlo Director Jean-Louis Grinda. French-Canadian conductor Yves Abel leads the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and a cast headed by Bryan Hymel and Nadine Sierra, with baritone Lucas Meachem as Mercutio and tenor Daniel Montenegro as Tybalt. *Romeo and Juliet* will be presented in seven performances between September 6 and October 1.

For more information about San Francisco Opera Guild's 80th season, visit sfoopera.com/opera-guild.

OPERA BALL 2019 / TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Opera Ball 2019: The Capulets' Ball* are priced at \$1,500; \$2,500; \$5,000 and \$10,000. For more information or to reserve tickets, visit sfoopera.com/operaball2019 or call (415) 565-3204. Tickets for the performance of Gounod's *Romeo and Juliet* are sold separately and priced from \$26–\$398. For tickets, visit sfoopera.com, the San Francisco Opera Box Office [301 Van Ness Avenue] or call (415) 864-3330. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the day of each performance; tickets are \$10 each, cash only, and are restricted to two per person. Casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change.

OPERA BALL 2019 SPONSORS

Diane B. Wilsey

Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor

TriplePoint Capital

Cocktail Reception Sponsor

Neiman Marcus Union Square

Dinner Sponsor

United Airlines

Official Airline

J. Lohr Vineyards & Wines

Wine Sponsor

Roederer Estate
Sparkling Wine Sponsor

Diane B. Wilsey
Benefactor Party Sponsor

Haute Living San Francisco
Nob Hill Gazette
Town & Country
Media Sponsors

Corporate Table Sponsors
Accenture, San Francisco Giants and Wells Fargo

###

About the *Opera Ball 2019* Co-Chairs

Elizabeth Birka-White graduated from the University of California, Berkeley with a B.A. in English Literature and minor in French. She worked as a journalist, beginning in 1979 at the *Albany Times* before moving on to the *Berkeley Independent*, a paper that had thrived in Berkeley for more than 100 years. She also worked as a *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter in the Contra Costa Bureau. She has been a trustee of the University of California Press Foundation since 2007 where she is currently in her second year of a three-year term as President of the Foundation Board. Since 2006, she has been a member of the Fine Arts Museum Auxiliary and co-chaired their annual signature event, Bouquets to Art, in 2011. Additionally, she is a member of the Modern Art Council of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art since 2008, and was President of the National Charity League, Vista Oak Chapter from 2002–2004. She lives with her husband, David, in Contra Costa County and has three children.

Jane S. Mudge is a seasoned community fundraiser. She is co-owner of J.V. Staging, LLC, a property preparation and staging company, and opening in June 2019 co-owner of Acorn Home Furnishings & Design on San Francisco's Union Street. Educated both locally and abroad, she received her B.A. from Santa Clara University. Her professionalism and integrity are rooted in her marketing and advertising experience and work with major clients including Visa USA, Dockers, Safeway, Inc. and California State commodity boards. She has served as San Francisco Opera Guild's President (2016–2018) and Vice President of Fundraising (2012–2014). Additionally, she is a member of the Women's Board of California Pacific Medical Center. She has co-chaired numerous philanthropic events including *Opera Ball 2015*, San Francisco Opera Guild's 2012 Spring Gala, San Francisco Ballet's 2009 Opening Night Gala, French American Soirée des Arts and Celebrate Spring for Schools of the Sacred Heart. She resides in San Francisco with her two teenage daughters.

Mary Poland / San Francisco Opera Guild President

Mary Poland is a philanthropic leader who believes in equitable access to arts, higher education and public lands. Her charitable giving is both generous and strategic, and she is a role model for

volunteerism. Elected President of San Francisco Opera Guild in 2018, Poland first joined the Opera Guild Board in 1983 and has held many leadership positions, including Vice President of Development, Treasurer, co-chair of the Wine and Travel Auction, co-chair of the Gown Show, co-chair of *Opera Ball* (twice), Vice President of Administration, Director at Large, co-chair of the Guild's *An Evening on the Stage* and many years as a member of the Development Council, Nominating Committee and Finance Committee.

Poland has over 40 years of board leadership experience at prestigious institutions. She is currently on the Board of Trustees for the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. She is also on the board of NatureBridge, the Buck (Institute) Advisory Council and the NorCal Advisory Council for Georgetown University. Highlights of her previous board activity include the Board of Regents and Executive Council at Georgetown University, San Francisco Education Fund Advisory Council, Board of Trustees at the Marin Art and Garden Center and Board Member of Pivot Learning Partners. She is originally from Mercer Island, Washington and graduated from the University of Washington with an accounting degree. In 1976, the San Francisco Bay Area became her home when she moved there and had a successful career in marketing and finance. She and her husband, Bill Poland, live in Marin County and have a son, Stratton.

J. Riccardo Benavides / Opera Ball 2019 Event Designer

Renowned for his stylish taste, **J. Riccardo Benavides** melds sophistication with enchantment. His beautiful designs bring a personal touch and an air of whimsy to every event. From an opulent gala retrospective for designer Oscar de la Renta to an 1,800-person extravaganza for Netflix, Benavides' extraordinary and dignified work has made its mark. Constantly inspired by the latest trends and fashions, his original style is full of imagination, holding guests in a constant state of awe and intrigue. Benavides' clients include San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Saks Fifth Avenue, British Motor Cars, The St. Regis Hotels, Churchill Museum in London, as well as intimate private client parties and events worldwide. For more information, visit ideas-events.com.

###

For further press information or to download photos of *Marchesa* and *Opera Ball*, visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

San Francisco Opera Communications

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

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

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