



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S 2019 SUMMER SEASON  
JUNE 5–29, WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE**

**BIZET'S *CARMEN* IN STAGING BY FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO STARRING J'NAI BRIDGES;  
HANDEL'S *ORLANDO* UPDATED TO WWII ERA BY DIRECTOR HARRY FEHR WITH  
SASHA COOKE IN TITLE ROLE; DVOŘÁK'S *RUSALKA* IN DAVID MCVICAR PRODUCTION  
CONDUCTED BY EUN SUN KIM AND STARRING RACHEL WILLIS-SØRENSEN**

**CASTING UPDATES:**

**Countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen Makes Company Debut as Medoro in *Orlando*,  
Replacing David Daniels**

**Icelandic Bass Kristinn Sigmundsson Performs *Vodník* in *Rusalka*,  
Substituting for Ferruccio Furlanetto**

**Michelle Merrill Takes to the Podium for *Carmen* on June 20;  
James Gaffigan Conducts All Other *Carmen* Performances**



Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen; Kristinn Sigmundsson; Michelle Merrill; Eun Sun Kim (Photo: Nikolaj Lund)

**Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com)**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (February 7, 2019) — Beginning June 5 and continuing through the 29th, San Francisco Opera presents a trio of extraordinary lyric works—Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, George Frideric Handel's *Orlando* and Antonín Dvořák's *Rusalka*—featuring powerful leading women in the title roles. Spanning three centuries and sung in French, Italian and Czech, the 2019 Summer Season repertory will occasion the Company debuts of four conductors, including two women, in productions that are new to

the War Memorial Opera House stage. Some casting updates for the repertory were announced today and additional casting of supporting roles will be released at a future date.

Performing the title heroines in the 2019 Summer Season operas, each for the first time, are: mezzo-soprano **J’Nai Bridges** as the fiercely independent Carmen; mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke** taking on Orlando, a role originally composed for the castrato Senesino; and **Rachel Willis-Sørensen** portraying the water nymph Rusalka. The Company’s roster of conductors will be expanded with the debuts of **James Gaffigan, Eun Sun Kim, Michelle Merrill** and **Christopher Moulds**.

In a casting update for *Orlando*, countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** makes his Company and role debuts as Medoro, replacing David Daniels. The Brooklyn-born, second-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow quickly rose to prominence after being named a Grand Finals Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions in 2017. The *New York Times* commented, “There were several good singers onstage Sunday afternoon ... but there was only one complete artist. At just 23, Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen ... already possesses a remarkable gift for intimate communication.” Recently recognized in the 2019 GRAMMY® Award nominations, Nussbaum Cohen’s upcoming engagements include David in Handel’s *Saul* with Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, the world premiere of choreographer Yuri Possokhov’s “... two united in a single soul ...” with San Francisco Ballet and the release of his debut solo album with American Bach Soloists.

Icelandic bass **Kristinn Sigmundsson** returns to San Francisco Opera to perform the role of Vodník in *Rusalka*, replacing Italian bass Ferruccio Furlanetto who decided, after further consideration, not to add the role to his repertory. Sigmundsson made his Company debut in 2003 as Méphistophélès in Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust* and has returned to perform leading roles with the Company in works by Mozart, Strauss, Verdi and Wagner. His portrayal of Vodník at the Metropolitan Opera was praised by the *New York Times* as “a Water Gnome of dramatic range and gravitas.”

Due to a scheduling conflict for American conductor **James Gaffigan**, who makes his Company opera conducting debut with *Carmen*, **Michelle Merrill** will take to the podium for the June 20 performance of Bizet’s work in her Company debut; Gaffigan conducts the other six performances as previously announced. A talented young conductor with extensive orchestral experience, including guest appearances with Orchestre National d’Île-de-France, the National Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra and four years as Associate Conductor of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Merrill currently serves as the newly-appointed Music Director of the Coastal Symphony of Georgia.

Merrill is one of two female conductors to join San Francisco Opera’s roster this season. **Eun Sun Kim** makes her Company debut leading the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in *Rusalka*. Well-known for her performances in Europe at Staatsoper Berlin, Frankfurt Opera, Munich’s Bavarian State Opera and Dresden’s Semperoper, the fast-rising South Korean maestra made her American debut in 2017 leading Verdi’s *La Traviata* at Houston Grand Opera, an engagement that led to her appointment as the

company's Principal Guest Conductor. In 2018, Kim led Verdi's Requiem at the Cincinnati May Festival, becoming the first female conductor in the choral festival's 145-year history.

The 2019 Summer Season opens with director **Francesca Zambello's** production of ***Carmen* (June 5–29)**. The popular French work about a free-spirited woman and her besotted lover stars mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges** in her professional role debut as the title heroine and tenor **Matthew Polenzani** performing Don José for the first time in his career. Romanian soprano **Anita Hartig** makes her Company debut as Michaëla and bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** is the bullfighter, Escamillo.

General Director at the Glimmerglass Festival and longtime San Francisco Opera collaborator, Zambello commented on working with Bridges in 2011: "At Glimmerglass, I began offering a family performance of one of the operas with a cast of young artists. J'Nai Bridges essayed the role of Carmen in one of those family performances and her singing was already memorable, as were her animal stage instincts. I am thrilled to see the wonderful arc of J'Nai's career and for us to be rejoined as she makes her professional debut in this role."

**Handel's *Orlando* (June 9–27)** will be unveiled in a bold production by English director **Harry Fehr** which sets Ariosto's mythic romance in London during The Blitz of the Second World War. Mezzo-soprano **Sasha Cooke** makes her highly-anticipated role debut as the warrior Orlando, here envisioned as a fighter pilot who is mentally tormented by battle trauma and an immoderate passion for his lover, Angelica. Soprano **Heidi Stober** adds Angelica to her repertory of Handelian roles, **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** is Medoro and Austrian soprano **Christina Gansch** makes her American debut as Dorinda. Bass-baritone and 2018 Richard Tucker Award recipient **Christian Van Horn** is Zoroastro, the doctor who helps Orlando navigate his mental anguish. English conductor **Christopher Moulds** leads the San Francisco Opera Orchestra in his first engagement with the Company.

***Rusalka* (June 16–28)**, Antonín Dvořák's enchanting 1901 fairytale about a water nymph who trades her voice for love, returns to the War Memorial Opera House stage in a "thoughtfully conceived and brilliantly executed" (*Chicago Tribune*) production by director **David McVicar**. In her first portrayal of the title role, soprano **Rachel Willis-Sørensen** heads a star-studded cast that includes tenor **Brandon Jovanovich** as the Prince, mezzo-soprano **Jamie Barton** as the witch Ježibaba, **Kristinn Sigmundsson** as Vodník and soprano **Sarah Cambidge** as the Foreign Princess.

In the midst of the summer repertory season, San Francisco Opera will host the annual conference of **OPERA America**, the service organization dedicated to supporting the presentation of opera, from June 12–16. Industry professionals from opera companies around North America will converge on the city for sessions, panel discussions and special events. For more information about the conference, visit [operaamerica.org](http://operaamerica.org).

## **TICKETS AND INFORMATION**

Tickets for *Carmen*, *Orlando* and *Rusalka* are priced from \$26 to \$398. A \$2 facility fee is included in all Balcony sections. All other sections include a \$3 per ticket facility fee. Please visit [sfopera.com](http://sfopera.com) for further details or call the Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330. San Francisco Opera Box Office hours: Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (Saturday phone only). Casts, programs and schedules are subject to change.

All War Memorial Opera House performances feature a Pre-Opera Talk beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain. The lecturers for the Summer Season are **Laura Prichard** (*Carmen*), **Bruce Lamott** (*Orlando*) and **Peter Susskind** (*Rusalka*). Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance. Visit [sfopera.com/learn](http://sfopera.com/learn) for information about opera talks, preview events and other enrichment programs.

OperaVision screens, suspended from the ceiling of the balcony section at select performances, provide close-up and mid-range ensemble shots in high-definition video; English subtitles appear at the bottom of each screen. OperaVision is made possible by the Koret/Taube Media Suite.

Located at 301 Van Ness Avenue, the War Memorial Opera House is within walking distance of the Civic Center BART Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49 and the F Market Street. For further information about public transportation and parking, visit [sfopera.com/plan-your-visit/directions-and-parking](http://sfopera.com/plan-your-visit/directions-and-parking).

## **2019 SUMMER SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **EXPLORATION WORKSHOPS FOR FAMILIES: ALL ABOUT CARMEN**

**Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera**

**Veterans Building (4th Floor), 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco**

**Sunday, June 23, 2019 at 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.**

Two interactive family workshops will explore Bizet's *Carmen* through its story, music, production design and characters. Workshops are for families with children ages 6 and older; attendance at a performance of the opera is not required to participate in the workshop. Tickets are \$10. For tickets and more information, visit [sfopera.com/community](http://sfopera.com/community) or call (415) 864-3330.

## 2019 SUMMER SEASON

\*San Francisco Opera Debut \*\*American Opera Debut ♪Role Debut †Current Adler Fellow •OperaVision Performance  
All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House.

**CARMEN** by Georges Bizet  
Production New to San Francisco Opera

**June 5\*** (7:30 p.m.), **11** (7:30 p.m.), **14** (7:30 p.m.), **20\*** (7:30 p.m.), **23\*** (2 p.m.), **26\*** (7:30 p.m.),  
**29** (7:30 p.m.), **2019**

San Francisco Opera production, originally created by Opera Australia based on the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and Norwegian National Opera co-production

Libretto by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, based on the novel by Prosper Mérimée

Sung in French with English supertitles

Approximate running time: 3 hours including one intermission

First performance: Paris; March 3, 1875  
First SFO performance: October 1, 1927  
Most recent SFO performance: 2015–16 Season

### **Cast:**

<i>Carmen</i>	<b>J’Nai Bridges</b> ♪
<i>Don José</i>	<b>Matthew Polenzani</b> ♪
<i>Micaëla</i>	<b>Anita Hartig*</b>
<i>Escamillo</i>	<b>Kyle Ketelsen</b>
<i>Zuniga</i>	<b>David Leigh*</b> ♪

### **Creative Team:**

<i>Conductor</i>	<b>James Gaffigan* / Michelle Merrill*</b> (Jun 20)
<i>Production</i>	<b>Francesca Zambello</b>
<i>Associate Stage Director &amp; Movement Director</i>	<b>Denni Sayers</b>
<i>Production Designer</i>	<b>Tanya McCallin</b>
<i>Original Lighting Designer</i>	<b>Paule Constable</b>
<i>Revival Lighting Designer</i>	<b>Justin A. Partier</b>
<i>Chorus Director</i>	<b>Ian Robertson</b>

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Opera Dance Corps**

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**ORLANDO** by George Frideric Handel  
Production New to San Francisco Opera

**June 9\*** (2 p.m.), **15\*** (7:30 p.m.), **18** (7:30 p.m.), **21** (7:30 p.m.), **27\*** (7:30 p.m.), **2019**

Scottish Opera production

Libretto adapted from Carlo Sigismondo Capece’s *L’Orlando*, after *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

Approximate running time: 3 hours including two intermissions

First performance: London; January 27, 1733  
First SFO performance: September 14, 1985  
Most recent SFO performance: 1985 Season

**Cast:**

<i>Orlando</i>	<b>Sasha Cooke</b> ♪
<i>Angelica</i>	<b>Heidi Stober</b> ♪
<i>Dorinda</i>	<b>Christina Gansch</b> **♪
<i>Medoro</i>	<b>Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen</b> +*♪
<i>Zoroastro</i>	<b>Christian Van Horn</b> ♪

**Creative Team:**

<i>Conductor</i>	<b>Christopher Moulds</b> *
<i>Director</i>	<b>Harry Fehr</b> **
<i>Production Designer</i>	<b>Yannis Thavoris</b> *
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	<b>Anna Watson</b> *
<i>Projection Designer</i>	<b>Andrzej Goulding</b> *

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra**

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**RUSALKA** by Antonín Dvořák  
Production New to San Francisco Opera

**June 16\*** (2 p.m.), **19\*** (7:30 p.m.), **22\*** (7:30 p.m.), **25** (7:30 p.m.), **28** (7:30 p.m.), **2019**

Lyric Opera of Chicago production  
Libretto by Jaroslav Kvapil, based on the novella *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué  
Sung in Czech with English supertitles  
Approximate running time: 3 hours, 25 minutes including two intermissions

First performance: Prague; March 31, 1901  
First SFO performance: November 26, 1995  
Most recent SFO performance: 1995 Season

**Cast:**

<i>Rusalka</i>	<b>Rachel Willis-Sørensen</b> ♪
<i>The Prince</i>	<b>Brandon Jovanovich</b>
<i>Vodník (Water Gnome)</i>	<b>Kristinn Sigmundsson</b>
<i>Ježibaba</i>	<b>Jamie Barton</b>
<i>The Foreign Princess</i>	<b>Sarah Cambidge</b> ♪
<i>The Forester</i>	<b>Philip Horst</b>
<i>The Kitchen Boy</i>	<b>Laura Krumm</b> ♪
<i>Hunter</i>	<b>Andrew Manea</b> ♪

**Creative Team:**

<i>Conductor</i>	<b>Eun Sun Kim</b> *
<i>Production</i>	<b>David McVicar</b>

*Revival Director*  
*Set Designer*  
*Costume Designer*  
*Lighting Designer*  
*Choreographer*  
*Chorus Director*

**Leah Hausman**  
**John Macfarlane**  
**Moritz Junge**  
**David Finn**  
**Andrew George**  
**Ian Robertson**

**San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Opera Dance Corps**

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OperaVision, high-definition projection screens featured in the upper Balcony level, is made possible by the Koret/Taube Media Suite.

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*Carmen* is made possible, in part, by: Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, through the Conductors Fund and the Emerging Stars Fund; Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund; and United Airlines.

*Orlando* is made possible, in part, by: Bernard and Barbro Osher; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, through the Emerging Stars Fund; and Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund.

*Rusalka* is made possible, in part, by: the Carol Buck Foundation; John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, through the Emerging Stars Fund; Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund; and Chevron.



2018–19 Season Sponsor



**High resolution downloadable photographs for the casting updates and the Summer 2019 productions and artists are available at [sfopera.com/press](https://sfopera.com/press). For cast biographies, visit [sfopera.com](https://sfopera.com).**

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