



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS GEORGES BIZET'S *CARMEN*
IN FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO PRODUCTION UNDER BATON OF JAMES GAFFIGAN
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, JUNE 5–29**

**Mezzo-Soprano J'Nai Bridges Makes Professional Role Debut as Carmen and
Tenor Matthew Polenzani Takes on Don José for First Time**



J'Nai Bridges; Matthew Polenzani

Tickets available at sfopera.com and (415) 864-3330

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 1, 2019) — San Francisco Opera's 2019 Summer Season opens with Georges Bizet's *Carmen* June 5–29 at the War Memorial Opera House. Presented in American director Francesca Zambello's acclaimed staging, which has been mounted by Opera Australia, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and Norwegian National Opera, the opera features American mezzo-soprano **J'Nai Bridges** in her first professional performances of the title role and American tenor **Matthew Polenzani** assuming the role of Don José for the first time. Romanian soprano **Anita Hartig** makes her San Francisco Opera debut as Micaëla and American bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** is the bullfighter, Escamillo. In his first opera engagement with the Company, conductor **James Gaffigan** leads the cast and San Francisco Opera Orchestra.

Carmen shocked audiences at its 1875 premiere in Paris, but the work's music and realistic drama quickly won devotees. It is today one of opera's most popular and enduring works. The work follows the free-spirited gypsy Carmen and her obsessive lover, Don José, as their relationship steers toward a tragic end. Bizet's score is filled with unforgettable music, including Carmen's entrance ("Habanera"), the Toreador's bravura aria ("Votre toast"), Don José's flower song ("La fleur que tu m'avais jetée"),

Micaëla's courageous soliloquy ("Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante") and the orchestral preludes that open each of the opera's four acts.

J'Nai Bridges made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2016 as Bersi in *Andréa Chenier* and the following year created the role of Josefa Segovia in the world premiere of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West*. Winning additional praise for performances with LA Opera, Dutch National Opera and the Bavarian State Opera, the American mezzo-soprano brings her "rich, dark, exciting sound" (*Opera News*) to Carmen in her professional role debut.

Returning to San Francisco Opera for the first time since his memorable performances in the title role of Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* in 2013, tenor **Matthew Polenzani** takes on the wayward soldier, Don José. Romanian soprano **Anita Hartig** makes her Company debut as Micaëla, a role she has performed to great acclaim with the Metropolitan Opera and Vienna State Opera. Bass-baritone **Kyle Ketelsen** returns as the dashing bullfighter, Escamillo, which he recently performed at Madrid's Teatro Real and the Met. Bass **David Leigh** bows for the first time with the Company as Zuniga, and current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows soprano **Natalie Image** (Frasquita), mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon** (Mercédès), tenor **Christopher Oglesby** (El Dancaïro), tenor **Zhengyi Bai** (El Remendado) and baritone **SeokJong Baek** (Moralès) complete the cast.

American conductor **James Gaffigan**, who led the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Adler Fellows in *The Future Is Now* concert in 2017, returns for his first opera with the Company. **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. Chorus Director **Ian Robertson** prepares the singers of the San Francisco Opera Chorus.

Sung in French with English supertitles, the seven performances of *Carmen* are scheduled for June 5 (7:30 p.m.), June 11 (7:30 p.m.), June 14 (7:30 p.m.), June 20 (7:30 p.m.), June 23 (2 p.m.), June 26 (7:30 p.m.) and June 29 (7:30 p.m.), 2019.

EXPLORATION WORKSHOPS FOR FAMILIES: ALL ABOUT CARMEN

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

San Francisco Opera's Education Department hosts two interactive family workshops exploring Bizet's *Carmen* through its story, music, production design and characters. Held in the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera on the fourth floor of the Veterans Building, the 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 or call (415) 864-3330.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Carmen* 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. For tickets, visit sfopera.com, call (415) 864-3330 or visit the San Francisco Opera Box Office at 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco. Box Office hours: Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the morning of each performance. Standing room tickets are \$10 each, cash only, and limited to two tickets per person. Casting, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change

Each presentation of *Carmen* at the War Memorial Opera House features a 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk by opera lecturer and scholar Laura Stanfield Prichard. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance.

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. Visit sfopera.com for OperaVision dates.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue. Patrons are encouraged to use public transportation to attend San Francisco Opera performances. 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 public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmta.com.

Van Ness Construction: Due to construction for the SFMTA Van Ness Improvement Project, vehicles are unable to pick-up and drop-off at 301 Van Ness Avenue, and bus lines 47, 49 and 90 may experience travel delays. Please use the white loading zone at 450 Franklin Street (behind the Opera House) for rideshare pick-up and drop-off. We suggest planning extra time.

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CARMEN CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut ♪Role Debut †Current Adler Fellow •OperaVision Performance

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**

War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94012

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: 2 hours and 50 minutes, including one intermission

First performance: Paris; March 3, 1875

First SFO performance: October 1, 1927

Most recent SFO performance: 2015–16 Season

Cast:

Carmen

J’Nai Bridges

Don José

Matthew Polenzani

Micaëla

Anita Hartig*

Escamillo

Kyle Ketelsen

Zuniga

David Leigh*

El Dancairo

Christopher Oglesby*⁺

El Remendado

Zhengyi Bai*⁺

Moralès

SeokJong Baek*⁺

Frasquita

Natalie Image*⁺

Mercédès

Ashley Dixon⁺

Manuelita

Blanche Hampton

Lillas Pastia

Valentina Simi

Creative Team:

Conductor

James Gaffigan* / Michelle Merrill* (Jun 20)

Production

Francesca Zambello

Associate Director & Movement Director

Denni Sayers

Production Designer

Tanya McCallin

Original Lighting Designer

Paule Constable

Revival Lighting Designer

Justin A. Partier

Original Choreographer

Arthur Pita

Fight Director

Dave Maier

Chorus Director

Ian Robertson

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

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Wells Fargo is the Season Sponsor of San Francisco Opera.

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

Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards and Winery is the official wine sponsor of San Francisco Opera.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos provided by Piedmont Piano Company.

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.



2018–19 Season Sponsor



High-resolution, downloadable photographs of *Carmen* and artist headshots are available at sfopera.com/press. For cast biographies, visit sfopera.com/carmen.

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