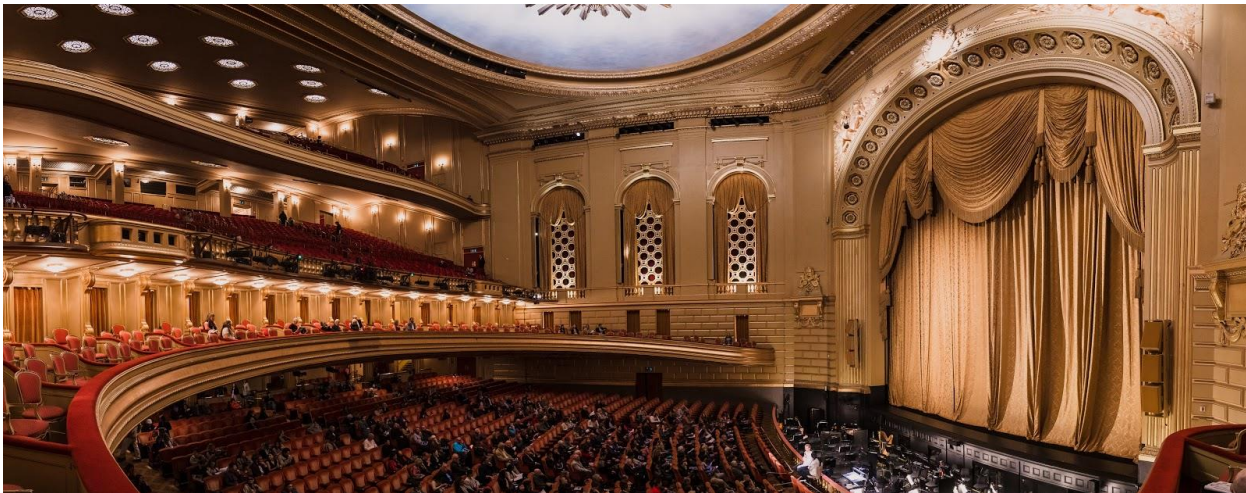


SAN FRANCISCO BALLET AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ANNOUNCE
FINAL PHASE OF WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE SEAT UPGRADE PROJECT
SCHEDULED FOR 2021

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



War Memorial Opera House Auditorium // Photo credit: Brandon Patoc

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (January 15, 2020) – San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera, in collaboration with the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, today shared plans for 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. Over the spring and summer of 2021, 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.

Installation of the new seats is scheduled to occur over 14 weeks between May and August 2021. The War Memorial Opera House will reopen on September 10 with San Francisco Opera's 2021–22 season-opening gala. 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 be wider, 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, floor repair, and carpet replacement.

In order for both organizations to accommodate the installations while continuing to perform during the venue closure, San Francisco Ballet and San Francisco Opera will adjust the number of weeks they occupy the War Memorial Opera House in 2021. San Francisco Ballet is in discussions with BroadwaySF to present its last two programs of the 2021 season at the Orpheum Theatre. Complete details of SF Ballet's 2021 Season will be announced in April 2020. San Francisco Opera's summer season, typically running June into early July, will move to April 25–May 16, 2021 in the War Memorial Opera House. San Francisco Opera's 2020–21 Season will be announced on January 22, 2020.

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 approximately \$3.7 million initiative is funded by proceeds accumulated from a facility fee ranging from \$1 to \$3 based on seating section added to tickets for SF Ballet (effective November 2013) and San Francisco Opera (effective January 2014). The City of San Francisco is funding additional architecture and design services related to the accessible seating portion of the project. The continued enhancement of the patron experience in the Opera House is a priority for both SF Ballet and SF 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 support from theatrical consultant The Shalleck Collaborative and the City's Department of Public Works. Montreal-based Ducharme Seating, a company with expertise in historical theaters, is designing and manufacturing the seats. 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. FSC (Forest

Stewardship Council) and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, Ducharme Seating is committed to manufacturing products with minimal environmental impact. 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, [please click](#).

ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO BALLET

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 continues to be 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.

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