



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS BENJAMIN BRITTEN'S *BILLY BUDD* IN
ACCLAIMED PRODUCTION BY DIRECTOR MICHAEL GRANDAGE
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, SEPTEMBER 7–22**

**Lawrence Renes Conducts Orchestra and 75 Singers in All-Male Cast
Headed by William Burden, John Chest and Christian Van Horn**

**Performances of Shipboard Opera Based on Herman Melville's Novella
Coincide with Author's Bicentennial**

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



Michael Grandage production of Britten's *Billy Budd* ©Alastair Muir/Glyndebourne Festival
William Burden; John Chest; Christian Van Horn

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 6, 2019) — San Francisco Opera presents Benjamin Britten's masterpiece of law and order on the high seas, *Billy Budd*, in six performances at the War Memorial Opera House September 7–22. Based on the unfinished novella by Herman Melville and set to a libretto by E.M. Forster and Eric Crozier, *Billy Budd* returns to the Company's repertory after a 15-year absence in the "powerful" (*New York Times*) staging by Tony Award-winning director **Michael Grandage**. **Lawrence Renes** conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and an all-male cast of 75 artists, including 44 men from the San Francisco Opera Chorus prepared by Chorus Director **Ian Robertson** and 8 boys from the **Ragazzi Boys Chorus**. The performances coincide with the Melville bicentennial and the 100th anniversary of the posthumous discovery of the American author's unfinished manuscript of *Billy Budd*.

Grandage said, “Britten has this brilliant capacity to conjure up the huge, surging sound of the sea through the orchestra. Therefore, I wanted to leave the sea to the orchestra and focus on creating the claustrophobic, violent, capricious shipboard world that these characters inhabit.”

Unveiled at the 2010 Glyndebourne Festival and revived at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2014, Grandage’s production has earned wide acclaim for “its cogency and sharpness of realistic detail” (*Opera News*). Production designer **Christopher Oram**’s “breathtaking hulk of a set” (*The Telegraph*) transforms as the action, which takes place entirely aboard the HMS *Indomitable* (an eighteenth-century British warship), moves above and below deck. The production is staged in revival by director **Ian Rutherford** and features original lighting design by **Paule Constable** executed by **David Manion**.

American tenor **William Burden**, who last season added George Bailey in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life* to his repertory of heroic portrayals at San Francisco Opera, is Edward Fairfax Vere, the captain of the *Indomitable* whose recollection of a disturbing incident sets the story in motion. American baritone **John Chest**, a leading artist at the Deutsche Oper Berlin who recently appeared at the Glyndebourne Festival, makes his Company debut as Billy Budd. The former Merola Opera Program participant’s voice was praised by *Gramophone* as “both beautiful and immediately engaging. Virile but distinguished by an appealing vulnerability.” Bass-baritone **Christian Van Horn**, winner of the 2018 Richard Tucker Award and who appeared as Zoroastro in Handel’s *Orlando* with San Francisco Opera this summer, is the ship’s master-at-arms, John Claggart.

The ensemble cast features **Philip Horst** as Mr. Redburn, **Wayne Tigges** as Mr. Flint, current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow **Christian Pursell** as Mr. Ratcliffe, **Robert Brubaker** as Red Whiskers, **Brenton Ryan** as a Novice, Adler Fellow **Christopher Colmenero** as Maintop, **Matthew O’Neill** as Squeak, **John Brancy** as Donald, **Edward Nelson** as Bosun, **Sidney Outlaw** as First Mate, **Kenneth Overton** as Second Mate, **Eugene Villanueva** as the Novice’s Friend, **Philip Skinner** as Dansker and **Hadleigh Adams** as Arthur Jones. Lawrence Renes, who led the San Francisco Opera premiere of John Adams’ *Nixon in China* in 2012, conducts Britten’s turbulent score.

San Francisco Opera has presented *Billy Budd* in three previous seasons, beginning in 1978 when David Atherton conducted performances featuring sets and costumes modeled on John Piper’s designs for the 1951 world premiere production at London’s Covent Garden. The production was revived in 1985 under the baton of Raymond Leppard with American tenor James King as Captain Vere and baritone Dale Duesing as Billy. The opera returned during

the 2004–05 Season in director Willy Decker’s production, conducted by then San Francisco Opera Music Director Donald Runnicles with a cast featuring Kim Begley as Vere, Nathan Gunn in the title role and Phillip Ens as Claggart.

Sung in English with English supertitles, the six performances of *Billy Budd* are scheduled for September 7 (7:30 pm), September 12 (7:30 pm), September 15 (2 pm), September 17 (7:30 pm), September 20 (7:30 pm) and September 22 (2 pm), 2019.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Billy Budd* 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 am–5 pm; Tuesday through Saturday 10 am–6 pm. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 am 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 *Billy Budd* at the War Memorial Opera House features a 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk by musician and San Francisco Conservatory of Music faculty member Corey Jamason. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance.

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

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BILLY BUDD CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut ♪Role Debut †Current Adler Fellow

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House
301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco CA 94102

BILLY BUDD by Benjamin Britten
Production New to San Francisco Opera

September 7 (7:30 pm), **12** (7:30 pm), **15** (2 pm), **17** (7:30 pm), **20** (7:30 pm), **22** (2 pm), **2019**

A Glyndebourne production, originally performed in the Glyndebourne Festival 2010
Libretto by E.M. Forster and Eric Crozier; based on the novella by Herman Melville
By arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., publisher and copyright holder
Sung in English with English supertitles
Approximate running time: 3 hours, including one intermission

First Performance: London, December 1, 1951; revised London, November 13, 1960
First SFO performance: September 16, 1978
Most recent SFO performance: 2004–05 Season

Cast:

Captain Vere	William Burden
Billy Budd	John Chest*
John Claggart	Christian Van Horn ♪
Mr. Redburn	Philip Horst ♪
Mr. Flint	Wayne Tigges ♪
Mr. Ratcliffe	Christian Pursell †♪
Red Whiskers	Robert Brubaker ♪
Novice	Brenton Ryan ♪
Maintop	Christopher Colmenero *†♪
Squeak	Matthew O'Neill
Donald	John Brancy *♪
Bosun	Edward Nelson ♪
First Mate	Sidney Outlaw *♪
Second Mate	Kenneth Overton ♪
Novice's Friend	Eugene Villanueva ♪
Dansker	Philip Skinner
Arthur Jones	Hadleigh Adams ♪
Cabin Boy	Benjamin Drever ♪
Midshipmen	Talinn Hatti *♪, Marvin Valdez *♪, Curtis Resnick *♪, Lucas Willcuts *♪

Creative Team:

Conductor	Lawrence Renes
Production	Michael Grandage *

Revival Director	Ian Rutherford
Production Designer	Christopher Oram*
Original Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Revival Lighting Designer	David Manion*
Fight Director	Dave Maier
Chorus Director	Ian Robertson

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

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