



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD'S AN EVENING ON THE STAGE
TO HONOR JOHN A. AND CYNTHIA FRY GUNN
NOVEMBER 28, WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE**



John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn (Terrence McCarthy); 2017 *An Evening on the Stage* (Drew Altizer Photography)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (November 9, 2018) — San Francisco Opera Guild will honor Bay Area philanthropists John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn at the sixth annual *An Evening on the Stage* on Wednesday, November 28. The gala dinner on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House is co-chaired by Kim Dempster and Linle J. Froeb. The set of composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer's holiday opera *It's a Wonderful Life* provides the magical backdrop for this year's event, when the Opera Guild's 2018 Crescendo Award will be presented to John Gunn, Chairman of San Francisco Opera's Board of Directors, and arts patron Cynthia Fry Gunn. Passionately committed to the art form and actively involved in the leadership of the Company, the Gunn's magnanimous support has set an extraordinary standard in the community.

Proceeds from *An Evening on the Stage* benefit San Francisco Opera Guild's signature education programs reaching more than 50,000 students in nearly 200 schools throughout Northern California. Previous honorees include community leaders and opera advocates Charlotte Mailliard Shultz; Diane B. Wilsey; Gordon Getty; Franklin P. (Pitch) Johnson, Jr.; and Dianne and Tad Taube.

An Evening on the Stage will begin at 6 p.m. with a cocktail reception in the elegant War Memorial Opera House foyer. Guests will then enter the theater and traverse a bridge crossing over the orchestra pit for the onstage dinner commencing at 7 p.m. The intimate atmosphere and set pieces from *It's a*

Wonderful Life, an operatic retelling of the classic story made famous by Frank Capra's 1946 film, will create a uniquely enchanting setting for the evening.

Reuniting with San Francisco Opera Guild for this memorable occasion will be celebrated event stylist and Opera Ball designer J. Riccardo Benavides and San Francisco's premier catering firm McCalls Catering & Events. Following dinner, guests can take to the dance floor with live music from the popular band Notorious. In addition, guests will be treated to a special performance by a San Francisco Opera artist.

Company Sponsors John and Cynthia Fry Gunn have underwritten numerous productions and provided exceptional support for many of San Francisco Opera's most innovative endeavors. John Gunn has served on San Francisco Opera's Board of Directors since 2002 (becoming chairman in 2008). In September 2008, the Gunns made a historic gift of \$40 million to help fund the signature projects of General Director David Gockley, including new operas and productions, multimedia projects, and outreach programs, and they have proudly continued that support for General Director Matthew Shilvock.

Mr. and Mrs. Gunn are among the Company's most passionate and generous supporters of new works and bold productions. Their first sponsorship was the American premiere of György Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* in 2004, and their significant support has made possible the world premieres of Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton's *Appomattox* (2007), Stewart Wallace and Amy Tan's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (2008), Christopher Theofanidis and Donna Di Novelli's *Heart of a Soldier* (2011), and John Adams and Peter Sellars' *Girls of the Golden West* (2017).

This season, the Gunns' inspired generosity is helping make possible four productions, including the Company's new production of *Tosca* and *It's a Wonderful Life*. The Gunns hope that their support inspires others to give. Mr. Gunn comments, "Opera is a dynamic art form and all of us play a role in keeping it vital. We must expand our repertoire and our audiences and strive for financial flexibility. And we depend on donors to keep opera alive."

John Gunn is the former chairman and CEO of Dodge & Cox Investment Managers. He joined the firm in 1972, the year he received his MBA from Stanford Business School and married Cynthia, who graduated from Stanford with an A.B. in political science in 1970. Early in her career, Mrs. Gunn was the editor and director of The Portable Stanford book series for ten years. She edited twenty-eight books by Stanford professors on a vast array of topics, including *Economic Policy Beyond the Headlines* by George Shultz and Ken Dam.

In addition to their support of San Francisco Opera, the Gunns are active members of the community. Mr. Gunn chairs the advisory board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, is Vice Chairman of the Board of Stanford Health Care and is a former trustee of Stanford University. Mrs. Gunn currently serves as an overseer of Stanford's Hoover Institution and is a trustee of the San Francisco Fine

Arts Museums. Formerly, she was a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services of Silicon Valley and the board of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health. John Gunn's love of the operatic art form began in his formative years when he attended numerous Company dress rehearsals with friend and fellow student Ronald Adler, son of former San Francisco Opera General Director Kurt Herbert Adler.

An Evening on the Stage is made possible through the generous support of Presenting Sponsor Neiman Marcus Union Square; Education Sponsor Denise Littlefield Sobel; Supporting Sponsor Accenture; Official Airline United Airlines; Wine Sponsor Chalk Hill Estate Vineyards and Winery; Sparkling Wine Sponsor Roederer Estate; Media Sponsors Haute Living San Francisco and Nob Hill Gazette; and Décor Sponsor J. Riccardo Benavides Event Styling.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *An Evening on the Stage* are priced at \$1,250, \$2,500, \$5,000 and \$7,500 and are available at sfopera.com/HolidayEvent2018 or by calling (415) 565-3204. Proceeds from this event support San Francisco Opera Guild's education and community programs. San Francisco Opera Guild gives voice to potential through education and outreach programs that bring opera center stage into the life of the community. For more information about San Francisco Opera Guild and its programs, visit sfoperaguild.com.

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This press release and related photographs are available at sfopera.com/press. For further press information, contact San Francisco Opera Communications:
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