



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ANNOUNCES CASTING FOR
RICHARD WAGNER'S *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN*
(*THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG*)
THREE CYCLES PRESENTED JUNE 12–JULY 1, 2018**

**VISIONARY PRODUCTION OF FOUR-OPERA *RING* CYCLE BY
DIRECTOR FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO; DONALD RUNNICLES CONDUCTS**



Scenes from the *Ring* cycle: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre* and *Götterdämmerung*. ©Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera

**TRIO OF RENOWNED WAGNERIANS MAKE THEIR COMPANY DEBUTS:
GERMAN SOPRANO EVELYN HERLITZIUS, AMERICAN TENOR DANIEL BRENNAN,
GERMAN BASS-BARITONE FALK STRUCKMANN**

**INTERNATIONAL CAST INCLUDES GREER GRIMSLEY, KARITA MATTILA,
BRANDON JOVANOVICH, ŠTEFAN MARGITA, JAMIE BARTON**



Evelyn Herlitzius (Brünnhilde); Daniel Brenna (Siegfried); Falk Struckmann (Alberich); Greer Grimsley (Wotan); Karita Mattila (Sieglinde)

sfopera.com/ring, (415) 864-3330

SAN FRANCISCO (September 26, 2016) — San Francisco Opera General Director **Matthew Shilvock** today announced the casting and schedule for the Company's summer 2018 presentations of Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*). The four-opera cycle of *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*—widely considered the greatest and most ambitious work ever conceived for the lyric stage—will be presented in three complete cycles from June 12 through July 1, 2018. **Francesca Zambello** directs the visually spectacular production of Wagner's epic narrative of gods, mortals, corruption and redemption, which premiered at the War Memorial Opera House in June 2011. **Donald Runnicles**, one of the world's foremost Wagnerian conductors, reunites with Zambello and the production to lead the cast and San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus.

Tickets for the complete four-opera *Ring* cycle are now on sale to current San Francisco Opera subscribers and donors only. Four-opera cycle tickets go on sale for the general public beginning in January 2017.

Shilvock said, "The Ring is one of humanity's defining works of expression. Its narrative sweep charts the creation and destruction of the world and such an epic undertaking coalesces the incredible forces of San Francisco Opera in a powerful way. I couldn't be more delighted that we are undertaking this journey in San Francisco and am excited to connect audiences and Company together in this profound experience."

San Francisco Opera has assembled an exceptional international cast of the world's leading Wagnerians for the 2018 *Ring* cycle, beginning with an exciting trio of artists who are new to the Company. German soprano **Evelyn Herlitzius** ("towering vocal strength, meeting all the challenges of the score with vibrant, thrilling tone," *Opera News*) makes her highly anticipated Company debut in the pivotal role of Brünnhilde who appears in three of the four operas: *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. She has performed Brünnhilde at the Vienna State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Munich's Bavarian Opera House, Bayreuther Festspiele and other European opera houses. American tenor **Daniel Brenna** ("an exciting baritone sound that can hold its own against the orchestra's most withering fire," *Parterre*) first bows with San Francisco Opera as Siegfried in both *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*, a role for which he earned critical acclaim during the 2016 revival of Zambello's production of the *Ring* at Washington National Opera. Well known for his accomplished performances in Wagner's works, especially the *Ring*, German bass-baritone **Falk Struckmann** ("Commanding voice and musical intelligence," *New York Times*) makes his Company and role debuts as Alberich in *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.

Following his unforgettable 2013 performances here as the Dutchman in Wagner's *Der Fliegende Holländer*, American bass-baritone **Greer Grimsley** ("as fine a Wotan as you are likely to encounter on today's operatic scene," *Seen and Heard*) returns to the Company as Wotan/The Wanderer. Admired worldwide for his performances of this central role in the cycle, Grimsley's well-regarded portrayal will finally come to San Francisco Opera in 2018. Providing a glimpse of her Sieglinde at the David Gockley Gala in June 2016, distinguished Finnish soprano **Karita Mattila** will sing the role in all three cycles. American tenor **Brandon Jovanovich** reprises the roles of Froh in *Das Rheingold* and Siegmund in *Die Walküre*. Triumphant as Adalgisa in the Company's 2014 performances of Bellini's *Norma*, American

mezzo-soprano **Jamie Barton** will sing the roles of Fricka in *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* and Waltraute in *Götterdämmerung*.

Štefan Margita and **David Cangelosi** reprise their vividly etched performances of Loge and Mime respectively, portrayals for which the two tenors were highly praised in the Company's 2011 *Ring*. American bass **Raymond Aceto** sings the roles of Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* and Hunding in *Die Walküre* while Italian bass **Andrea Silvestrelli** will unleash his deep bass voice as Fasolt in *Das Rheingold* and Hagen in *Götterdämmerung*. American baritone **Brian Mulligan** takes on the roles of Donner in *Das Rheingold* and Gunther in *Götterdämmerung*. Also featured are Merola Program alumni mezzo-soprano **Ronnita Miller** (Erda) and soprano **Melissa Citro** (Gutrune); and **Stacey Tappan** (Woglinde and the Forest Bird), **Lauren McNeese** (Wellgunde) and **Renée Tatum** (Flosshilde). Additional *Ring* casting will be announced in January 2017.

Currently the General Music Director of the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Maestro Donald Runnicles reunites with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus to conduct all 12 performances. Runnicles, who was last on the War Memorial podium in June 2015 to lead performances of Berlioz's colossal *Les Troyens*, has previously conducted the *Ring* in San Francisco in 1990, 1999 and 2011.

When first unveiled as a complete four-opera cycle during the 2011 *Ring* Festival, the *New York Times* hailed Zambello's production as "boldly contemporary." The *San Francisco Chronicle* observed: "San Francisco Opera's most ambitious undertaking in years also turned out to be the company's greatest triumph." Zambello revisited elements of the staging for its May 2016 revival at the Washington National Opera, and the production earned considerable acclaim in the nation's capital. "Francesca Zambello's *Ring* cycle is strong and moving, thought-provoking and powerful," praised Anne Midgette of *The Washington Post*, who concluded, "My bottom line for any production, updated or not, is the quality of its storytelling, and this is where Zambello excelled. When a production creates characters that move you, and get you to re-engage with the work in new ways, it is succeeding." *Metro Weekly* commented: "The beautiful imagery, [Michael] Yeargan's evocative sets and Zambello's clear storytelling make for a powerful vehicle."

Setting the narrative with visuals from various periods of American history, the director argues for the work's timeless quality. "The *Ring* is always contemporary. We are presenting a world in some ways familiar to our audience but also one that will feel very mythic as we look to our country's rich imagery," says Zambello. "The great themes of the *Ring*—nature, power and corruption—resound through America's past and haunt our present."

Along with Zambello, the creative team includes set designer **Michael Yeargan**, costume designer **Catherine Zuber**, lighting designer **Mark McCullough**, projection designers **S. Katy Tucker** and **Jan Hartley** and chorus director **Ian Robertson**. The *Ring* is a co-production with Washington National Opera.

All artists will perform their roles in each of the three cycles, which are scheduled for June 12–17, June 19–24 and June 26–July 1, 2018. *Ring* cycles performances take place on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. To provide *Ring* aficionados and those who are new to the work additional points of

engagement, San Francisco Opera will partner with Bay Area cultural institutions to present myriad activities during the 2018 *Ring* Festival, including lectures, events and other activities. The full calendar of ancillary activities will be announced at a later date. For more information, visit sfopera.com/ringfestival.

Regarded as one of the world's leading companies in presenting the entire *Ring* cycle, San Francisco Opera's storied history with Wagner's masterwork goes back eight decades. The Company's first presentation of the *Ring* came in 1935 with Friedrich Schorr (Wotan), Lauritz Melchior (Siegmund/Siegfried), Elisabeth Rethberg (Sieglinde) and Kirsten Flagstad (Brünnhilde), the latter in the first complete *Ring* of her legendary career. Later stagings were in 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999 and 2011. The City of San Francisco has also played host to two other presentations of the *Ring*: a complete cycle in 1900 by the touring Metropolitan Opera at the Grand Opera House and a partial *Ring* in 1931 by veteran soprano Johanna Gadski's touring Grand German Opera Company at the Civic Auditorium.

Tickets and Information

Tickets for Wagner's *Ring* are currently offered in complete four-opera cycles and are available for purchase to current San Francisco Opera subscribers and donors only. Complete cycles are priced from \$190 to \$3,420 and include a tax-deductible contribution to provide extra support for this monumental production. Non-donors and subscribers can become eligible to buy the *Ring* during this priority period by donating \$75 or more. To become a donor, contact the San Francisco Opera Box Office [301 Van Ness Avenue, or by phone at (415) 864-3330] or visit sfopera.com/donate. The *Ring* will be available to the general public for purchase as four-opera cycles beginning in January 2017.

All *Ring* cycle subscribers will receive a Festival packet with details about all *Ring* Festival activities, lectures and events. Additionally, San Francisco Opera will partner with hotels and an airline to accommodate out-of-town subscribers, as well as Bay Area patrons looking to get away and immerse themselves in the *Ring* Festival. Complete details about the *Ring* Festival experience will be announced in spring 2017. For more information, visit sfopera.com/ringfestival.

San Francisco Opera has created a Ring Circle for patrons who wish to make a special contribution to this production. Ring Circle memberships begin with donations of \$5,000 or more and members enjoy benefits leading up to and during the *Ring*. For additional information, please contact Cathy Lewis at (415) 551-6239 or clewis@sfopera.com.

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 more public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmuni.com.

Casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2018 Ring Festival and production of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, please visit sfopera.com/ring.

SUMMER 2018 OPERA SEASON: *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN (The Ring of the Nibelung)*

*San Francisco Opera Debut ♪Role Debut

CYCLE 1: June 12 (7:30 p.m.); June 13 (7 p.m.); June 15 (6:30 p.m.); June 17 (1 p.m.)

CYCLE 2: June 19 (7:30 p.m.); June 20 (7 p.m.); June 22 (6:30 p.m.); June 24 (1 p.m.)

CYCLE 3: June 26 (7:30 p.m.); June 27 (7 p.m.); June 29 (6:30 p.m.); July 1 (1 p.m.)

All cycle performances are presented on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

Production:

<i>Conductor</i>	Donald Runnicles
<i>Director</i>	Francesca Zambello
<i>Set Designer</i>	Michael Yeagan
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Catherine Zuber
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Mark McCullough
<i>Projection Designers</i>	S. Katy Tucker, Jan Hartley
<i>Chorus Director</i>	Ian Robertson

Co-production with Washington National Opera

Sung in German with English supertitles

All performances of the *Ring* will feature OperaVision, HD video projection screens in the Balcony.

DAS RHEINGOLD by *Richard Wagner*

June 12 (7:30 p.m.), **19** (7:30 p.m.) and **26** (7:30 p.m.), **2018**

Approximate running time: 2 hours, 35 minutes with no intermission

First Performance: Munich; September 22, 1869

First SFO Performance: November 1, 1935

Most recent SFO Performance June 2011

Cast:

<i>Wotan</i>	Greer Grimsley
<i>Loge</i>	Štefan Margita
<i>Alberich</i>	Falk Struckmann* ♪
<i>Fricka</i>	Jamie Barton
<i>Erda</i>	Ronnita Miller
<i>Mime</i>	David Cangelosi
<i>Fasolt</i>	Andrea Silvestrelli
<i>Fafner</i>	Raymond Aceto
<i>Froh</i>	Brandon Jovanovich
<i>Donner</i>	Brian Mulligan
<i>Woglinde</i>	Stacey Tappan
<i>Wellgunde</i>	Lauren McNeese
<i>Flosshilde</i>	Renée Tatum

DIE WALKÜRE by Richard Wagner

June 13 (7 p.m.), **20** (7 p.m.) and **27** (7 p.m.), **2018**

Approximate running time: 4 hours, 30 minutes with two intermissions

First Performance Munich; June 26, 1870

First SFO Performance November 4, 1935

Most recent SFO Performance June 2011

Cast:

Brünnhilde

Evelyn Herlitzius*

Wotan

Greer Grimsley

Sieglinde

Karita Mattila

Siegmund

Brandon Jovanovich

Fricka

Jamie Barton

Hunding

Raymond Aceto

SIEGFRIED by Richard Wagner

June 15 (6:30 p.m.), **22** (6:30 p.m.) and **29** (6:30 p.m.), **2018**

Approximate running time: 4 hours, 50 minutes with two intermissions

First Performance Bayreuth; August 16, 1876

First SFO Performance November 6, 1935

Most Recent SFO Performance June 2011

Cast:

Siegfried

Daniel Brenna*

Brünnhilde

Evelyn Herlitzius

Mime

David Cangelosi

The Wanderer (Wotan)

Greer Grimsley

Alberich

Falk Struckmann ♪

Fafner

Raymond Aceto

Erda

Ronnita Miller

Forest Bird

Stacey Tappan

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG by Richard Wagner
June 17 (1 p.m.), 24 (1 p.m.) and July 1 (1 p.m.), 2018

Approximate running time: 5 hours, 15 minutes with two intermissions

First Performance Bayreuth, August 17, 1876

First SFO Performance November 9, 1935

Most recent SFO Performance

June 2011

Cast:

<i>Brünnhilde</i>	Evelyn Herlitzius
<i>Siegfried</i>	Daniel Brenna
<i>Gunther</i>	Brian Mulligan
<i>Hagen</i>	Andrea Silvestrelli
<i>Waltraute</i>	Jamie Barton
<i>Gutrune</i>	Melissa Citro
<i>Alberich</i>	Falk Struckmann ♪
<i>Woglinde</i>	Stacey Tappan
<i>Wellgunde</i>	Lauren McNeese
<i>Flosshilde</i>	Renée Tatum

Praise for San Francisco Opera's production of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and Debuting Artists

June 2011 - Premiere of full *Ring* cycle at San Francisco Opera

"San Francisco Opera's most ambitious undertaking in years also turned out to be the company's greatest triumph." *San Francisco Chronicle*

"Zambello keeps the intertwined human dramas in tight focus, and there is no shortage of visual wit and imagination." *Chicago Tribune*

"Drawing on American imagery in bold, playful ways, it presents the *Ring* as a story about the amassing of power and its corrupting effect, the despoiling of nature and the oppression of have-nots." *New York Times*

"Zambello's strength is in her focus on personal relationships and her sense of humor. She does show the despoiling of the environment — the Rhine maidens clean up a polluted river. But what she mainly reveals is how women are left to clean up the mess the men make of the world." *Los Angeles Times*

"In the pit, former Music Director Donald Runnicles led a performance of majestic power and sweep, eliciting thrillingly great playing from the tireless Opera Orchestra." *San Francisco Chronicle*

"It's a spectacle for the digital age." *Mercury News*

May 2016 – Revival at Washington National Opera

“Francesca Zambello’s *Ring* cycle is strong and moving, thought-provoking and powerful, with musical performances and insightful directing supporting each other in an experience that will leave those who saw it thinking and savoring for a long time to come.” *The Washington Post*

“My bottom line for any production, updated or not, is the quality of its storytelling, and this is where Zambello excelled. When a production creates characters that move you, and gets you to re-engage with the work in new ways, it is succeeding.” *The Washington Post*

“Zambello’s take on Wagner’s epic underlines the familiar issues of greed and power, while adding layers of ecological sensitivity, not to mention feminist sensibility.” *Opera News*

“The staging of the final scene of this *Walküre* came together with outstanding dramatic and musical commitment from all involved to present what is certainly the most emotionally intense Act III I have personally seen live, a reminder of the cathartic power this work wields in the right hands and how often productions stop short of its full impact.” *Parterre*

“And when it comes to Zambello’s vision, it cannot be emphasized enough how much the projections and video of Jan Hartley and S. Katy Tucker complement and expand, not just the themes, but the entire mood of the cycle.” *Metro Weekly*

Evelyn Herlitzius, soprano (Brünnhilde) *San Francisco Opera Debut

“... a soprano voice of immense power and a svelte body capable of moving agilely. Climactic phrases ring out gloriously and with authority” *New York Times*

“... towering vocal strength, meeting all the challenges of the score with vibrant, thrilling tone” *Opera News*

Daniel Brenna, tenor (Siegfried) * San Francisco Opera Debut

“...an exciting baritonal sound that can hold its own against the orchestra’s most withering fire [...] Still very early in his career, he is, as they say, a Siegfried to watch.” *Parterre*

“Brenna is simply amazing in every facet of this role.” *DC Metro Theater Arts*

Falk Struckmann, bass-baritone (Alberich) * San Francisco Opera Debut

“Commanding voice and musical intelligence” *New York Times*

“Blessed with a luxuriant baritone that commands attention” *The Huffington Post*

Greer Grimsley, bass-baritone (Wotan)

“The show may be called “The Valkyrie,” but it’s Wotan who does the heavy lifting, and Greer Grimsley has never been more impressive in that role with its lengthy narratives and its wide emotional range.” *Seattle Times*

“Greer Grimsley is as fine a Wotan as you are likely to encounter on today’s operatic scene.” *Seen and Heard*

2018 RING CYCLE ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

For biographies of all cast and creative team members, go to sfopera.com/ring.

EVELYN HERLITZIUS (Brünnhilde)

Acclaimed for her portrayals of some of the most demanding roles in the dramatic soprano repertory, Evelyn Herlitzius makes her much anticipated Company debut as Brünnhilde. Herlitzius has performed with the leading opera houses of Europe, including Vienna State Opera, Munich’s Bavarian State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin and Teatro alla Scala in Milan. The German soprano debuted at the Bayreuth Festival in 2002 as Brünnhilde and returned on numerous occasions, including as Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* to open the 2015 Festival. Her highly acclaimed portrayal of the title role in Strauss’ *Elektra*, which the *Telegraph* called “a creature of mesmerizing intensity,” has been seen at Dresden’s Semperoper, the Bavarian State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro alla Scala and Zürich Opernhaus. A DVD of the 2013 Festival d’Aix-en-Provence *Elektra*—conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen and in the late French director Patrice Chéreau’s final production—is available from BelAir Classiques. Future engagements include *Elektra* at Berlin’s Staatsoper im Schiller Theater, Brünnhilde in the *Ring* in Wiesbaden and Berlin, and Ortrud in *Lohengrin* at Paris Opéra.

GREER GRIMSLEY (Wotan)

Greer Grimsley made his San Francisco Opera debut as Baron Scarpia in the 2001 production of *Tosca* and returned as Count Monterone (*Rigoletto*), Jokanaan (*Salome*), and in the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer*. He garnered critical acclaim in 2005, 2009, and 2013 as Wotan/the Wanderer in Seattle Opera’s *Ring* cycle, which he also performed in Cologne in 2010 and at the Metropolitan Opera in 2013. The American bass-baritone’s recent engagements include the title role of *Sweeney Todd* at Vancouver Opera and the Glimmerglass Festival, Wotan (*Die Walküre*) in Barcelona and Tokyo, in the title role of *Macbeth* with Minnesota Opera, Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* with Santa Fe Opera, and Claggart (*Billy Budd*) with Los Angeles Opera. Upcoming engagements include Jokanaan and Don Pizarro at the Met.

DANIEL BRENNNA (Siegfried)

American tenor Daniel Brenna makes his Company debut as Siegfried in *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*. He appeared as Siegfried in Francesca Zambello’s production of the *Ring* at Washington National Opera in May 2016. *The Washington Post* applauded Brenna’s “robust sound,” declaring, “this singer is definitely someone to watch.” Internationally known for his portrayal of Siegfried, Brenna has performed the role in Budapest, Stuttgart, Longborough Festival Opera and at Opéra de Dijon (in Dijon’s 2013 *Ring* cycle, he also performed Siegmund in *Die Walküre*). Brenna debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 2015 as Alwa in a new production of *Lulu* and has performed Desportes in *Die Soldaten* at the Salzburg Festival, Munich’s Bavarian State Opera and Milan’s Teatro alla Scala. Other notable performances include the title role of *Tannhäuser* and Aron in *Moses and Aron*. Upcoming engagements include Laca Klemeň in Olivier Tambosi’s production of *Jenůfa* at the

Metropolitan Opera, Aegisth in *Elektra* with Edmonton Opera, and the world premiere of David Hefti's opera *Anna's Mask* at Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland.

FALK STRUCKMANN (Alberich)

One of today's foremost Wagnerians, German bass-baritone Falk Struckmann made his premiere engagement at the Bayreuth Festival in 1993 as Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* under Daniel Barenboim and later appeared there in the *Ring* under James Levine and Christian Thielemann. In the *Ring*, he has performed Wotan, Fafner, Hunding, and Hagen and, for his San Francisco Opera debut, will take on the role of Alberich in *Das Rheingold*, *Siegfried*, and *Götterdämmerung* for the first time. Struckmann bowed at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in *Siegfried* under Riccardo Muti and at New York's Metropolitan Opera in the title of *Wozzeck* under the baton of James Levine. His appearances with the Berlin Staatsoper include new productions of *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* and *Parsifal*. His numerous engagements at the Vienna State Opera include *Lohengrin*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, *Tristan und Isolde* and *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Upcoming roles include Baron Scarpia (*Tosca*) at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Rocco (*Fidelio*) at the Metropolitan Opera, and Hagen (*Götterdämmerung*) at Vienna State Opera.

KARITA MATTILA (Sieglinde)

Finnish soprano Karita Mattila is recognized internationally for the beauty and versatility of her lyric voice and the dramatic intensity of her performances. She made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1989 as Ilia in *Idomeneo* and subsequently has appeared with the Company as Eva (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*), in her role debut as Elsa (*Lohengrin*), in the title roles of *Kát'a Kabanová* and *Manon Lescaut*, and as Emilia Marty in *The Makropulos Case*. Her most recent engagement last summer was her first stage appearance as Kostelnička in *Jenůfa*. In 2003 Mattila was honored by the French Minister of Culture as a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. She has won Grammy awards for her recordings of *Jenůfa* with Bernard Haitink on Erato and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* with Sir Georg Solti on the Decca label.

BRANDON JOVANOVIČ (Siegfried)

American tenor Brandon Jovanovich has been a frequent performer at San Francisco Opera, including as Walther von Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2015), *Susannah* (2014), the title role of *Lohengrin* (2012), and the 2011 *Ring* cycle (Siegfried, Froh). Recent career highlights include Sergei in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Metropolitan Opera; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; a concert version of *Fidelio* with the San Francisco Symphony; and Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* with Jiří Bělohlávek and the Czech Philharmonic at Vienna's Musikverein. In the 2016–17 season, Jovanovich returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Énée* in *Les Troyens*), sings Siegfried at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and made his house debut at the Wiener Staatsoper as Don José in *Carmen*.

JAMIE BARTON (Fricka, Waltraute)

American mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton won the 2015 Richard Tucker Award and both the Main and Song Prizes at the 2013 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition; she is also a winner of the 2007 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and a Grammy nominee. Barton made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2014 as Adalgisa in *Norma*. Her 2016–17 season includes a U.S./U.K. recital

tour with pianist James Baillieu; a return to the Metropolitan Opera for her role debut as Ježibaba (*Rusalka*) and as Fenena (*Nabucco*); her first Princess Eboli (*Don Carlo*) in her Deutsche Oper Berlin debut; and her New York Philharmonic debut as Fricka in *Das Rheingold*. This fall, Delos Music releases Barton's first solo album, *All Who Wander*, featuring songs by Mahler, Dvořák, and Sibelius.

ŠTEFAN MARGITA (Loge)

Štefan Margita first appeared with San Francisco Opera in 2007 as Walther von der Vogelweide in *Tannhäuser*. He made his critically acclaimed role debut as Loge in the Company's 2008 production of *Das Rheingold* with an encore performance in the 2011 *Ring* cycle. Margita has performed Laca Klemeň (*Jenůfa*) to great praise around the world, including the Glyndebourne Festival, Prague National Theatre, and Paris's Théâtre du Châtelet. He began his international career as Vána Kudrjáš (*Kát'a Kabanová*) at the Grand Théâtre de Genève, where he returned in 2004 as Luka Kuzmič (*From the House of the Dead*)—a role he has also performed at Teatro alla Scala, the Metropolitan Opera and the Aix-en-Provence Festival. The tenor's upcoming engagements include Loge at Lyric Opera of Chicago, the Drum Major (*Wozzeck*) at Paris Opéra, and Luka Kuzmič at Paris Opéra and Royal Opera, Covent Garden.

DONALD RUNNICLES (Conductor)

Recipient of the 2009 San Francisco Opera Medal, Donald Runnicles served as music director and principal conductor of San Francisco Opera from 1992 to 2009. He first led the Company in two *Ring* cycles in 1990 and has since conducted more than 60 productions here, including *Les Troyens* in 2015 and the world premieres of Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*; the West Coast premiere of Wallace's *Harvey Milk*; the North American premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*; and the 1999 and 2011 *Ring* cycles. Runnicles made his North American debut in 1988 conducting Berg's *Lulu* at the Metropolitan Opera. He appears regularly at the BBC Proms and Edinburgh Festival, and has built strong relationships as a guest conductor with the Bayreuth, Salzburg, and Glyndebourne festivals, as well as the Vienna State Opera. He is currently general music director of Deutsche Oper Berlin, principal guest conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, and music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival. Maestro Runnicles was named Officer of the British Empire in 2004.

FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO (Director)

Recipient of the 2015 San Francisco Opera Medal, Francesca Zambello began her long association with the Company in 1983 as assistant stage director for *Ariadne auf Naxos* and has since been involved in more than 50 productions here, including *Luisa Miller*, *La Traviata*, *La Voix humaine*, *La Bohème*, *Prince Igor*, *Jenůfa*, the West Coast premiere of Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, *Porgy and Bess*, her 2011 *Ring* cycle, and the world premieres of *Heart of a Soldier* and *Two Women*. She is currently general and artistic director of the Glimmerglass Festival and artistic director of Washington National Opera. In addition to her work in opera, she has also staged plays and musicals on Broadway and around the world. Her many honors include France's Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres and the Russian Federation's medal for service to culture, three Olivier Awards, two French Grand Prix des Critiques and Germany's Palme d'Or. An adjunct professor at Yale, she began her career as an assistant director to the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. This November, she returns to San Francisco Opera to direct a new production of *Aida*.

ABOUT *DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN* (THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG)

Based loosely on Norse mythology, the plot of Wagner's epic music-drama *Der Ring des Nibelungen* revolves around a ring made from gold stolen from the Rhine River—the ring can only be forged by one who renounces love forever, and it gives its possessor unlimited power. But the ring carries a deadly curse that determines the destiny of all who come in contact with it. Throughout the cycle, various mythic figures struggle to obtain the ring; chief among them is Wotan, ruler of the gods. Wotan strives to undo the curse by fathering a pure-of-heart hero, but events spin out of control as his offspring—the half-mortal twins Siegmund and Sieglinde and the Valkyrie Brünnhilde—defy his will. The ring is eventually won by the hero Siegfried, son of Siegmund and Sieglinde, and he braves a circle of fire to awaken the sleeping Brünnhilde, after which the two fall ecstatically in love. Siegfried gives the ring to Brünnhilde as a token of their union and leaves for new adventures, but he is ultimately slain and Brünnhilde sacrifices herself to return the ring to its natural home in the Rhine, thus ending the rule of the gods and restoring the world to its natural order.

Composed from 1853 to 1874, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is arguably the pinnacle of operatic art. The composer, who also wrote the libretto, drew inspiration for his magnum opus from early Germanic and Norse mythology and from the poem *Nibelungenlied*, which was written by an anonymous German poet in the 13th century. In 1848 Wagner drafted a prose outline for his drama, and throughout the next five years he wrote the librettos for *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* in reverse order. While *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* received their premieres in Munich in 1869, the first performance of the complete *Ring* cycle was in 1876 in Bayreuth, Germany.

Der Ring des Nibelungen is regarded by many as the artistic ancestor of such 20th-century epics as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Star Wars*. Common themes such as the lust for power, the lure of wealth, the sacred beauty of nature and the destructive force of mankind remain relevant today.

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To obtain further press information, including *Der Ring des Nibelungen* production photographs and headshots of the cast and creative team, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

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