



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD

GIVING VOICE TO POTENTIAL

**PHILANTHROPIST MARY POLAND
ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD AT ANNUAL MEETING**

Drew Altizer Photography Awarded “Star of Excellence”

Elizabeth Birka-White and Jane Mudge Will Co-Chair *Opera Ball 2019*



San Francisco Opera Guild President Mary Poland with husband Bill; Mary Poland addressing audience at the Guild luncheon; Jane Mudge with “Star of Excellence” recipient Drew Altizer; *Opera Ball 2019* Co-Chairs Elizabeth Birka-White and Jane Mudge [Drew Altizer Photography]

sfoperaguild.com

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (November 15, 2018) — At San Francisco Opera Guild’s Annual Meeting on Tuesday, November 13, at the Westin St. Francis San Francisco on Union Square, **Mary Poland** was elected president of the organization for a two-year term. Poland succeeds **Jane Mudge**, whose tenure as president (2016–2018) was celebrated with a proclamation signed by San Francisco Mayor London Breed declaring November 13 “Jane S. Mudge Day.” During the Guild’s annual luncheon, held immediately after the meeting, society photographer **Drew Altizer** was presented with the “Star of Excellence” award.

Poland assumes leadership of San Francisco Opera Guild during its 80th anniversary year, overseeing all aspects of Opera Guild operations, fundraising and activities, including the Guild’s award-winning portfolio of education programs, outreach efforts to Guild Chapters around the Bay Area and signature events such as *Opera Ball*, the San Francisco Opera season-opening gala. Additionally, she will serve on the San Francisco Opera Association Board of Directors.

Poland said: “It is an honor to follow in the tradition spearheaded by past Guild presidents, many of whom are present today, especially Jane Mudge whose strategic mind has elevated the Guild to new heights. As we approach our 80th anniversary year, I am confident that the men and women of this organization will work together to continue making a powerful impact on the lives of children, adults and families throughout Northern California through the power of opera. We do this both with our education programs in the schools and at the War Memorial Opera House, which is the most important classroom.”

In a related announcement, Poland broke the news that Jane Mudge and **Elizabeth Birka-White** have been appointed to co-chair *Opera Ball 2019*, which will inaugurate San Francisco Opera’s 2019–20 Season on Friday, September 6.

Mary Poland’s philanthropic volunteerism encompasses more than 40 years of board engagement and leadership roles with esteemed Bay Area non-profit institutions—including 35 years as an Opera Guild board member. Since joining the board in 1983, Poland has served as Vice President of Development, Treasurer and held many other offices along with co-chairing events such as *An Evening on the Stage* in 2015 and *Opera Ball* in 1995 and in 2010 (with the late Charlot Malin). She continues to apply her experience and advocacy with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, NatureBridge, the Buck Institute and the NorCal Advisory Council for Georgetown University. Poland resides in Marin with her husband, Bill Poland.

Guests at the Guild’s annual luncheon included representatives from Neiman Marcus Union Square, Wells Fargo, Accenture, Saks Fifth Avenue, designer **J. Riccardo Benavides** and San Francisco composer **Jake Heggie**. Heggie, whose opera *It’s a Wonderful Life* with a libretto by Gene Scheer will be presented by San Francisco Opera from November 17 through December 9 in its West Coast premiere, addressed the assembled guests about the positive impact the Guild has had on his career.

During the luncheon, outgoing President Jane Mudge presented Drew Altizer with the “Star of Excellence” award for the exemplary work of his eponymous photography company, which has photographed signature Bay Area events for more than 15 years, with coverage of performing and visual arts, athletics, fashion, politics and a variety of charitable causes. Drew Altizer Photography images have been published in *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Town & Country*, *Women’s Wear Daily* and many local and regional publications, including *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Nob Hill Gazette*, *Gentry*, *San Francisco* magazine, *Haute Living* and *C* magazine.

Mudge said, “Drew Altizer Photography embodies the spirit of a hands-on company and is a perfect match for the Guild. Drew and his dedicated team of photographers and back-room support know how to capture that indelible moment at a celebration and share it with the world at large. They continue to be a major component of what makes our events successful and a valued partner in executing the Guild’s mission within the community.”

Founded in 1939, San Francisco Opera Guild is a professional organization made up of business and civic leaders who are united by the common goals of promoting the artform of opera as a tool for enhancing the lives of every person, especially young children, and supporting San Francisco Opera. The Guild's education programs reach 50,000 students in nearly 200 schools throughout Northern California annually, encouraging them to discover the power and beauty of opera. Lectures at Opera Guild Chapters in San Francisco, Marin, the East Bay, the Peninsula and Napa/Sonoma; Opera House tours; and Insight Panel discussions with San Francisco Opera artists foster deeper understanding of the operas presented on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House. To learn more about San Francisco Opera Guild, visit sfooperaguild.com.

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2018–2019**

President	Mary Poland
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Education Fund Chairman	Rita Milner
Director-At-Large	Carol Benz
Ex-Officio:	
Past President	Jane Mudge
Nominating Committee Chairman	To Be Elected By Nominating Committee

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To obtain further press information, including photographs of Mary Poland and the San Francisco Opera Guild annual luncheon, please visit sfoopera.com/press or contact:

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