



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ANNOUNCES “EARN YOUR WINGS”
INITIATIVE IN COLLABORATION WITH
COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP AND COMPASS FAMILY SERVICES**

**#EarnYourWings Inspired by Themes of the Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer Opera,
It’s a Wonderful Life, Opening November 17 at the War Memorial Opera House**

sfopera.com/EarnYourWings #EarnYourWings #WonderfulSF



L to R: Community Housing Partnership/Megan Bayley; Compass Family Services/Travis Jensen; *It’s a Wonderful Life*/Karen Almond

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 29, 2018) – San Francisco Opera announces “**Earn Your Wings**” (**#EarnYourWings**), a new initiative designed to promote civic engagement and which recognizes **Community Housing Partnership** and **Compass Family Services**—two organizations making an impact in the City of San Francisco by providing life-changing services and housing to families and individuals at risk of or who have experienced homelessness. The campaign is born from the Company’s focus on developing civic practices as part of a strategic framework to guide the organization into its centennial 2022–23 Season and beyond. With the launch of #EarnYourWings and similar programs in the future, San Francisco Opera renews its commitment to form responsive, long-term reciprocal relationships with community partners.

#EarnYourWings is inspired by themes in San Francisco composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer’s opera *It’s a Wonderful Life* (which is based in part on the classic Frank Capra film), opening at the War Memorial Opera House on November 17. In the opera, the angel-in-training Clara seeks to earn her wings by helping George Bailey recognize the profound impact he has had on the lives of people around him by giving back to his neighbors, colleagues and friends. In this spirit, and in recognition of National Hunger and Homeless Awareness Week (November 10–18), San Francisco Opera invites audiences to join the Company

and ‘earn your wings’ by engaging in opportunities to support Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership’s programs, and by supporting holiday giving activities in their own communities. The Company’s long-term goal is to extend these partnerships through continued collaborative activities, co-designed programming, and residencies into the future.

“San Francisco Opera believes in creating impactful, reciprocal connections with our Bay Area community. With ‘Earn Your Wings’ we hope to promote some of the critical work being done in our immediate neighborhoods of Civic Center and the Tenderloin by forming relationships with Community Housing Partnership and Compass Family Services—two organizations who are making a direct impact in critical areas for our city right now, namely homelessness, affordable housing and social support,” said San Francisco Opera General Director **Matthew Shilvock**. “Our presentation of *It’s a Wonderful Life* this holiday season, with the opera’s themes of how individuals can make a positive impact on an entire community, provides an ideal lens through which to build these partnerships.”

San Francisco Opera’s #Earn Your Wings campaign continues through December and includes:

- **Learn, give and share –**
San Francisco Opera partners with Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership to share stories from each organization and their clients at San Francisco Opera’s **#EarnYourWings webpage** (sfopera.com/EarnYourWings) and via the Company’s social media channels ([@sfopera](https://twitter.com/sfopera)) and by using hashtags **#EarnYourWings** and **#WonderfulSF**. Audiences can engage with each organization’s year-end and holiday giving programs, such as Compass Family Services’ Adopt-a-Family campaign, which pairs individuals, families and groups with Compass families transitioning from homelessness who lack the resources to buy holiday gifts, and Community Housing Partnership’s year-end household donations drive. Visit the **#EarnYourWings webpage** for ongoing updates and more information about how you can make a difference.
- **Celebrate the angels in your community –**
San Francisco Opera, Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership invite their audiences and the broader community to celebrate the real-life angels in their lives. The opera’s George Bailey learns through the angel Clara that he has impacted the lives of those around him in ways he never realized. Recognize and thank individuals and organizations who are making a difference in your community by posting in our **#EarnYourWings Facebook group** and tagging them. San Francisco Opera will feature selected stories on the **#EarnYourWings webpage**.
- **#EarnYourWings special events –**
Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership will partner with San Francisco Opera for events and programming highlighting #EarnYourWings. Activities include a **November 16 public panel discussion** on the social impact themes of *It’s a Wonderful Life*. This event will explore how the arts community can help address the homelessness crisis in San Francisco and feature constituents from Community Housing Partnership and Compass Family Services’ network and members of the arts community. Additional private events are being planned, such as post-show

'talk-backs' with artists from the opera. Complete public event details will be announced at a later date; visit the [#EarnYourWings webpage](#) for updates.

- ***It's a Wonderful Life* Family Day (Saturday, November 24)** – In conjunction with the Thanksgiving weekend performance of *It's a Wonderful Life* on Saturday, November 24 at 2 p.m., San Francisco Opera hosts a Family Day celebration. From **11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.**, the “**Bedford Falls Makers Market**” located in the **War Memorial Courtyard** (Franklin Street at Fulton Street) will be **open to the public**. Inspired by the setting of *It's a Wonderful Life* (the town of Bedford Falls, New York) this outdoor marketplace will offer food trucks, handmade crafts from local artists and other family activities. Performance attendees will also have opportunities to support the work of Compass Family Services and Community Housing Partnership. **Performance tickets** for the November 24, 2 p.m. matinee of *It's a Wonderful Life* are available at **50% off for children under 18 years of age**; the performance is recommended for ages 8 and up. Learn more about *It's a Wonderful Life* and Family Day at sfopera.com/wonderful.
- **Community Housing Partnership/Compass Family Services go behind-the-scenes at the opera** – Community Housing Partnership and Compass Family Services community members will go behind-the-scenes at San Francisco Opera, with invitations to activities including the final dress rehearsal of *It's a Wonderful Life*. The by-invitation-only dress rehearsal audience includes 1,500 students from Bay Area schools.

“Compass Family Services is thrilled to partner with the San Francisco Opera. Not only are we neighbors, serving San Francisco for over 105 years, we share a deep and rich history in our City by the Bay,” said **Erica Kisch**, Executive Director of Compass Family Services. “The stories of our families are the stories of San Francisco; stories of loss, courage, hope and perseverance; stories about the road less traveled, winners and losers, and struggles that end in triumph and transformation. We look forward to sharing our stories with you and to working together with the San Francisco Opera to create a culturally rich and diverse community for all San Franciscans.”

“Community Housing Partnership is honored to partner with San Francisco Opera in spreading awareness—and hope—surrounding the most critical issues facing our city today. This partnership exemplifies the collective spirit of San Francisco, and what is possible when organizations from different sectors unite as a community to support our most vulnerable neighbors in need,” shared Community Housing Partnership’s Chief Executive Officer, **Gail Gilman**. “We are thrilled to share inspiring stories of hope and resilience from our residents who have overcome homelessness, and alongside the San Francisco Opera, empower fellow community members to earn their wings by being part of building a brighter future for all of San Francisco.”

It's a Wonderful Life, by composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer, is based in part on Frank Capra’s beloved 1946 film and the story *The Greatest Gift* by Philip Van Doren Stern. Synonymous with the holiday season, Capra’s classic of American cinema, which starred James Stewart, Donna Reed and Lionel Barrymore, tells the story of George Bailey, who on Christmas Eve is contemplating suicide until the angel

Clarence grants him a vision that restores George’s vigor for life. Drawn to the subject for the enlightening journey of its central character, Heggie said: “The music and soundscapes attempt to capture both the otherworldly side of the story and the earthly music of each decade we explore with George—from childhood games and a high school dance, to soaring love scenes, a wedding, the despair of the economic crash of 1929 and World War II, the threat of a suicide and the extraordinary, transformative power of a community coming together to help.”

San Francisco Opera presents the West Coast premiere of ***It’s a Wonderful Life*** in nine performances **November 17 through December 9, 2018** at the War Memorial Opera House, including two Sunday matinee performances and a **special Saturday family matinee on November 24**. *It’s a Wonderful Life* is co-commissioned and co-produced with Houston Grand Opera and the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. To learn more, visit sfopera.com.

#EarnYourWings and San Francisco Opera’s activities with Community Housing Partnership and Compass Family Services are created through a creative partnership with the Chicago-based [Fifth House Ensemble](#), a national leader in collaborative, arts-integrated program design for educational and social impact. #EarnYourWings is made possible by an [OPERA America Innovation Grant](#), supported by the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation.

About COMPASS FAMILY SERVICES

Serving 5,000 parents and children each year, Compass Family Services leads the way in helping San Francisco families facing homelessness secure stable housing and attain economic self-sufficiency and family well-being. We have been service innovators for more than 100 years, and over 90% of the families who complete our housing programs achieve lasting success. Learn more at compass-sf.org.

About COMMUNITY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Community Housing Partnership is a leading non-profit in San Francisco dedicated to helping individuals who have experienced homelessness secure housing and become self-sufficient. Our mission is built on a simple-but-powerful idea: We combine housing with supportive services like health care and job training and empower our residents to change local policies. A home can help to stabilize a person’s life — helping people to improve their health, cook for their family, find a job, begin paying rent and feeling a sense of dignity. Together with our supporters, we are changing lives and rebuilding the neighborhoods and city that we love. Each year, Community Housing Partnership’s supportive housing transforms the lives of over 1,700 formerly homeless adults, children, seniors, and veterans. The impact is long-lasting: 97 percent of our past and present residents who were formerly homeless stay in housing. Learn more at chp-sf.org.



This press release and downloadable photos from Community Housing Partnership, Compass Family Services and San Francisco Opera's presentation of *It's a Wonderful Life*, are available at sfopera.com/press.

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