



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA OPENS 102nd SEASON SEPTEMBER 6
WITH GIUSEPPE VERDI'S *UN BALLO IN MASCHERA***



Eun Sun Kim; Leo Muscato's production of *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

Photos: Kristen Loken (left), Yasuko Kageyama/Rome Opera (center, right)

Music Director Eun Sun Kim leads new-to-San Francisco production by director Leo Muscato and an international cast headed by Michael Fabiano, Lianna Haroutounian, Amartuvshin Enkhbat, Mei Gui Zhang, Judit Kutasi



Michael Fabiano (Gustavus III), Lianna Haroutounian (Amelia), Amartuvshin Enkhbat (Renato), Mei Gui Zhang (Oscar), Judit Kutasi (Ulrica)

**Opening Weekend celebrations include *Opera Ball* benefit gala and
September 8 free *Opera in the Park* concert**

**Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and [sfopera.com](https://www.sfopera.com)
September 15 performance will be livestreamed**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 27, 2024) — San Francisco Opera opens its 102nd season on Friday, September 6 with Giuseppe Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Opera Ball*, the opening night benefit co-hosted with San Francisco Opera Guild. Caroline H. Hume Music

Director **Eun Sun Kim** leads the Company's first presentation of *Un Ballo in Maschera* (*The Masked Ball*) since 2014 in Italian director Leo Muscato's staging for the Rome Opera which has never been presented outside of Europe. Opening weekend festivities inaugurating the 2024–25 Season continue Sunday, September 8 with *San Francisco Chronicle Presents Opera in the Park*, the annual free concert in Golden Gate Park featuring Maestro Kim and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra with vocal stars of the new season.

Since its premiere in 1859—the peak of Verdi's prolific "middle period" when he was producing soon-to-be classic operas like *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata* and *Il Trovatore* with astonishing regularity—*Un Ballo in Maschera* has emerged as one of the composer's most compelling and tightly constructed stage works. A political drama of hidden agendas, treachery and all-consuming passions, *Ballo's* fast-paced story is continuously propelled forward by Verdi's melodic invention, especially in episodes like the eerie fortune-telling scene, the midnight love duet and Renato's Act III aria, "Eri tu" ("You were the one"), which is regarded as one of the composer's greatest baritone arias.

Music Director **Eun Sun Kim**, noted for bringing "tonal muscle and stylistic variety" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) to her performances of Verdi, leads *Un Ballo in Maschera* as part of her initiative to conduct major works by Verdi and Richard Wagner every season. This season she takes on Verdi's *Ballo* (September 6–27) and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (October 19–November 5), each for the first time. Her 2024–25 Season also includes a sold-out performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony on October 26, honoring the work's 200th anniversary, and Mozart's early masterpiece *Idomeneo* in June 2025.

With productions of *La Forza del Destino*, *Rigoletto*, *Attila*, *Ernani*, *I Masnadieri* and *I Due Foscari*, **Leo Muscato** has developed a deep affinity for staging Verdi's works. His vision for *Un Ballo in Maschera*, which retains Verdi's original Swedish setting, received praise at its 2016 performances in Rome for playing "skillfully with the dramatic elements in the story" (*Opera*). Muscato's creative team collaborators, each making their Company debut, are set designer **Federica Parolini**, costume designer **Silvia Aymonino** and lighting designer **Alessandro Verazzi**. San Francisco Opera Dance Master **Colm Seery** is the choreographer and Chorus Director **John Keene** prepares the artists of the San Francisco Opera Chorus.

The international cast is headed by a nucleus of leading operatic stage artists. **Michael Fabiano** portrays Gustavus III, the Swedish king whose 1792 assassination at a masked ball in Stockholm's opera house was the spark that fired Verdi's imagination to create the opera. Fabiano made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2011 and has returned on many

occasions as some of opera's foremost heroes, including the title role of Verdi's *Don Carlo* and in Puccini's *La Bohème*, *Tosca* and *Madame Butterfly*. Of the latter, the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, "American tenor Michael Fabiano, always a welcome presence in the War Memorial, brought his blazing tone and easy fluency to the role of Pinkerton."

The role of Amelia is performed by Armenian soprano Lianna Haroutounian. Since her 2014 Company debut as Tosca, Haroutounian has enjoyed several triumphs on the War Memorial Opera House stage, including Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly* as a "Butterfly for the ages" (*Mercury News*), Nedda in Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*—"another of her glistening, glorious star turns" (*San Francisco Chronicle*)—and the title role in Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.

Completing *Ballo's* love triangle is Amartuvshin Enkhbat as Renato. The young Mongolian baritone, appearing with San Francisco Opera for the first time, has garnered praise worldwide in Verdi's baritone roles, including for his 2023 Metropolitan Opera debut as Germont in *La Traviata*: "... his burnished-mahogany 'Di Provenza il mar' proving the most deeply satisfying singing of anyone onstage" (*New York Times*).

Last seen on the War Memorial Opera House stage in 2022 as "a touchingly expressive, plush-voiced Eurydice" (*Opera News*) in Gluck's opera, Mei Gui Zhang returns as Oscar, the king's page. The Chinese soprano was recently featured in the Company's award-winning *In Song* video portrait series. [In Song: Meigui Zhang](#) traces her personal and artistic journey from Chengdu to an international opera career.

Judit Kutasi's American debut with San Francisco Opera last season provided one of the most thrilling recent discoveries for critics and audiences alike. Of Kutasi's Ortrud in *Lohengrin*, San Francisco Classical Voice said, "She brought a huge, beautifully controlled, vividly colorful voice and first-class acting to the role," and Parterre proclaimed her debut "quite possible one of the most noteworthy US debuts in the recent years!" The Romanian mezzo-soprano returns this season as the mysterious fortune teller, Ulrica.

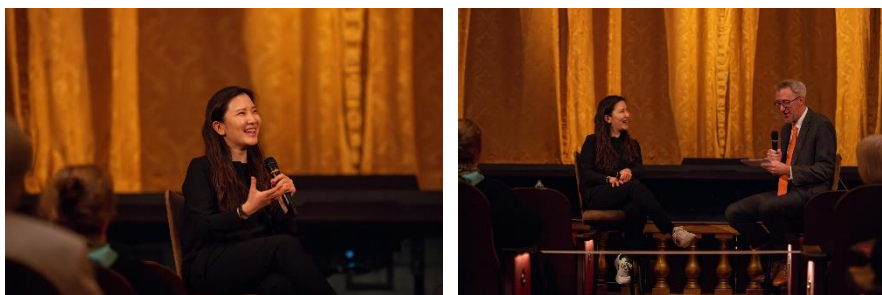
Portraying the co-conspirators who plot to assassinate the king are bass Adam Lau as Samuel and current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow bass-baritone Jongwon Han as Tom. Tenor Christopher Oglesby is the Chief Magistrate and current Adler Fellows Samuel Kidd and Thomas Kinch take on the roles of Christiano and Amelia's servant, respectively.

San Francisco Opera first presented *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1931 and returned to it in 1937 and 1940, a period when Verdi's opera was rarely heard on any other American opera

stage. The Company has presented the opera in 18 previous seasons, typically with casts featuring the art form's luminaries. Two artists who are closely associated with *Un Ballo in Maschera*, both on stage and recordings, made their role debuts in the opera with San Francisco Opera: soprano Leontyne Price sang her first Amelia here in 1965 and tenor Luciano Pavarotti portrayed King Gustavus for the first time in 1971.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles, the seven performances of *Un Ballo in Maschera* are scheduled for September 6 (8 p.m.), 11 (7:30 p.m.), 15 (2 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 21 (7:30 p.m.), 24 (7:30 p.m.), 27 (7:30 p.m.), 2024.

POST-PERFORMANCE TALKBACK WITH EUN SUN KIM: Sunday, September 15



Eun Sun Kim at a post-performance talkback. Photo: Reneff-Olson Productions

Following the Sunday, September 15 matinee of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*, San Francisco Opera Music Director Eun Sun Kim will participate in a post-performance talkback in the auditorium. Ticketholders are invited to gather after the performance for a live Q&A with the maestro to learn about the behind-the-scenes work that goes into producing Verdi's opera.

LIVESTREAM: UN BALLO IN MASCHERA, Sunday, September 15

The Sunday, September 15 matinee performance of *Un Ballo in Maschera* will be livestreamed at 2 p.m. PT. The opera will also be available to watch on demand for 48 hours beginning on Monday, September 16 at 10 a.m. PT. Tickets for the livestream and limited on-demand viewing are \$27.50. For tickets and more information about livestreams, visit sfopera.com/digital.

PRE-OPERA TALKS

San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna will provide a 20-minute overview of the opera 55 minutes prior to each performance in the Opera House auditorium for ticketholders. An audio recording of the talk will be available at sfopera.com/ballo.

OPENING WEEKEND (September 6–8)



Opera Ball at City Hall (left) and the Opera House (center); the free *Opera in the Park* concert.

Photos: Drew Altizer Photography (left, center), Cory Weaver (right)

San Francisco Opera's new season opens Friday, September 6 with *Opera Ball*, the annual benefit co-presented by San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild. The celebratory evening begins with a cocktail reception and sumptuous dinner at City Hall. Guests then proceed to the Opera House where the curtain rises on Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Dancing and late-night bites await back at City Hall after the opera.

Opera Ball is made possible, in part, by Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey and is co-chaired by Romana D. Bracco and Valerie Crane Dorfman. Proceeds benefit a wide range of artistic initiatives at San Francisco Opera and San Francisco Opera Guild's education programs which reach thousands of students in K-12 classrooms and afterschool programs. For more information, visit sfopera.com/operaball. BRAVO! CLUB, the community of young professionals and opera lovers, will kick off the new season on September 6 with a special Cocktail Celebration. Visit sfopera.com/bravo for more information.

Opening weekend concludes with *San Francisco Chronicle Presents Opera in the Park* on Sunday, September 8 at 1:30 p.m. The free annual concert showcases Eun Sun Kim, the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and stars of the Company's fall season at Robin Williams Meadow in Golden Gate Park.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Un Ballo in Maschera* range from \$28 to \$426 and are available at the San Francisco Box Office (301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco), by calling (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com. San Francisco Opera Box Office hours are Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (Saturdays phone only). A \$2 per-ticket facility fee is included in Balcony 1, 2 and 3 zone prices; all other zones include a \$3 per-ticket facility fee.

Tickets for the September 15 livestream of *Un Ballo in Maschera* are \$27.50. For more information, visit sfopera.com/digital.

Subscriptions for the Company's 102nd season start from \$146 for the Full Series (6 productions), and \$52 for the Half Series (2–4 productions) and a Design Your Own (DYO) option (minimum three operas). For information about subscriber benefits and special series subscriptions, including the Student & Teacher Series offering 50% off select Full and Half Series, visit sfopera.com/subscribe.

Ticket packages are available for *Opera Ball* and the BRAVO! Cocktail Dinner Opening Night Celebration at sfopera.com/operaball.

Rush tickets are available for select performances to those who register at sfopera.com/rush. Rush tickets are available from 11 a.m. until midnight of the day before the performance or until the allotment of rush tickets is sold out. Registration in advance is required to receive notices about Rush ticket availability. Standing Room tickets will be sold for mainstage opera performances in the War Memorial Opera House. Standing room tickets are \$10 and sold on the day of performance only, beginning at 10am. Cash only and limit of two tickets per person.

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/Muni Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49 and F Market Street. For further public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmta.com.

Gifts of all sizes help create San Francisco Opera's programs and are appreciated. To donate visit sfopera.com/donate.

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2024–25 Season, visit sfopera.com.

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UN BALLO IN MASCHERA CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut †Role Debut

†Current Adler Fellow ◇Adler Fellowship and Merola Opera Program Graduate +Merola Opera Program Graduate

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House (301 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco)

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA (THE MASKED BALL) by Giuseppe Verdi

September 6 (8 p.m.), 11 (7:30 p.m.), 15 (2 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 21 (7:30 p.m.), 24 (7:30 p.m.) 27 (7:30 p.m.), 2024

Opera in three acts. Libretto by Antonio Somma, based on a libretto by Eugene Scribe for Daniel Auber's opera *Gustave III, ou Le Bal masque*.

Production of the Fondazione Teatro dell'Opera di Roma

Approximate running time: 3 hours, including two intermissions

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

World Premiere: Rome, February 17, 1859
First SFO Performance: September 19, 1931
Most Recent: October 2014

Cast:

<i>Amelia</i>	Lianna Haroutounian
<i>Gustavus III</i>	Michael Fabiano
<i>Renato</i>	Amartuvshin Enkhbat *
<i>Oscar</i>	Mei Gui Zhang †+
<i>Ulrica</i>	Judit Kutasi
<i>Tom</i>	Jongwon Han ††
<i>Samuel</i>	Adam Lau †+
<i>Christiano</i>	Samuel Kidd * ††
<i>Chief Magistrate</i>	Christopher Oglesby †◇
<i>Amelia's Servant</i>	Thomas Kinch ††

Creative Team:

<i>Conductor</i>	Eun Sun Kim
<i>Director</i>	Leo Muscato *
<i>Set Designer</i>	Federica Parolini *
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Silvia Aymonino *
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Alessandro Verazzi *
<i>Choreographer</i>	Colm Seery
<i>Chorus Director</i>	John Keene

Fight Director

Dave Maier

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

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Un Ballo in Maschera is made possible, in part, by Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey; Jerome and Thao Dodson; Keith and Priscilla Geeslin; the San Francisco Opera Guild; John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn; Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem through the Great interpreters of Italian Opera Fund; The Thomas Tilton Production Fund. Mei-Gui Zhang's appearance is made possible by a gift to the Emerging Stars Fund by Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem. Additional support provided by Candace Zander Kahn, Jerome Guillen and Jeremy Gallaher, Barbara Moller Ward.

Opera Ball is made possible, in part, by Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey.

Opera in the Park is made possible, in part, by Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor Diane B. Wilsey. Additional support provided by The William & Gretchen Kimball Fund, Kaiser Permanente.

San Francisco Opera livestreams are made possible, in part, by George and Leslie Hume.

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PRESS PHOTOS: Artist headshots and production images for *Un Ballo in Maschera* are available at sfopera.com/press.

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