



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

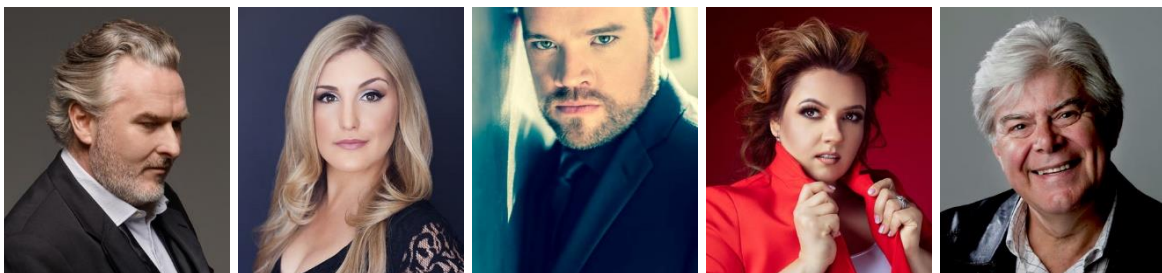
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS
RICHARD WAGNER'S *LOHENGRIN*
October 15–November 1



Scenes from Wagner's *Lohengrin*; San Francisco Opera Music Director Eun Sun Kim
Photos: Clive Barda/Royal Opera, Covent Garden (l, c); Stefan Cohen/San Francisco Opera (r)

Music Director Eun Sun Kim Leads Her First *Lohengrin* in
New-to-San-Francisco-Opera Production by David Alden

Cast Includes Simon O'Neill as Lohengrin, Julie Adams and Brian Mulligan in
Role Debuts as Elsa and Telramund, Judit Kutasi in Her American Debut as
Ortrud and Kristinn Sigmundsson as Heinrich



Simon O'Neill, Julie Adams, Brian Mulligan, Judit Kutasi, Kristinn Sigmundsson

Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and [sfopera.com](https://www.sfopera.com)
October 21 Performance Will Be Livestreamed

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 28, 2023) — San Francisco Opera presents Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* from October 15–November 1 in director David Alden's staging, a co-production of London's Royal Opera, Covent Garden and Antwerp's Opera Vlaanderen.

Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and a cast featuring tenor Simon O'Neill, soprano Julie Adams, baritone Brian Mulligan, bass Kristinn Sigmundsson, and, in her American opera debut, mezzo-soprano Judit Kutasi. Wagner's riveting music in *Lohengrin* for the chorus is performed by the San Francisco Opera Chorus under the leadership of Chorus Director John Keene.

Wagner's *Lohengrin* transforms historical events from the tenth century into a mythic romance exploring the limitations of faith and love. At the center is Elsa, the princess of Brabant, who stands wrongly accused of a heinous crime. Her savior, a mysterious knight who arrives to defend her, will marry Elsa provided she never ask his name or where he comes from. *Lohengrin*, which had its premiere in Weimar in 1850, was one of the composer's earliest triumphs and features a monumental score with an expansive, ethereal soundscape.

With this pivotal work of the operatic canon, Eun Sun Kim fully implements her new initiative to lead works by Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi each season. Earlier this season she was on the podium for a revival of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*. For the foreseeable future, Kim will conduct at least one opera by both composers each season.

Director David Alden's vision updates the work's setting from medieval Germany to a mid-twentieth-century European state at war. *The Guardian* called the production "prescient in light of current events in Europe; the opera's setting in a divided society threatened by war from the east has shed its historical trappings and instead become unexpectedly contemporary." This staging, new to San Francisco Opera, features the creative work of set designer Paul Steinberg, costume designer Gideon Davey, original lighting designer Adam Silverman which will be relit in San Francisco by Simon Bennison, projection designer Tal Rosner and choreographer Maxine Braham.

Simon O'Neill stars as the mysterious knight, Lohengrin. Known for his performances of Wagnerian heroes such as Lohengrin, Siegmund, Siegfried, Tristan and Parsifal, O'Neill was hailed by the *Houston Chronicle*: "O'Neill's golden tenor, with its easeful command and sweetness of tone, projects Lohengrin's superhuman nobility." The New Zealand-born heldentenor, who began his operatic career in San Francisco as a participant in the Merola Opera Program (2002), made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2012 as Mao Tse-Tung in the Company premiere of John Adams' *Nixon in China*.

American soprano Julie Adams returns to San Francisco Opera to make her role debut as Elsa. The former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow (2015, 2016) has earned acclaim for a variety of roles such as Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème* and German and Slavic heroines, including Freia and Gerhilde in San Francisco Opera's 2018 performances of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. More recently, Adams has taken on the title role of Dvořák's *Rusalka* for Staatstheater Braunschweig and was praised as "vocally brilliant, sensitive and expressive" (*Die Deutsche Bühne*) as Elisabeth in Wagner's *Tannhäuser* at Wuppertal Opera.

The union of Elsa and Lohengrin is opposed by the scheming Ortrud, who is performed by Romanian-Hungarian mezzo-soprano Judit Kutasi in her American and role debuts. Kutasi has won acclaim in a variety of roles including her "immaculately and impressively sung" (*Opera*) Laura in Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* at Toulouse's Théâtre du Capitole. American baritone Brian Mulligan makes his role debut as Ortrud's husband, Telramund. A frequent collaborator with San Francisco Opera since his Company debut in 2008, Mulligan has earned recent praise for his "unusually vivid intensity" (*New York Times*) as the Herald in *Lohengrin* for the Metropolitan Opera and for his "extraordinarily probing performance" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) in an excerpt from John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* at San Francisco Opera's *100th Anniversary Concert* last summer.

Icelandic bass Kristinn Sigmundsson, who was the Water Gnome in Dvořák's *Rusalka* at San Francisco Opera under Kim's baton in 2019, returns as King Heinrich. Baritone Thomas Lehman bows for the first time with San Francisco Opera as the Herald.

Lohengrin entered San Francisco Opera's performance history in 1931 as the third Wagner opera to be performed by the Company after *Tristan und Isolde* (1927) and *Tannhäuser* (1930). The titular knight has been performed on the War Memorial Opera House stage by such leading tenors as Lauritz Melchior, Set Svanholm, Sandor Konya, Ben Heppner and Brandon Jovanovich, the latter in an acclaimed role debut in 2012. Conductors who have led the work for San Francisco Opera include Fritz Reiner, William Steinberg, Charles Mackerras, former Chorus Director Ian Robertson and former Music Directors Donald Runnicles and Nicola Luisotti.

Sung in German with English supertitles, the six performances of *Lohengrin* are scheduled for October 15 (2 p.m.), 18 (7 p.m.), 21 (7 p.m.), 24 (7 p.m.), 27 (7 p.m.); November 1 (7 p.m.), 2023.

LIVESTREAM: *Lohengrin*, Saturday, October 21

San Francisco Opera offers livestreams for each of its productions during the 2023–24 Season. The Saturday, October 21 performance of *Lohengrin* will be livestreamed at 7 p.m. PT. The performance will also be available to watch on demand for 48 hours beginning on Sunday, October 22 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.

OPERA PREVIEWS AND PRE-OPERA TALKS

From October 10–13, Professor Simon Williams will present 90-minute overviews of *Lohengrin* for Bay Area chapters of San Francisco Opera Guild. For a full schedule and ticket to these events, visit sfopera.com/operapreviews.

55 minutes before every performance of *Lohengrin*, conductor Peter Susskind will present a 20-minute overview of the opera inside the auditorium of the Opera House for ticketholders. A digital recording of Susskind's pre-opera talk will also be made available at sfopera.com/Lohengrin.

A Musical Evening with Heldentenor Simon O'Neill, Monday, October 30, 6 p.m.

The Wagner Society of Northern California (WSNC) will host a dinner and musical evening with Simon O'Neill on Monday, October 30 at the Marines' Memorial Club (609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94102). This benefit for the Wagner Society's Grant Fund features the New Zealand-born heldentenor and star of San Francisco Opera's *Lohengrin* in a musical program in the Commandant's Room. Tickets are \$200 per person. More information and tickets available here wagnersf.org/events/a-musical-evening-with-heldentenor-simon-oneill/.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Lohengrin* range from \$26 to \$426 and are available at the San Francisco Opera Box Office, by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com. 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 October 21 livestream of *Lohengrin* are \$27.50. For more information, visit sfopera.com/digital.

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 much 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 2023–24 Season, visit sfopera.com.

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LOHENGRIN CASTING AND CALENDAR

**American Debut *San Francisco Opera Debut †Role Debut
‡Current Adler Fellow +Merola Opera Program Graduate ++Merola and Adler Fellowship Graduate

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

LOHENGRIN music and libretto by Richard Wagner
PRODUCTION NEW TO SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

October 15 (2 p.m.), 18 (7 p.m.), 21 (7 p.m.), 24 (7 p.m.), 27 (7 p.m.); November 1 (7 p.m.), 2023

Opera in three acts

Lohengrin is a co-production of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and Opera Vlaanderen. This production was first seen at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden on 30 April 2018.

Sung in German with English supertitles

Approximate running time: 4 hours and 20 minutes including two intermissions

World Premiere:	Weimar, August 28, 1850
First SFO Performance:	September 14, 1931
Most Recent:	October–November 2012

Cast:

<i>Lohengrin</i>	Simon O'Neill +
<i>Elsa</i>	Julie Adams †++
<i>Ortrud</i>	Judit Kutasi †**

Telramund
King Heinrich
The King's Herald
Duke Godfrey
Nobles

Brian Mulligan ♪
Kristinn Sigmundsson
Thomas Lehman *
James Coniglio
Victor Cardamone ♪‡+, Edward Graves ♪‡+,
Jongwon Han ♪‡, Adam Lau ♪+
Jesslyn Thomas ♪, Liesl McPherrin ♪,
Whitney Steele ♪, Silvie Jensen ♪

Pages

Creative Team:

Conductor

Eun Sun Kim

Director

David Alden

Associate Director

Peter Relton *

Set Designer

Paul Steinberg

Costume Designer

Gideon Davey *

Original Lighting Designer

Adam Silverman

Revival Lighting Designer

Simon Bennison *

Projection Designer

Tal Rosner *

Choreographer

Maxine Braham *

Chorus Director

John Keene

Fight Director

Dave Maier

San Francisco Opera Orchestra and San Francisco Opera Chorus

Wagner Society of Northern California Presents

A Musical Evening with Heldentenor Simon O'Neill

Monday, October 30, 6 p.m.

Marines' Memorial Club

609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

The Wagner Society of Northern California (WSNC) hosts a dinner and musical evening with Simon O'Neill on Monday, October 30 at the Marines' Memorial Club. This benefit for the Wagner Society's Grant Fund features the New Zealand-born heldentenor and star of San Francisco Opera's *Lohengrin* in a musical program in the Commandant's Room. Tickets are \$200 per person, including a charitable donation to WSNC. More information and tickets available here wagnersf.org/events/a-musical-evening-with-heldentenor-simon-oneill/.

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by Norby Anderson, Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson, The Dolby Family, Carol and Dixon Doll, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, Keith and Priscilla Geeslin,

Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation for the Arts, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey, Barbara A. Wolfe.

Lohengrin is made possible, in part, by Barbara A. Wolfe; Dr. and Mrs. William M. Coughran; Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson; John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn; Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson; Bernard and Barbro Osher; and Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

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

San Francisco Opera is supported, in part, by a grant from Grants for the Arts.



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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable artist headshots and production images for *Lohengrin* are available at sfopera.com/press.

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