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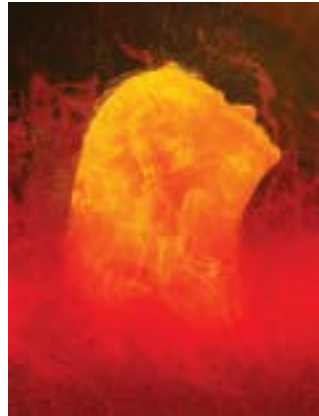
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A MESSAGE FROM

THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

There are few undertakings more ambitious and rewarding for an opera company than Richard Wagner's epic *Ring* cycle. It is our great pleasure to welcome you to this stunning artistic achievement and supreme test of teamwork.

San Francisco's love affair with *The Ring of the Nibelung* dates as far back as 1900 when the touring Metropolitan Opera produced the four-part work at the Grand Opera House on Mission Street (between Third and Fourth Streets and destroyed in the 1906 earthquake). Since San Francisco Opera's first staging of Wagner's tetralogy in 1935 with Lauritz Melchior and Kirsten Flagstad, and subsequent mountings in 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999, and 2011, the Company has been regarded as one of the world's preeminent presenters of this spectacular work.

San Francisco Opera's distinguished association with the *Ring* continues this summer with the Company debuts of Daniel Brenna as Siegfried and Falk Struckmann as Alberich and the return of stars Iréne Theorin, Greer Grimsley, Karita Mattila, Brandon Jovanovich, and Jamie Barton, along with conductor Donald Runnicles, director Francesca Zambello and her visionary production. It is no surprise that ticket sales have been robust and far-ranging for these three complete cycles. To date, our audiences hail from 48 states and 27 countries, including Australia, Brazil, Finland, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, and Singapore.

Once again, our *Ring* production is complemented by an array of ancillary events designed to help you derive the maximum enjoyment and understanding of Wagner's unique creation. An extraordinary choral program featuring the San Francisco Opera Chorus, symposia, and behind-the-scenes activities await us all, and we hope you will take advantage of these opportunities to enrich your experience. Please refer to page 16 in your program for more information.

Producing the *Ring* requires staggering commitment. In addition to the outstanding response we have seen from returning and new subscribers from around the globe, nearly 3,000 households have made donations at all levels to help us bring this work to life. We are pleased to acknowledge the many patrons, foundations, and corporations that have supported the *Ring*, most notably our production sponsors Dr. & Mrs. William M. Coughran; Jerome L. & Thao N. Dodson; Bertie Bialek Elliott; Sylvia & John Hughes; the Edmund W. & Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund; Bernard & Barbro Osher; Betty & Jack Schafer; Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem; The Thomas Tilton Production Fund; Joan & David Traitel, through the Great Singers Fund; United Airlines; and Barbara A. Wolfe.

On behalf of all of us on the board of directors, thank you for being part of the community that has made this emotionally thrilling, entertaining, and elevating artistic experience possible. Whether you are a confirmed Wagnerite or joining us on this epic journey for the first time, we hope you will enjoy these remarkable performances.

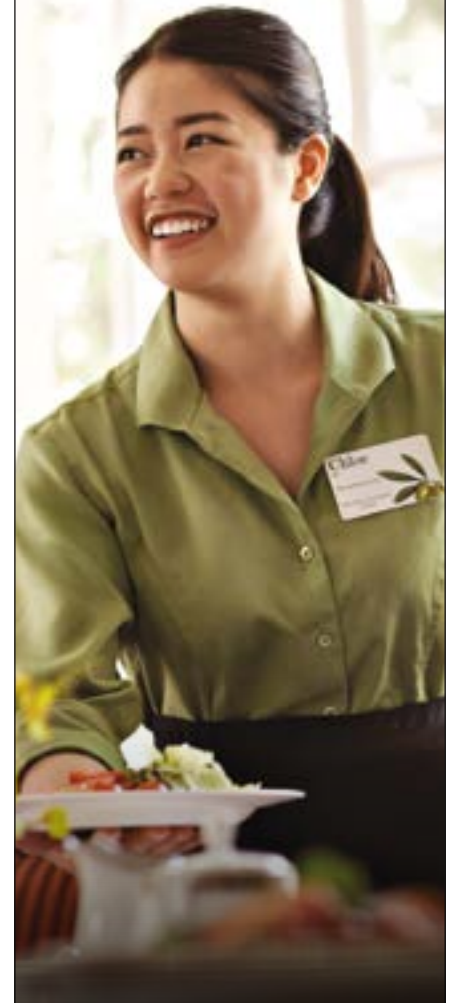


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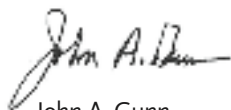


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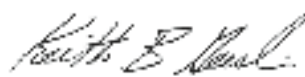
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Envisioning a New *Tosca*

Anticipation is running high for the new production of Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca* that opens on October 3. Glamorous Italian soprano Carmen Giannattasio makes her role and Company debuts as Tosca, and Leo Hussain, British conductor and former music director of the Opéra de Rouen, makes his first San Francisco Opera appearance. But despite these international trappings, this new staging is very much a homegrown labor of love.



SCOTT WALL

An Act I set model of the Company's new *Tosca*

Just 15 miles south of the War Memorial Opera House in Burlingame, the Company's scene shop has been hard at work creating arresting sets of circa 1800 Rome. In addition, the director of this *Tosca*, Shawna Lucey, has been an invaluable part of San Francisco Opera since 2013, first as an assistant stage director and most recently as the stage director of last fall's *La Traviata*.



Shawna Lucey

Not long before assuming his duties as Company general director two years ago, Matthew Shilvock approached Lucey about her thoughts on *Tosca* and whether she had strong feelings about the work, to which she definitively replied "yes." "At the center of the piece is a strong woman, and I really identify with that," says Lucey. What's more, "the music is perfection; it's psychologically thrilling, passionate, full of love and danger. *Tosca* is the perfect opera for today and the perfect first opera. It's also the work that someone who loves opera for decades goes back to."

And it is the opera that the Company has frequently returned to. *Tosca* was featured during the Company's first season in 1923 at the Civic Auditorium, inaugurated the War Memorial Opera House on October 15, 1932, and was chosen to reopen the opera house in 1997 following a closure for seismic retrofitting. *Tosca* has been presented over 150 times in 38 previous seasons. Yet on all those occasions, the sets and costumes have largely been a restaging of the original 1932 *Tosca*. Lucey sees this new production as an opportunity to explore deeper characterizations and better relate the opera's themes to today. The idea of how political corruption rots society and fractures personal relationships shapes her vision.

Lucey has been partnering with production designer Robert Innes Hopkins to create "psychologically charged" spaces. For instance, Act One's Sant'Andrea della Valle features vibrant primary colors rather than the usual pastel hues of Baroque churches. "I'm not just thinking about our dedicated Puccini fans but also our up-and-coming opera audience and how we're going to draw them in with the visuals of this piece," says Lucey.

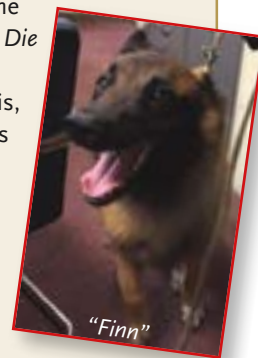
She believes that patrons have other surprises in store. "*Tosca* is a dangerous opera because it can border on melodrama. It's melodramatic if you don't ground it into the deep psychological roots of the given circumstance.

"Robert and I are creating a fresh and enduring staging full of nuanced storytelling that will be passionate, exhilarating, and addictive."

Did You Know?

Götterdämmerung is the only *Ring* opera to use chorus. While the chorus men are featured prominently in Act II and Act III, the women sing a mere 12 measures (28 notes) during the Act II wedding scene.

In the second act of the current production of *Die Walküre*, two Belgian shepherds, or Malinois, accompany Hunding's men in the pursuit of Siegmund. The dogs, both male, originate from the East Bay and are named Finn (4 years old and 55 pounds) and Fubar (3½ years old and 65 pounds).

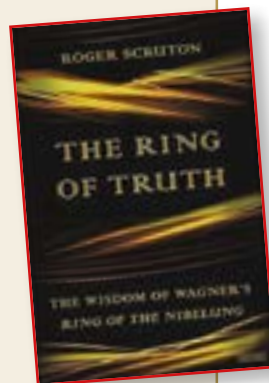


"Finn"

They join a long list of animals who have appeared in San Francisco Opera productions—including a cat, for the Company's 1991 staging of Hans Werner Henze's *Das Verratene Meer*.

Due to recent technological advancements and more energy-efficient lighting and projection devices, this *Ring* revival is far more green in its electrical consumption. In 2011, the under deck lighting alone required over 400 amps, more than your average home. This year, it takes approximately 122 amps.

Richard Wagner is the most written-about musician in history. A recent addition to the literature is Roger Scruton's *The Ring of Truth: The Wisdom of Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung*, which delves into the work's philosophical, musical, and literary underpinnings. You can purchase this and other *Ring*-related recommendations by Company General Director Matthew Shilvock at the Opera Shop, located on the south mezzanine level, main lobby, and north dress circle.



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Left to right: Composer Augusta Read Thomas, Santa Fe Opera's Brandon Neal and Andrea Fellows Walters, composer Laura Kaminsky, librettist Kimberly Reed, and San Francisco Opera Director of Education Ruth Nott

TELLING POWERFUL NEW OPERA STORIES

The initiative **Opera for All Voices: Stories of our Time** was established to create works that will attract audiences of all ages who may not have experienced opera. The seven companies of the consortium—led by San Francisco Opera and Santa Fe Opera and including Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Minnesota Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Sarasota Opera, and Seattle Opera—are working together to create new works flexible in both scope and scale.

The first two commissions were announced in May 2017. **Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun** by composer **Augusta Read Thomas** and librettist **Leslie Dunton-Downer** will receive its premiere at the Santa Fe Opera in October 2019. The second commission, **Postville: Hometown to the World** by composer **Laura Kaminsky** and librettist **Kimberly Reed**, is anticipated to premiere at San Francisco Opera in 2020.

In May 2018, two additional commissions were announced, selected through an invitational process and adjudicated by a jury of 12 distinguished individuals in the field of opera. Kip Cranna, San Francisco Opera's dramaturg, guided the process. The works by composer **David Hanlon** (a former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow) and librettist **Stephanie Fleischmann** and composer **Chandler Carter** and co-librettist **Diana Solomon-Glover** will be mentored by the creative teams of the first two operas.

Postville draws from the complex intersection of race, religion, ethnicity, and culture that took place in Postville, Iowa, where America's largest kosher meat-packing plant became the site of the largest workplace raid by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency. The 2008 raid resulted in approximately one quarter of Postville's residents—most of them Guatemalan—being arrested and deported. It will make for a powerful story, told through the lens of the Opera for All Voices initiative.

Merola Opera Program

Widely regarded as the foremost opera training program for aspiring singers, coaches, accompanists, and stage directors, the Merola Opera Program is the cornerstone of San Francisco Opera's training and performance curricula for promising artists. Named for Gaetano Merola, San Francisco Opera's first general director, the intensive program includes several enticing public performances this summer.

Schwabacher Summer Concerts: The Merola Class of 2018 performs scenes from various operas on Thursday, July 5, 7:30 p.m. at San Francisco Conservatory of Music (50 Oak Street) and Saturday, July 7, 7:30 p.m. at Stanford University's Bing Concert Hall. \$30–\$55.

Il Re Pastore by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Thursday, July 19, 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, July 21, 2 p.m. at San Francisco Conservatory of Music. \$55–\$80.

The Rake's Progress by Igor Stravinsky: Thursday, August 2, 7:30 p.m. and Saturday, August 4, 2 p.m. at San Francisco Conservatory of Music. \$55–\$80.

Merola Grand Finale of arias and ensembles: Saturday, August 18, 7:30 p.m. at War Memorial Opera House. \$25–\$50.

For tickets or more information, visit merola.org or call (415) 864-3330.

Opening Night 2018

Circle Friday, September 7 on your calendars and get ready for **Opera Ball 2018: ¡Viva La Noche!**, San Francisco Opera Guild's signature gala benefit inaugurating San Francisco Opera's 96th season. Produced by San Francisco Opera Guild and co-chaired by Shannon Cronan and Kathy Huber, this year's *Opera Ball* is presented in conjunction with the season-opening double bill of Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*. In this production by José Cura, both Italian classics are set in La Boca, the Buenos Aires neighborhood famous for its colorful architecture and tango. Renowned designer J. Riccardo Benavides returns to create a festive atmosphere inside the tented pavilion with Latin culinary delights by McCalls Catering and a post-performance celebration with dancing. All proceeds benefit the Opera Association and Opera Guild's education programs. For tickets, visit sfopera.com/operaball2018.

BRAVO! Club's 27th Annual Opening Night Gala is a lavish and fun-filled celebration ideal for young professionals. For details, visit sfopera.com/bravo.

Opera Ball 2018 Co-chairs
Shannon Cronan and Kathy Huber



GET “IN THE KNOW”

In conjunction with Richard Wagner’s *Ring* cycle, San Francisco Opera is proud to host and co-sponsor a wealth of ancillary events and resources to engage the Bay Area community. Many thanks to all our local partners who have already made the *Ring* Festival a success. For additional information, ongoing festival updates, and a schedule of events, visit sfopera.com/ringfestival.

OPERA TALKS

Before every *Ring* performance, enjoy an overview of each opera led by a Wagner scholar. These 25-minute talks offer insights about the *Ring* and are free to ticket holders. They take place in the theater of the War Memorial Opera House 55 minutes prior to curtain. For more information, visit sfopera.com/operatalks.

Cycle 1: Desirée Mays

Cycle 2: Alexandra Amati

Cycle 3: Laura Prichard

RING 101

Begin your Wagner journey with a general introduction by San Francisco Opera Dramaturg Dr. Clifford “Kip” Cranna. Then, following a lunch break, explore the history of the *Ring* in San Francisco (1900–2018) with a multimedia presentation that includes items from the San Francisco Opera Archives and interviews with special guests. *Ring* 101 takes place at the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera’s Taube Atrium Theater on Tuesday, June 12, 19, and 26 from 11 a.m.–3 p.m. Tickets are \$50. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/ring101 or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

RING SYMPOSIUM

Join *Ring* stage artists, production team members, and special guests for an in-depth panel discussion, moderated by a Wagner specialist. The symposiums take place at the Wilsey Center for Opera’s Taube Atrium Theater on Thursday, June 14, 21, and 28 from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. Tickets are \$40. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/ringsymposium or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

FILM SCREENING

On the Thursday afternoon of every cycle, view the 1999 behind-the-scenes documentary *Sing Faster—The Stagehands’ Ring Cycle*, followed by a hosted Q&A with the director Jon Else (June 14 and 28) or film producer Richard Berge (June 21). Screenings at the Wilsey Center’s Taube Atrium Theater are from 2–3:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5 and are available at the door.

WAGNER CHORUS CONCERT

The acclaimed San Francisco Opera Chorus, led by Chorus Director Ian Robertson, perform choral operatic excerpts by Wagner and Carl Maria von Weber at the Wilsey Center’s Taube Atrium Theater on Thursday, June 14, 21, and 28 from 8–9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$30. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/ringfestival or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

RING FORUMS

Presented in partnership with the Wagner Society of Northern California, these daylong forums on the Saturday of each cycle offer three different in-depth explorations of the *Ring* with alternating guest speakers and topics. The *Ring* forums take place at the Wilsey Center’s Taube Atrium Theater on June 16, 23, and 30 from 10 a.m.–3:30 p.m. Tickets are \$65 (\$55 for Wagner Society members) and include a box lunch. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/ringfestival or call the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330.

OPERA HOUSE TOURS

Discover the magic that goes into creating a *Ring* production with a backstage tour of the War Memorial Opera House led by a Guild volunteer docent. Tours occur only on selected dates in small groups; reservations are required. E-mail tour.reserve@gmail.com or call the San Francisco Opera Guild at (415) 551-6353 to leave a message. For group tours, contact Lynn Watson at sf.opera.tours@gmail.com. \$20 for general admission.

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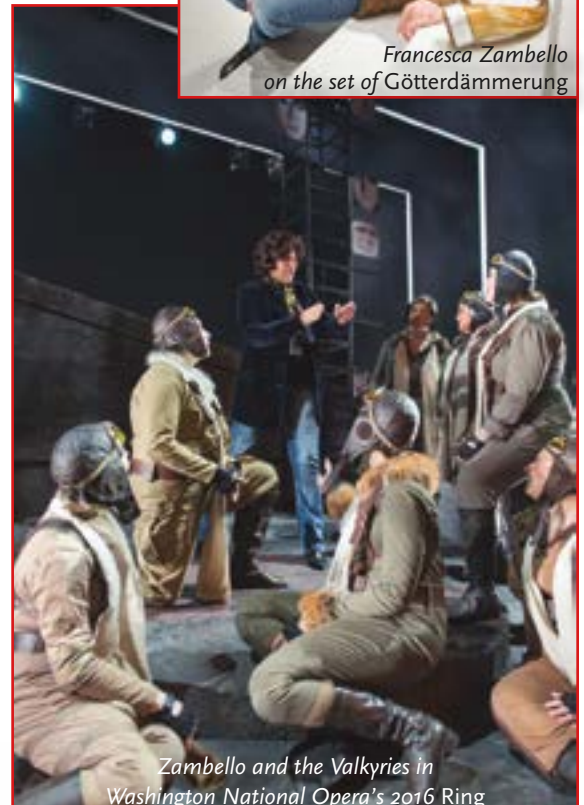
In the summer of 1981, I climbed to the top of Red Rocks, a vast outdoor arena at the foot of the Rocky Mountains near Denver. It is an awe-inspiring landscape where you can imagine gods and goddesses roaming just out of sight. Time appears to slow down as if at any moment the earth goddess Erda herself will ascend from the rocky soil.

I have often returned to this image throughout our planning of the *Ring*, now returning to San Francisco Opera. That view called to mind the untouched world at the beginning of Richard Wagner's cycle, and I began to see in that landscape an American parallel to Wagner's story. The timeless themes of the *Ring*—the destruction of nature, the quest for power, the cutthroat corruption, the plight of the powerless—are not bound to some leafy, mythical Nordic realm. When you look at the great 19th-century landscapes of the American West, they depict the same feelings of majesty and abundance evoked at the beginning of *Das Rheingold* with its world not yet adulterated by Man. But when Alberich raids the Rhine for the golden Ring, the contract with nature is broken and the scales become unbalanced.

Wotan, too, severs his relationship with nature and sacrifices his integrity to build Valhalla, a mansion he can't afford, thereby mortgaging nature to realize his ambitions. Valhalla rises like the technically ingenious skyscrapers of the 1930s, while Alberich's theft mirrors the corruption in 20th-century business and politics. Concern for the environment is replaced by concern for the bottom-line.



Francesca Zambello on the set of *Götterdämmerung*



Zambello and the Valkyries in Washington National Opera's 2016 *Ring*

*Is it a feminist approach?
No, but it suggests the power of
female leaders to heal the scars of destruction.*

When we first began production on the *Ring* in Washington, D.C. in 2005, the focus was on the misuse of power. Then we brought it to San Francisco for the first complete cycle in 2011. Californians have a keen awareness of nature and the environment, so we began to shift the emphasis toward the despoliation of our natural resources. What major river in the United States has not been exploited like the Rhine? Think of the Wagnerian catastrophes of Los Alamos, Three Mile Island, the BP oil spill, and Flint, Michigan. Now a long-term trend of increasing temperatures threatens to permanently transform the Earth's climate. How do we rebuild our environment with no Brünnhilde to rescue us?

It is fitting that California plays a strong role in where our cycle starts. The western shore is our last chance for reinvention, where we can no longer ignore the havoc left in our wake. As the curtain rises, you see an untouched landscape. Then the glistening world sickens, darkens, and decays. When the curtain falls, the world is devoid of any living natural resource, destroyed by our own making. The Norns live inside a computer, attached to the motherboard by bundles of cables; the only visible sign of nature is a slowly dying tree in Gibichung Hall. At the end, the fire surrounding Brünnhilde has a greenish tinge suggesting chemical combustion. We are left hoping that the world might be reborn through her suicide.

Brünnhilde is the transformative, life-affirming hero of the *Ring*. She achieves what no man can: she restores the world order and rebalances the scales. Brünnhilde gives rise to a new world from the ashes of her self-sacrifice. She rights the wrongs of Alberich and Wotan, clearing the path for regeneration. When she returns the Ring to the Rhinemaidens, it is a healing gesture that also symbolizes her forgiveness of Guttrune. The gods are gone, but the mortals, especially the women, who are left represent the beginning of a new order. Is it a feminist approach? No, but it suggests the power of female leaders to heal the scars of destruction.

I am indebted to the artists with whom I have collaborated on this production over the years. We shared a collective, unified vision through constant communication and diligence. We knew where we were going from the beginning, and we knew what the end was going to be. My gratitude also goes out to the many generous people who have brought this *Ring* to life, and to our audiences who are on the voyage with us. 🍷



Zambello, Jamie Barton as Waltraute, and Catherine Foster as Brünnhilde from the 2016 WNO *Ring*

WHAT PRICE LOVE?

A century before George Orwell's 1984, the Ring warned of the rise of totalitarianism and the pursuit of power at the expense of love.

CORY WEAVER

Richard Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is rarely described as an extended love story, but that is what it is. The changing relationships throughout the four operas tend to obscure this central idea but, when you think about it, love is the thread that binds the whole story together—not love confined to a single pair of individuals but love as the alternative to hatred and revenge, power and property, greed and envy. The story begins with love's renunciation and ends with its triumph as the one irreplaceable, transforming ingredient in a new world order. That surely is the significance of the soaring orchestral melody that concludes *Götterdämmerung*.

It is difficult to separate the allegory of the *Ring* from events in post-Napoleonic Europe when rival forces were attempting, on the one hand, to restore reactionary systems of government (think of them as the gods) and, on the other hand, to establish new systems of capital ushered in by the Industrial Revolution (think of Alberich and his ilk). The result was a chain of political uprisings throughout Europe in the 1830s and '40s—and incredible intellectual and creative ferment. Goethe and Beethoven were alive when Wagner was a teenager, Charles Darwin was four years his senior, and Karl Marx was five years his junior. The philosophers Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche were his contemporaries, and Sigmund Freud was born when Wagner was in his 40s. We are still, in many ways, heirs to that seminal period in European thought. In that context, Wagner's eagerness to throw his own, often provocative ideas into the arena reflected his need to join the debate, and the *Ring* is, first and foremost, a drama of ideas.

As a young radical, Wagner argued that the basic goodness of human beings had been subverted by the property-owning classes and the selfish interests of the state. In this he was echoing the ideas of the French philosopher and socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–65) who famously asserted that property is theft. And “what a thief steals, you steal from the thief,” advises Loge in the second scene of *Das Rheingold*. But whereas Marx and Engels saw the future of human society in terms of the emancipation of the proletariat, Wagner saw it in terms of the redeeming power of love. This was a worldview that owed much to the writings of German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), to whom Wagner dedicated his important essay of 1849, “The Artwork of the Future.”

People who knew the young Wagner in his Dresden years were impressed by his passion and high-mindedness. In March 1849, for instance, the actor Edward Devrient made the following entry in his diary: “Met Kapellmeister Wagner on the Terrace; another discussion about his theories for changing the world. He still thinks that only by destroying property is it possible to civilize mankind.... He thinks of putting an end to all deficiencies, believes in the absolute and original perfection of the human race—a perfection lost only as a result of the state.... Finally, he had to agree with me that only *moral* amelioration can put an end to our misery and that this would produce the right types of state, based on the law of love.”

The link to *Rheingold* is remarkably clear. *The absolute original perfection of the human race?* Well, that is the opening prelude and the naiveté of the Rhinemaidens. *A perfection lost only as a result of*

the state? That is the coming of feudal rulers like Wotan, and powerful plutocrats like Alberich. And the solution? *The right types of state, based on the law of love.* It is all there in a single diary entry by someone who knew Wagner intimately.

Three months earlier, in December 1848, Devrient had written: “Kapellmeister Wagner read me his completed opera poem *Siegfried’s Death*. The fellow’s a poet through and through. A beautiful piece of work. Alliteration, as used by him, is a real find for opera poems; it ought to be raised to the level of general principle. I consider this poem to be his best and most dramatic. Afterwards we spoke at length about language, instruction of the people, Christian development, and, of course, we got on to the state, at which point he again mounted his favorite hobby-horse, the destruction of capital. But there’s no doubt his is the most original mind of all the people I know in Dresden.”

The Industrial Revolution had, after all, been a golden opportunity for some and a hell on earth for others, just as Wagner depicted it in the third scene of *Rheingold* with the hellish hammerings of anvils and the screams of the tormented Nibelungs. The Victorians themselves recognized that this unprecedented social transformation had a dark side: the mind-numbing toiling of men and the servitude of women and children in the workhouses, factories, and mines. And behind everything stood, as it were, Alberich, who was prepared to renounce love in order to acquire power and wealth.



CORY WEAVER

The Ring is, first and foremost, a drama of ideas.

Wagner had no doubt at all who Alberich symbolized: the tyrant, the overlord, the power-hungry invader. Six years after the failure of the Dresden revolution of 1849, Wagner’s despair at the apparent triumph of the forces of greed, materialism, and artistic shallowness caused him to write to Liszt: “Let us treat the world only with contempt, for it deserves no better; but let no hope be placed in it, so that our hearts be not deluded! It is evil, evil, *fundamentally evil*... it belongs to Alberich: no one else!! Away with it!”

A century before George Orwell wrote his novel 1984, Wagner was warning of the rise of totalitarianism and the pursuit of power at the expense of love. We know this from several sources, and especially from his essay “The Artwork of the Future” in which he expressed the view that the earliest societies arose naturally out of humanity’s instinctive need for mutual love and fellowship. But later, he said, authoritarian states arose *unnaturally*, out of *none* of humanity’s instinctive needs, being imposed by the few on the many. The authoritarian state was, he said, a crime against human nature, and therefore against nature itself. “A crime against nature,” which is the starting point for *Rheingold*. These ideas weren’t expressed in an essay called “The Politics of the Future” or “The Society of the Future” but “The Artwork of the Future.” Wagner wanted to go to the very heart of what made humans “human.”

We find similar ideas contained in his sketches and commen-



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Opposite: The twin lovers Siegfried (Christopher Ventris) and Sieglinde (Eva-Maria Westbroek) sing the Act I love duet from *Die Walküre*, as seen in the Company’s 2010 staging.

Above: Hagen (Andrea Silvestrelli), the son of Alberich, rallies his men in Act II of *Götterdämmerung*; the eponymous hero Siegfried (Jay Hunter Morris) wakes Brünnhilde (Nina Stemme) from her magic sleep. Both photos date from the Company’s 2011 Ring production.



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"I immediately recognized Wagner as an impractical dreamer," wrote Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin (1814–76). Bakunin (left) was one of the composer's closest associates in Dresden and during the city's 1849 uprising; (center) from 2011's *Rheingold*, the quintessential plutocrat and renouncer of love, Alberich (Gordon Hawkins), torments his fellow Nibelungs with his all-powerful ring; (right) Wagner at his home in Bayreuth, Germany with his second wife, Cosima, and the Hungarian pianist and composer Franz Liszt. Wagner married Cosima, Liszt's daughter, in 1870, six years before the premiere of the *Ring*.

taries for two unfinished operas planned in early 1849: *Jesus of Nazareth*, whose central theme is that one does not overcome lovelessness by being loveless, or overcome violence by using violence; and *Achilles*, in which the "hero" is identified as a fully developed human being, free from obligations to so-called gods. "Man is god perfected," wrote Wagner, and we see in the *Ring* a progression from human beings constrained by their belief in gods, to those who are free to build a new order based on love. That is why we witness Wotan giving way to Siegfried in the third act of *Siegfried*, and why the gods play no role at all in *Götterdämmerung*, being merely figments of memory and imagination, represented by altars and empty rituals. Wagner owed many of these ideas to Feuerbach who loomed large in his thinking when he began work on the libretto of *Siegfried's Death* which eventually evolved into *The Ring of the Nibelung*.

Another idea postulated by Feuerbach was that the "glorious necessity of love" should take precedence over the law. This became Wagner's motto in his early sketches for the *Ring*, and he never entirely abandoned it. He once told Franz Liszt: "The state of lovelessness is the state of suffering for the human race ... we recognize the glorious necessity of love ... and so, in this way we acquire a strength of which natural man had no inkling, and this strength—increased to embrace the whole of humanity—will one day lay the foundations for a state on earth where no one need yearn for the other world, for they will be happy—to live and to love. For where is the man who yearns to escape from life when he is in love?"

Who is Alberich, renouncer of love, maker of the all-powerful ring and tormentor of his people if not an early version of Orwell's Big Brother? A hundred years earlier, Wagner had captured exactly this vision in *Rheingold*, when Alberich, brandishing his ring, extracts the helmet of invisibility from his cowering "little brother," Mime, and puts it to use. He has many chilling passages, but few are more chilling than what he has planned for the gods once he has acquired absolute power. When the men are subjugated, he

will force himself on their women who shun his attentions and reject his love. They should beware of the nocturnal army when the Nibelung hoard rises from silent depths! We can almost see the torchlit processions and hear the tread of marching feet.

Into a world of bountiful nature has come the lust for power, with which love can never coexist, and we are plunged into moral darkness. But the supreme irony is that Alberich, who renounces love in order to acquire power, ends up with neither. That tends to be the fate of dictators. The old authoritarian order of Wotan and the other gods had also benefited at the expense of nature. Wotan had torn a branch from the tree of life to fashion a spear, the instrument of his power and symbol of the laws and contracts on which that power rested. Like many leaders, he makes agreements of convenience that he has no intention of keeping. Then he resorts to cunning and dishonesty to escape his obligations and, in doing so, undermines the very basis of his own authority. It is an old story and also a very modern one. The law-maker becomes law-breaker.

Wotan, too, has, in a sense, renounced love by trading the goddess of love, Freia, as the price for the great fortress Valhalla. Loge's suggestion of substituting the Nibelung hoard for Freia offers Wotan the tantalizing prospect of having his cake and eating it, of having both love and power. But the two prove incompatible. In what is really the only music in *Rheingold* to come close to being an aria in any recognizable sense, Loge tells of his search throughout the world for something—anything—that is valued more highly than love. He had heard of one man who was prepared to renounce love in return for bright gold, and a ring of power that had been fashioned from the stolen Rhinegold. Wotan had heard of this gold and his interest is aroused. Could gold be the answer to all his problems? Ah, how many men in a tricky spot have thought that!

Thus Wotan, too, becomes a thief, wrenching the ring from Alberich's finger. But the Nibelung strikes back, cursing the ring and all who hanker after it. This is the curse of power without love.



RICHARD WAGNER MUSEUM, BAYREUTH / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Having acquired the ring illegally and immorally, Wotan is also destined to lose it. In order to satisfy the contractual claims of the giants, Fasolt and Fafner, builders of Valhalla, he reluctantly parts with the ring, doing so at the behest of the earth goddess Erda, a figure drawn not from Norse mythology but from the classical world. Interestingly, she doesn't say: "Give back the ring and the gods will be saved." It's already too late for that. Instead, she says: "All that exists will end"—have nothing to do with the ring. So now Wotan has been warned, the wheel of destiny is turning. In the third act of *Siegfried*, he will ask Erda directly how to stop this turning wheel, but she will have no answer.

By the mid-1850s, Wagner had become a very different man from the starry-eyed revolutionary of his Dresden years. He encountered the writings of Schopenhauer which matched his mood perfectly and gave him an intellectual framework for the remainder of his life's work (see accompanying article). This radically changed perspective took hold in the second act of *Die Walküre*, especially with the character of Wotan. But *Der Ring des Nibelungen* remains a drama of human frailty, its message a universal one of love and life. By the end of *Rheingold*, the stage is set for a struggle involving passionate love and, ultimately, compassionate love which, in *Götterdämmerung* and *Parsifal*, will be revealed as humanity's last best hope. 🌸

Peter Bassett is the author of Wagner's Parsifal: The Journey of a Soul and The Nibelung's Ring: A Guide to Wagner's Der Ring des Nibelungen (Wakefield Press).

Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the Orient

"My sleep is dreaming, my dreaming brooding, my brooding the mastery of knowledge." With this sentence, Erda addresses the Wanderer in the final act of *Siegfried*, and her words resonate with the Eastern practice of meditation in the pursuit of wisdom.

Richard Wagner's interest in the East had been stimulated by his brother-in-law, the orientalist Hermann Brockhaus, who had married Otilie Wagner in 1836. It was the Brockhaus family firm that had first published Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophical masterpiece *The World as Will and Representation*, a work destined to make a profound impression on the composer.

Schopenhauer's knowledge of the Hindu Upanishads and Buddhist scriptures dated from the end of 1813, by which time he had formulated many of his own insights from the vantage point of Western philosophy. Nevertheless, he relished the discovery that his views had much in common with key doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism.

There is an interesting parallel here in the relationship between Wagner's ideas and Schopenhauer's writings. The impact of those writings on the composer sprang less as a direct source of ideas but from the fact that they seemed to confirm and clarify notions that were already apparent to him, though difficult to explain. Wagner first read *The World as Will and Representation* in 1854, and found in it a coherent explanation of his treatment of Wotan. His intention had been to show nothing less than the breaking of the god's proud spirit by, what Schopenhauer would call, the annihilation of the will—the negation of compulsive striving and yearning that leads inevitably to disappointment and pain. The Buddha would have called it the renunciation of craving and desire which lies at the root of suffering.

During the last three decades of his life, Wagner demonstrated a serious interest in the two great religions of India. He cited contemporary research suggesting that Buddhist ideas had flowed westward after the spread of Alexander's empire to the Indus in 327 B.C., and had influenced Christian doctrine (a view shared by Schopenhauer). This notion shaped *Parsifal* which, despite its overtly Christian setting, is replete with Buddhist imagery. *Tristan und Isolde* contains echoes of both Buddhism and the Upanishads.

For Wagner, Buddhism was not remote from German thought but in harmony with it, something that was demonstrated in one splendid musical passage composed for his unfinished Buddhist opera, *Die Sieger (The Victors)*. This music ended up in *Siegfried*. According to Cosima Wagner's diaries, it had been written for the Buddha himself. The phrase in question is first heard in the Wanderer's final scene with Erda. He wants her to tell him how to stop a turning wheel, but she cannot help him. In Buddhist teachings, the turning wheel of Karma is the inexorable working out of the consequences of one's actions. After a pause, the Wanderer tells Erda that he is no longer concerned about the end of the gods and, in fact, consciously wills it. We then hear in the orchestra the so-called "world inheritance" theme once intended for the Buddha.

The most significant Buddhist influence on the *Ring* came in 1856 with a revised text for the closing scene of *Götterdämmerung* when Brünnhilde, made wise through suffering and love, refers to herself as the "enlightened one." Eventually though, words proved inadequate, and Wagner left it to the orchestra alone to articulate the sublime ending to the whole drama. 🌸

Scenes from the Life of Buddha (*painted textile*), Tibetan School / Musée Guimet, Paris

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German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860)

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EPIC AMBITION:

On Wagner's *Ring* and Its Filmic Afterlives

In the 2017 Ridley Scott film *Alien: Covenant*, a newly created android (played by Michael Fassbender) meets his creator (Guy Pearce) who asks him to play something on the piano—specifically Wagner. The android begins to play what his inventor identifies as “The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla.” “A little anemic without the orchestra,” the inventor remarks. Suddenly, the android stops playing and poses the question, “If you made me, who made you?”

Scott seems to want to tie every detail of their interaction into a larger theme: a man playing God listens to a piece about the creations of a god. It isn't surprising that Pearce's inventor would pick Wagner, a composer whose creations have been put to so many purposes both great and terrible, and whose work therefore

always raises questions of responsibility and autonomy. When the flesh-and-blood human in the scene passes judgment on the synthetic man's playing (“a little anemic”), he intends it as a verdict on the latter's personhood. But as the android's question makes clear, the choice of Wagner has a way of rebounding on the creator. Turn to Wagner and you yourself will be subject to a question. Scott's movie turns to Wagner to inquire about its own status as entertainment, as sequel, as film. David's question “Who made me?” is really the movie's own. And it is no accident that it is a question that strikes the director as particularly worth asking when Wagner is playing.

Film has long sensed that it shared something with Wagner.

Wagner, it seems, catches filmmakers at their most self-confident and self-critical.



Robert Duvall (left) memorably played Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore in the 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*. / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



Wagner's “*Ride of the Valkyries*” makes an iconic appearance in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* as the soundtrack to a Marine attack on a Vietnamese village. / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES



Both long to make myths, and both turn to tricks and illusion to get at some deeper authenticity. This sense of kinship pervaded early film criticism in Germany, and it even animated opera critics who worried about the competition posed by the new medium. Over the past hundred years, film has frequently turned to the opera house as the first cinema and to the *Ring* as its earliest ancestor.

There are, of course, high-minded cinematic interrogations of Wagner's place in our intellectual DNA. The filmmaker Hans-Jürgen Syberberg has tried for decades to disentangle the spell Wagner's magnum opus has cast over German aesthetics and history. Directors William Dieterle and Tony Palmer sought to encapsulate Wagner's oeuvre in massive biopics. Scholars have teased out the effects of Wagnerism and debated the intended and the acquired meanings of his work. But in its way, Hollywood has undergone a similar kind of analysis by simply making entertainment. In classic Freudian fashion, it has just kept talking about, citing, and using Wagner's music. And, as Ridley Scott's citation suggests, in

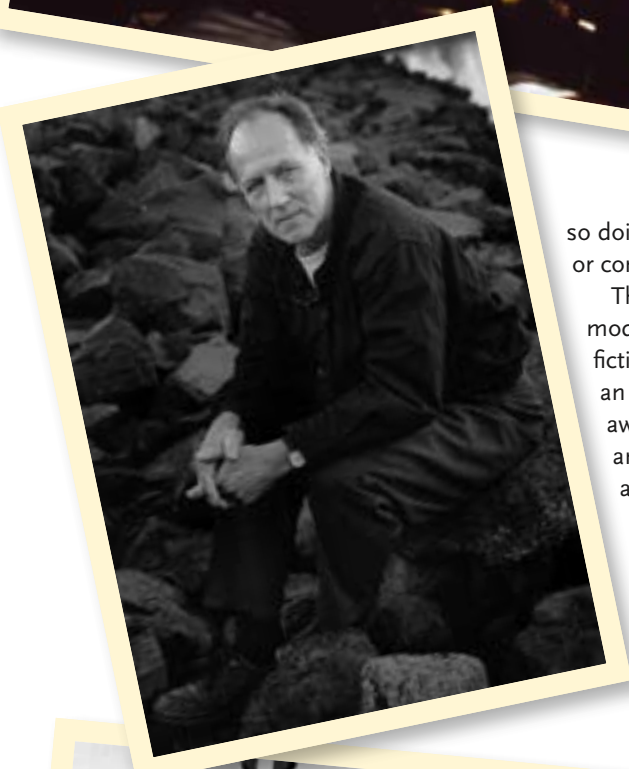
so doing it has brought to the fore half-articulated concerns about its own status as art or commerce, truth or illusion, creation or destruction.

There are moments when cinema senses a fealty to Wagner's use of myth or to his mode of epic storytelling. But, above all, cinema understands Wagner as a builder of fictional worlds. Even though it was Gustav Mahler who is supposed to have said of an alpine panorama that "you needn't bother to look at that— I've composed it all away," Wagner becomes a welcome cipher for cinema's ability to absorb the world and re-create it. Wagner, it seems, catches filmmakers at their most self-confident and self-critical.

And while at some moments film seems proud of the elective affinity, at others its Wagnerian affinities constitute something of a self-indictment. The most famous Wagner quotation in cinema certainly feels like one. After all, what does it say about music when it goes so well with American gunships pulverizing a Vietnamese peasant village? When Francis Ford Coppola incorporated the "Ride of the Valkyries" into his 1979 film *Apocalypse Now*, he created a sequence so iconic that most quotations of the *Ring* afterwards are always also quotations of *Apocalypse Now*. (The only other classical work that shares this peculiar fate is the opening of Richard Strauss' *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.) Four decades and hundreds of repetitions, parodies, and allusions later, the association of the "Ride" with overwhelming military force appears firmly established, but the scene that spawned them still retains some ambiguity.

For starters, it isn't just Coppola who turns to Wagner's "Ride" for his soundtrack. The "Ride" enters the film as music chosen by the characters of the film itself. And chosen not for mere accompaniment, but as a sonic weapon: "Wagner. Scares the hell out of the [Vietnamese]," explains Robert Duvall's Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore. And yet, the film makes the Marines' choice its own. The "Ride" arrives in the movie as sound that the characters themselves cause and hear, but it quickly sounds too crisp and even to maintain the fiction that it emerges from a tape player on a gunship. At that point, Wagner ceases to belong to the events depicted in the film, but to the film depicting them. This relay is what makes the scene so troubling: the film seems to endorse an association its characters make.

In Coppola's hands, Wagner becomes a weapon, a weapon closely allied with the overwhelming machinery of film itself. Coppola decided on the "Ride" partly



because Nazi propaganda used it to accompany footage of an air raid against resistance fighters in Crete. But however critical his turn to Wagner may be in intention, Wagner's sound has a troubling tendency to colonize the film itself. The sequence we see is an effect of powerful white men directing action: what Kilgore and his men accomplish by force of arms, Coppola accomplishes with his camera, Walter Murch with his brilliant editing—and Wagner with his thundering brass. Before their concerted onslaught, all the Vietnamese can do is scatter.

In this moment, then, Wagner seems to be in league with the movie machine's most destructive impulses. Contrast this with the way director Brian Singer uses the same music in 2008's *Valkyrie*. The film follows Claus von Stauffenberg (Tom Cruise) as he unsuccessfully tries to assassinate Hitler and end World War II. A war-wounded Stauffenberg returns home to find his children playmarching to the "Ride." Recognition plays on his face, staged by Singer as a kind of mirror of Wagner's music. The "Ride"'s repetitive churn and the Valkyries' cheerful collection of yet more dead fighters highlight for him that his children are imbibing the very lessons that have led to the war he seeks to end. Wagner becomes at that moment a token for a dreadful, compulsive repetition in German history.

At that moment, the air raid sirens begin to howl. The family turns off the gramophone and huddles in their bomb shelter. In a bravura moment, the shudder of an impact nearby jolts the tone-arm onto the record and the opening notes of the "Ride" ring out through the distant rumbling of the bombs. Singer intercuts between Cruise's face and a protracted pull into the turntable, the camera almost mimicking the path of a bomb. Singer stages a dialogue between Stauffenberg and the turning record, a dialogue that finally gives Stauffenberg the idea to use the Nazi leadership's own "Operation Valkyrie" against them. Only a few minutes ago, Wagner's music appeared as an accessory to Nazi madness. Now Wagner's music, in league with the movie camera, offers suddenly a way to counter that madness.

The prelude to *Das Rheingold* has long attracted filmmakers, but whereas the associations carried by the "Ride of the Valkyries" are fairly straightforward, the *Rheingold*-prelude has been put to very different ends by very different directors. It is not difficult to see why the prelude with its slow drone of an E-flat major chord might be attractive to filmmakers: it is music that assembles itself before our very ears.

At the same time, the piece is used not as a technological showcase but to return film to something more primal. As in the uses of the "Ride," *Das Rheingold* seems to impel directors to look at their tools and at the worlds they can assemble by their means. Director Terrence Malick turns to Wagner frequently in his films. In *The New World* (2005), a retelling of the Pocahontas story, he uses the *Rheingold*-prelude to make a point about world-making. Malick opens the film with the music. We witness natives darting about underwater, but eventually the camera looks up toward the river surface. Malick cuts to the surface and the camera catches up with three English ships. Only now does this world get a name, as the words "Virginia, 1607" appear on screen. Malick spends the rest of the sequence intercutting between the natives and the English, each noticing the other.

The way the sequence progresses makes it clear that the "New World" of the title does not refer Eurocentrically to North America. What rises from the mists for each party is the other group, and the "New World" is the one where



Facing page, top: Wagner's music accompanies movies of diverse genres, including the 1979 vampire film *Nosferatu*, starring Bruno Ganz (left) and Klaus Kinski (right).

BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Facing page, center: *Nosferatu* and *Lessons of Darkness* director Werner Herzog, photographed in San Francisco in 2000. © CHRIS FELVER / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Facing page, bottom: New World director Terrence Malick captured on the set in a 1978 snapshot. BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

Top: In the 2008 film *Valkyrie*, Tom Cruise sports a Wotan-like eyepatch as the real-life Nazi officer Claus von Stauffenberg. PHOTO 12 / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Below: "If you made me, who made you?" asks the android David (Michael Fassbender, right) to his creator (Guy Pearce, left) in the 2017 Ridley Scott film *Alien: Covenant*. Wagner's "Entry of the Gods into Valhalla" figures prominently in the scene.

LIFESTYLE PICTURES — ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

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their ways of looking at each other will have to coexist. As so often in Malick, the sequence also amounts to a celebration of the filmic medium, as the intercutting between the world of the natives and of the European arrivals comprise the two perspectives that will define the rest of the story.

Director Werner Herzog turned to the *Rheingold*-prelude twice. In his 1979 film *Nosferatu the Vampyre*, he uses the music as his main character, Jonathan Harker (Bruno Ganz), journeys to Dracula's castle. Herzog's camera, in shot after languid shot, captures the rough beauty of Dracula's remote mountain hideout. Mountains peel out of the fog, dramatic clouds pour over the ridges, mountain streams rush into the valleys. This is the visual language of German Romanticism: during the few moments that Harker comes into view, he looks as though he could be standing in a canvas by Caspar David Friedrich.

At the same time, while Wagner is central to the way the scene communes with its aesthetic ancestors, he also imbues the sequence with a deep ambivalence. Simply put, Wagner is a bad soundtrack for a horror movie. Wagner can, in moments of great triumph, foreshadow eventual destruction or, in moments of despair, telegraph eventual deliverance. That can make for an awkward fit for cinema's more strident impulses. But Herzog clearly seeks to harness that very quality in Wagner. The music keeps nature eerily neutral. Neither the *Rheingold*-prelude nor the visuals are stereotypically foreboding, but neither is their majesty without a certain menace.

In Herzog's hands, Wagner's prelude speaks for—and stands in for—nature itself. The same ambivalence of beauty and danger animates Herzog's second use of the piece, in the 1992 documentary *Lessons of Darkness*. The film presents highly impressionistic views of the burning oil fields Saddam Hussein's troops left in their wake after abandoning Kuwait. Herzog opens the film with *Das Rheingold* and a quotation: "The collapse of the stellar universe will—like creation—occur in immense splendor." The film attributes the quote to Blaise Pascal, but Herzog has admitted that it is in fact pure Herzog.

The quote is also a hint as to how Herzog reads Wagner's prelude. We are witnessing the creation of a universe; a whole world is willed into existence, but a world that is destined to collapse. The simplicity of Wagner's music allows Herzog to blur precisely which of the two, creation or collapse, we are witnessing on the screen. The burning oil fields really do look like a young planet vulcanizing into existence, or they might be the last fiery heavens of a dying world.

In other words, these images have, even before Wagner is there to comment on them, a Wagnerian mood. The question they raise, whether this is a beginning or an end, is one every listener has confronted by the time Brünnhilde and her steed are consumed by Siegfried's funeral pyre. It is a question that Wagner himself appears to have negotiated in the process of writing the *Ring*. And it is this colossal indecision—between solace and menace, hope and despair, fate and freedom—that seems, from androids playing the piano to oil fields ablaze in the Kuwaiti desert, to open up a space for filmmakers. It is this indecision in which they make their worlds. 🌸

Adrian Daub is a professor of German studies and comparative literature at Stanford University and the director of its program in feminist, gender, and sexuality studies.

Other Uses of the *Ring* in Film

***Birth of a Nation* (1915):**

"The Ride of the Valkyries" from Act III of *Die Walküre* was infamously used during the ride of the Ku Klux Klan.

***Magic Fire* (1955):**

This Wagner biopic includes a sequence which condenses the action and music of the *Ring* down to five minutes. (Composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold makes a cameo as the conductor.)



***What's Opera, Doc?* (1957):** Starring Bugs Bunny as Brünnhilde and Elmer Fudd as Siegfried, the Warner Bros. cartoon utilizes "The Ride of the Valkyries" and other musical quotations from Richard Wagner's operas.

***Mahler* (1974):** Ken Russell's biopic about Gustav Mahler includes an outrageous mountaintop scene that dramatizes the composer's conversion from Judaism to Catholicism and satirizes the *Ring*.

***Excalibur* (1981):** Siegfried's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung* is used throughout the John Boorman film, as well as the Notung theme whenever the sword Excalibur is featured on screen.

***L.A. Confidential* (1997):** The Magic Fire Music from *Die Walküre* is heard in the scene where a police officer played by Russell Crowe rescues a kidnapped woman and slays her captor.

***Birth* (2004):** The Act I prelude to *Die Walküre* is included in the sequence where Nicole Kidman's character, Anna, attends the opera.

John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn



TERRENCE MCCARTHY

Once again, the unprecedented generosity of Cynthia and John Gunn has set the stage for a dazzling season at San Francisco Opera. Since 2002, when John joined the Opera Board, the couple has underwritten numerous productions and provided exceptional support for many of the Company's innovative endeavors.

In September 2008, the Gunns made a historic commitment—believed to be the largest gift ever made by individuals to an American opera company—to help fund the signature projects of then-General Director David Gockley, including new operas and productions, multimedia projects, and outreach programs. This season, the Gunns' inspired generosity is helping make possible five productions—*Turandot*, *Elektra*, *Manon*, *Girls of the Golden West*, and the *Ring* cycle.

John shared his considerable insights at the 2014 conference of OPERA America, the national service organization for opera. As he told attendees, "Opera is a dynamic art form and all of us play a role in keeping it vital. We must expand our repertoire and our audiences, and strive for financial flexibility. And we depend on donors to keep opera alive."

John is the former chairman and CEO of Dodge & Cox

Investment Managers. He joined the firm in 1972, the year he received his M.B.A. from Stanford Business School and married Cynthia, who graduated from Stanford with an A.B. in political science in 1970. Early in her career, Cynthia was the editor and director of *The Portable Stanford* book series for ten years. She edited 28 books by Stanford professors on a vast array of topics, including *Economic Policy Beyond the Headlines* by George Shultz and Ken Dam.

In addition to their support of San Francisco Opera, the Gunns are active members of the community. John is the chair of the advisory board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR), serves as a trustee of Stanford University, and is Vice Chairman of the board of Stanford Hospital Care. Cynthia is an overseer of Stanford's Hoover Institution, a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services, and serves on the boards of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health and the San Francisco Fine Arts Museums.

Opera lovers are grateful to Cynthia and John, and applaud their commitment to keeping San Francisco Opera a leading-edge company.



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Jeannik Méquet Littlefield with daughter Denise Littlefield Sobel at the 2007 Opera Ball

Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund (Production Sponsor, *The Ring of the Nibelung*)

The *Ring* is the 22nd production supported by the Littlefield Family, a Company Sponsor since 2002. There is perhaps no greater passion in opera than Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung*. Jeannik Littlefield's lifelong passion for opera started when she was a child in France. The Littlefield name became especially familiar to opera fans in 2006, when Jeannik Littlefield made her historic \$35 million commitment to San Francisco Opera. She held a subscription to seats in Box K for over 40 years, until her passing in 2013. Jeannik's daughter, Denise, as a Wotan Circle Sponsor, has underwritten the *Ring's* LED lighting effects. The Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Endowment Fund provides a permanent and unrestricted source of income for the Company and a legacy of support for generations to come.

Bernard and Barbro Osher (Production Sponsor, *The Ring of the Nibelung*)

A native of Maine, Bernard Osher became involved with San Francisco Opera as a subscriber nearly 50 years ago, shortly after moving here from New York. He and his wife Barbro, a native of Sweden, have supported every aspect of the Company's work, from artist appearances to production facilities. Established in 1977, the Bernard Osher Foundation has funded virtually every major arts organization in the area, including youth programs. Higher education initiatives include community college support, Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes on 119 campuses nationwide, and Osher Centers for Integrative Medicine at several of the nation's leading teaching hospitals, and at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. Bernard is a longstanding member of the Opera's Board of Directors, serving on the Chairman's Council. Barbro is Honorary Consul General of Sweden in San Francisco and serves as Chairman of the Board of the Osher Foundation.



RAY "SCOTTY" MORRIS

Betty and Jack Schafer (Production Sponsor, *The Ring of the Nibelung*)

Betty and Jack Schafer have been supporters of San Francisco Opera since the mid-1960s. Jack joined the Opera Board in 2011. The Schafers qualify as true "Ring Heads," having traveled the globe to attend more than 25 performances of the *Ring* cycle. What makes it so interesting to them is the way each production brings a fresh interpretation to the moving parts (libretto, score, staging, casting, etc.) that make up the *Ring*. They are particularly enthusiastic about Francesca Zambello's *Ring* cycle which they watched come together in 2011, followed to Washington in 2016, and now welcome back to San Francisco this spring.



Ring sponsors are filling big shoes, as demonstrated by Betty and Jack Schafer.

CLAUDIA GOETZELMANN

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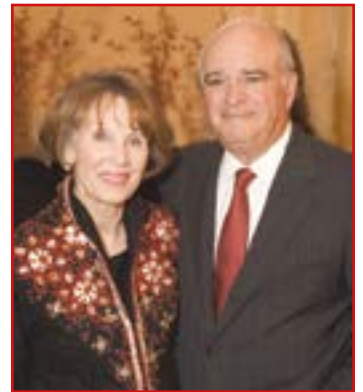
After a career devoted to his publishing businesses in Japan and Europe, the creation of Clos Pegase Winery in California's Napa Valley, and his art collection, Jan Shrem—in joyous partnership with his wife Maria Manetti Shrem—is bringing his focus and affection to philanthropic causes that advance education and the performing and visual arts. Though they grew up half a world apart, Jan and Maria both developed a love of opera at a young age. While their lives led them each around the globe, their individual passions eventually led them to San Francisco Opera and to each other. With a substantial multiyear commitment, Company Sponsors Jan and Maria have expanded their support with the establishment of three different funds. The Conductors Fund helps ensure the continued appearances of Maestro Nicola

Luisotti and other Italian conductors in the orchestra pit. The Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund helps bring today's most compelling artists in Italian repertoire to San Francisco Opera, and the Emerging Stars Fund supports the Company in showcasing several exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season.

Joan and David Traitel/Great Singers Fund

(Sponsor, Iréne Theorin, Greer Grimsley, Karita Mattila, Brandon Jovanovich)

"Without great singers, opera is not all it could be," says San Francisco Opera Board Member Joan Traitel. "That's why my husband and I approached David Gockley with the idea of creating a special way of supporting singers exclusively." The result was the Great Singers Fund, launched by the Traitels in 2008 to provide San Francisco Opera with enhanced support to attract the world's best singers. Joan, a member of the Opera's Board of Directors since 1998, and her husband, David, were production sponsors for several years before founding the Great Singers Fund. "The Fund makes a difference in the quality of opera in San Francisco," Joan explains. "Brandon Jovanovich is one of the most thrilling tenors in opera today, and I have loved every performance of his in San Francisco. And to have the astonishing Iréne Theorin return to the Company as Brünnhilde in our *Ring* cycle will be a real treat for audiences. We are so pleased that the Fund can enable their appearance at San Francisco Opera. I hope people see the relationship between the Great Singers Fund and this season's fantastic lineup. Your support truly can make a difference! These amazing artists make an evening special, and at the end you walk away happy."



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In Memory of Thomas F. Wolfe

Tom Wolfe was in his mid-20s when he first heard an opera recording of Renata Tebaldi at a friend's apartment in Greenwich Village. Tom described hearing Renata's voice as a profoundly transformative experience, stating it was as if he had been living in a black-and-white world and saw color for the first time. Soon after, he started attending the opera regularly, buying the standing room tickets, and watching from the back of the house. He was drawn, in particular, to the operas of Mozart, Puccini, and Strauss, but most of all he loved the operas of Richard Wagner and that interest bloomed into a lifelong fascination.

"He was an intellectual, constantly reading history, world religion, and critical theory," says his daughter Kirsten. "I think that was part of Wagner's grand appeal for him. The music and the plot, especially for the *Ring*, is complex, heroic, and offers ample opportunity for study. Wagner explored many of the large questions of life which my dad also contemplated: love, power, meaning, the impact of humanity on the natural world, and the cycle of destruction and redemption. My dad also just really loved the music, which deeply affected him."

"I was named after Kirsten Flagstad," recalls Tom's eldest daughter. "He intended to name my younger sister Brunnhilde until family intervened and redirected her name to Gretchen." Family pets and several boats followed with the names of Tristan, Isolde, Lohengrin, and the Flying Dutchman. Opera was infused into the everyday aspects of his life.

As young girls, his daughters remember seeing him most evenings in their living room, wearing huge black headphones with a libretto or a book of opera theory on his lap, while spending hours listening to the music and following the plot.

On one occasion, he drove to San Francisco in the hope of seeing Birgit Nilsson in *Tristan and Isolde* (1974), but he was unable to secure a ticket. He drove back home and, still dressed in his tuxedo, spent the evening listening to the same opera wearing his headphones.

Tom felt the profound psychological insights within Wagner's operas applicable to his daily life.

"I would say that his early history working for the Peace Corps and, later, as lawyer for the United Farm Workers in the Central Valley echoed his interest in some of the themes that Wagner explores in the *Ring*," his daughter recalls, "namely, the effect of power, greed, and inequity, and the issue of environmental degradation—all themes we continue to struggle with today."

Tom wanted to share the joy and intellectual pursuit of opera that he enjoyed over so many years. Initially, this meant sharing with his family; he brought his daughters to the opera when they were around the age of 7, and then discovered a



Thomas F. Wolfe

shared passion for opera when he met Barbara in the early 1980s. After his grandchildren were born, he would bring them as young children as well. His daughter recalls that "the opera really became our family tradition. He and Barbara supported the opera in as many ways as they could in order to share its beauty with a larger audience. I like to imagine he was thinking back to when he was a young man, hearing opera for the first time, and hoping to create the opportunity for that same transformative spark for a new generation."



Barbara and Tom Wolfe with their grandchildren

Our support of The Ring of the Nibelung is a tribute to and in memory of Thomas Wolfe.

—The Wolfe Family:
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Richard Wagner

DER RING DES NIBELUNGEN

(THE RING OF
THE NIBELUNG)

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Matthew Shilvock,
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Thanks to all members of the *Ring* Circle, listed on pages 96 and 97.

DAS RHEINGOLD

Scene 1

Three young women—Woglinde, Wellgunde, and Flosshilde—play in a mountain river. They are charged with guarding the gold deep in the water, and they at first scarcely notice the Nibelung, Alberich, who tries to catch the free-spirited girls as they tease him. They explain that this gold is all-powerful: if fashioned into a ring, its wearer would rule the world. But they are content that the gold is safe, since whoever would steal the treasure must renounce love. Hearing this secret, Alberich renounces love and steals the gold.

Scene 2

Fricka reproaches her husband Wotan, ruler of the gods, for having promised her sister Freia to the giants, Fafner and Fasolt, as payment for constructing their new home, Valhalla. Wotan replies that he never meant to keep his word. When Fafner and Fasolt arrive to claim Freia, Wotan tells them that they must accept another form of payment. Fafner, aware that the gods would lose their eternal youth and power without Freia's golden apples, decides to take her hostage. Donner, the god of thunder, and Froh, the god of spring, try to defend their sister Freia, to no avail. The fire demi-god Loge suggests that the giants might find Alberich's gold an acceptable substitute for Freia and proposes that Wotan steal the gold, a portion of which Alberich has used to forge the all-powerful Ring. The giants take Freia away until evening, when they will return to claim the Nibelung's gold as ransom. Wotan asks Loge to accompany him to steal Alberich's treasure in Nibelheim.

Scene 3

In the underground caverns of Nibelheim, Alberich tries on the Tarnhelm—a magical chain-mail helmet his brother Mime has forged that transforms the wearer into any size or shape—and uses it to torment Mime and his Nibelung slaves. Wotan and Loge arrive, and Alberich suspiciously questions them and boastfully tells them of his plan to overthrow the gods and rule the world. Loge tricks Alberich into using the Tarnhelm to transform himself into a toad, and Wotan and Loge seize him and drag him back up to Earth.

Scene 4

Back in the world of the gods, Loge and Wotan tell Alberich that they will free him only if he yields all his gold, including the Tarnhelm and the Ring. Alberich resists until the Ring is torn from his finger. As he leaves, he places a curse upon it: until the Ring returns to him, trouble, envy, and death will befall all who possess or crave it. The giants return with their hostage Freia and demand the Nibelung gold in exchange for her. Just then, Erda, the earth goddess, magically appears and warns Wotan to yield everything, including the Ring, as it spells doom for the gods. Wotan surrenders the Ring, and then Fafner kills Fasolt to claim the Ring, the Tarnhelm, and the hoard for himself. Fricka urges Wotan to turn his thoughts to their new home Valhalla, while Froh and Donner summon a rainbow bridge to take them there.

First performance: Munich; September 22, 1869.

First performance as part of a *Ring* cycle:
Bayreuth; August 13, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera;
January 4, 1889.

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 1, 1935. The Company presented *Das Rheingold* as part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1935, 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999, and 2011 and by itself in six other seasons: 1936, 1967, 1969 (Los Angeles tour), 1977, 1983, and 2008. For more information, please visit our online performance archive at archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 14 principals, 40 supernumeraries; **54 total.**

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps, 51 strings (14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 cellos, 7 basses); **89 total.**

Backstage: 1 additional harp for the final scene.

"Anvils": 6 percussionists play a total of 15 "anvils." Made of metal tuned to three specific pitches and created especially for this production, these anvils signal Scene 3's arrival into Nibelheim.

Conductor
Donald Runnicles

Director
Francesca Zambello

Associate Director and Choreographer
Denni Sayers

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Original Projections Designed by
Jan Hartley

New Projections Designed by
S. Katy Tucker
Remounted by
S. Katy Tucker

Co-Choreographer and Dance Master
Lawrence Pech

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Associate Conductor
Moritz Gnann*

Assistant Conductor
Eric Weimer

Musical Preparation
**Stephanie Rhodes Russell, Maureen Zoltek,
Bryndon Hassman, John Churchwell**

Prompter
Susan Miller Hult

Diction
Marianne Barrett*

Supertitles
Francesca Zambello

Assistant Director
Jodi Gage

Stage Manager
John W. Coleman*

Assistant Stage Managers
**Andrew Landis, Anna Reetz*,
Jimmy Marcheso**

Costume Supervisor
Jai Alltizer

Head of Wig and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

Co-production with
Washington National Opera

TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2018 AT 7:30 PM
TUESDAY, JUNE 19 AT 7:30 PM
TUESDAY, JUNE 26 AT 7:30 PM

Music drama in one act by **Richard Wagner**
Text by the composer

DAS RHEINGOLD

THE RHINEGOLD

Der Ring des Nibelungen—Prologue

(Sung in German with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

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

Nibelungs

*San Francisco Opera debut

Scene 1: A mountain river
Scene 2: Terrace of the gods
Scene 3: Nibelheim
Scene 4: Terrace of the gods

*The performance will last approximately two hours and thirty-five minutes
and is performed without intermission.*

*Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.
Patrons who leave during the performance may not be re-seated.*

*The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.
Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.*

DIE WALKÜRE

Events between *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*

- Fafner has turned himself into a dragon to protect his golden hoard.
- Wotan has fathered Brünnhilde, his warrior maiden, with Erda.
- Wotan has fathered another eight daughters, the Valkyries, with an unnamed goddess, possibly Erda.
- On a journey to Earth, Wotan has fathered with a mortal woman the twins Siegmund and Sieglinde.

ACT I

An exhausted fugitive seeks refuge in a woodland home built around a mighty tree. Sieglinde tends to this unexpected visitor. When her husband Hunding arrives home, the stranger relates his sad tale: attempting to protect a young woman from an unwanted arranged marriage, he killed her brothers and was forced to escape her avenging kinsmen. Hunding reveals that he was one of the kinsmen. He offers Siegmund shelter for the night but advises him to prepare for a fight the next day.

Sieglinde drugs Hunding's drink so that the stranger can flee to safety. She, too, had been an unwilling bride and remembers that, at her wedding, an unknown old man had thrust a sword deep into a tree trunk, but no man has had the strength to pull it out. The stranger realizes that this must be the sword his father had promised him and rejoices in reborn hope and newfound love for Sieglinde. Sieglinde recognizes him now as her long-lost twin brother, Siegmund. In great excitement, Siegmund triumphantly pulls the sword from the tree, and the lovers run off into the night.

ACT II

Wotan exhorts his daughter Brünnhilde, a Valkyrie, to protect his mortal son Siegmund in his coming duel with Hunding. Wotan had been grooming Siegmund to be a "free hero"—a free-willed mortal unaided by the gods, unbound by Wotan's treaties, and consequently the only one capable of regaining the cursed Ring that Wotan was earlier forced to yield. But Fricka, Wotan's wife and the protector of marriage, is outraged at the adulterous and incestuous love of Siegmund and Sieglinde and forces Wotan to let Hunding triumph. Wotan changes his order to Brünnhilde and tells her that she must let Siegmund die in combat.

Siegmund and Sieglinde rest during their flight. While Sieglinde sleeps, Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund, instructing him to follow her to Valhalla after his death. Deeply moved by Siegmund's devotion to Sieglinde, Brünnhilde decides to disobey her father's orders and save Siegmund's life. After Hunding arrives and begins his battle with Siegmund, a furious Wotan appears and shatters Siegmund's sword.

Allowing Hunding to easily kill Siegmund, Wotan then strikes Hunding down as well. Having defied her father, Brünnhilde gathers up the broken pieces of the sword and flees with Sieglinde to safety.

ACT III

Brünnhilde's eight sisters, the Valkyries, are on their way to Valhalla to report on the fallen heroes they have gathered. When Brünnhilde arrives with Sieglinde, the Valkyries harbor the pair for fear of Wotan's wrath. Brünnhilde gives Sieglinde the broken sword pieces and sends her to seek refuge in the forest where the dragon Fafner hides, for Wotan will not follow her there. Sieglinde takes some comfort in the knowledge that she will bear Siegmund's son, who Brünnhilde predicts will be the greatest of all heroes.

When Wotan arrives, he condemns Brünnhilde for the betrayal and sentences her to be stripped of her divinity and put to sleep on the mountaintop, to be claimed by the first mortal man to awaken her. Brünnhilde begs Wotan to surround her with a ring of magic fire so that only the bravest of men will attempt to awaken her. Wotan agrees, regretfully bidding his daughter goodbye and surrounding her with terrifying flames.

First performance: Munich; June 26, 1870.

First performance as part of a *Ring* cycle: Bayreuth; August 14, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Academy of Music; April 2, 1887.

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 4, 1935. The Company presented *Die Walküre* as part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1935, 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999, and 2011 and by itself in 14 other seasons: 1936, 1939, 1945, 1949, 1953, 1956, 1963, 1968, 1969, 1976, 1981, 1983, 1995, and 2010. For more information, please visit our online performance archive at archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 14 principals, 10 supernumeraries; **24 total.**

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling E-flat clarinet), 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps, 51 strings (14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 cellos, 7 basses); **89 total.**

Backstage: 3 trombones are used during the Act II fight scene to simulate the sound of the *Stierhorn*, a rough-sounding primitive instrument made from the horn of a bull or cow.

Conductor
Donald Runnicles

Director
Francesca Zambello

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Choreographer
Denni Sayers

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Projections Designed by
Jan Hartley

Remounted by
S. Katy Tucker

Co-Choreographer and Dance Master
Lawrence Pech

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Associate Conductor
Moritz Gnann

Assistant Conductor
Joseph Marcheso

Musical Preparation
**John Churchwell, Maureen Zoltek,
Tamara Sanikidze**

Banda
Dennis Doubin

Prompter
Matthew Piatt

Diction
Marianne Barrett

Supertitles
Francesca Zambello

Assistant Director
Jenny Harber

Stage Manager
Darin Burnett

Assistant Stage Managers
**Jimmy Marcheso, Thea Railey,
E. Reed Fisher**

Costume Supervisor
Jai Alltizer

Head of Wig and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

Co-production with
Washington National Opera

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2018 AT 7 PM
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20 AT 7 PM
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27 AT 7 PM

Music drama in three acts by **Richard Wagner**
Text by the composer

DIE WALKÜRE

THE VALKYRIE

Der Ring des Nibelungen—Part I

(Sung in German with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

<i>Sieglinde</i>	Karita Mattila
<i>Siegmund</i>	Brandon Jovanovich
<i>Hunding</i>	Raymond Aceto
<i>Wotan</i>	Greer Grimsley
<i>Brünnhilde</i>	Irène Theorin
<i>Fricka</i>	Jamie Barton
<i>Gerhilde</i>	Julie Adams
<i>Helmwige</i>	Melissa Citro
<i>Waltraute</i>	Renée Tatum
<i>Schwertleite</i>	Nicole Birkland
<i>Ortlinde</i>	Sarah Cambridge†
<i>Siegrune</i>	Laura Krumm
<i>Grimgerde</i>	Renée Rapier
<i>Rossweisse</i>	Lauren McNeese

Hunding's men

†Current Adler Fellow

ACT I

Hunding's house

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

Scene 1: Valhalla
Scene 2: A desert

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III

A mountaintop

The performance will last approximately four hours and thirty-five minutes.

Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be re-seated until intermission.

The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.

Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

SIEGFRIED

Events between *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*

- Sieglinde has died giving birth to Siegfried. The fragments of Siegmund's sword Notung have come into the possession of Mime, Alberich's brother.
- Mime has raised the young Siegfried, preparing him to recover the Nibelung hoard of gold, including the Ring and the Tarnhelm, which he then expects Siegfried to yield to him.

ACT I

Mime has set up a metal forge in a deserted area near the spot where a transformed Fafner guards the treasure. Siegfried demands a sword from Mime, but every weapon Mime forges is easily shattered by Siegfried. Commanding Mime to reforge the fragments of a sword purportedly left to Siegfried by his deceased mother, the young man learns more from Mime about his heritage.

Wotan, who now wanders the world incognito, approaches Mime and challenges him to a battle of wits, proposing that they each pose three questions to the other. When Mime is unable to answer the final question, Wotan reveals that only a person without fear can reforge Siegfried's sword, and that person will kill Mime. After Wotan departs, the terrified Mime resolves to teach Siegfried fear to save himself. But Mime faces a dilemma: if Siegfried learns fear, who will forge the sword that can kill Fafner and regain the golden hoard?

When Siegfried returns to claim his sword, Mime tries to teach the young man to fear. Siegfried, still immune to fear, successfully reforges Siegmund's sword and goes off with Mime to reclaim the golden hoard from Fafner. Unbeknownst to Siegfried, Mime has brewed a poisoned drink to give him after he triumphs over Fafner.

ACT II

Alberich, eager to regain the golden hoard, keeps watch near the place where Fafner sleeps and guards it. Meanwhile, Fafner has used the magic Tarnhelm to transform himself into an invincible form. Wotan arrives and warns Alberich of Mime's designs on the Ring and then rouses Fafner so that Alberich may demand the Ring from him in exchange for warning him of Siegfried's approach. Fafner refuses, and Wotan leaves.

Siegfried arrives with Mime, who tries to make him fear Fafner. But Siegfried instead resolves to approach Fafner and sends Mime away. Siegfried listens to the birds and fashions a makeshift pipe to imitate them. When the pipe fails to communicate with the birds, Siegfried tries his horn. Fafner emerges, and Siegfried kills him. The dying Fafner warns Siegfried against Mime's treachery, and his lifeblood renders Siegfried instantly able to understand the birds.

When Siegfried goes into Fafner's hiding place, Mime approaches Alberich and the two brothers fight over the golden hoard. Siegfried emerges with the Tarnhelm and the Ring as Mime and Alberich hide. A forest bird warns Siegfried to beware of Mime, who emerges and offers Siegfried the poisoned drink. Now able to understand the true meaning of Mime's words, Siegfried refuses it and kills Mime. The forest bird counsels Siegfried to penetrate the wall of fire surrounding Brünnhilde, his destined bride.

ACT III

Wotan visits Erda in a final effort to avert a disastrous future. When she advises him to seek guidance from Brünnhilde, he tells her of their daughter's disobedience and punishment, and the dismayed Erda becomes unwilling to reveal more. Wotan abandons Erda, informing her that he will bequeath the world to Siegfried.

Just then, Siegfried arrives, and Wotan questions him about his sword. This irritates Siegfried and he tells the old man to leave him alone. Wotan bars Siegfried's way with his spear, which Siegfried shatters, accusing Wotan of having killed his father. Wotan collects the fragments of the spear as we see him for the last time.

Siegfried plunges through the fire and awakens the sleeping Brünnhilde. Though Brünnhilde realizes that she is now a mortal woman and must obey Siegfried, she welcomes him and learns the meaning of love for herself.

First performance: Bayreuth; August 16, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera; November 9, 1887.

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 6, 1935. The Company presented *Siegfried* as part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1935, 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999, and 2011 and by itself four other times: in 1936, 1947, 1969, and 2011. For more information, please visit our online performance archive at archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 8 principals, 1 supernumerary; **9 total.**

Orchestra: 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons (1 doubling contrabassoon), 8 French horns (4 doubling Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps, 51 strings (14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 cellos, 7 basses); **89 total.**

Backstage: In Act II, 1 English horn for the Siegfried/reed scene and 1 French horn for Siegfried's horn calls.

Conductor
Donald Runnicles

Director
Francesca Zambello

Associate Director and Choreographer
Denni Sayers

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Projections Designed by
Jan Hartley
Remounted by
S. Katy Tucker

Dance Master
Lawrence Pech

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Associate Conductor
Moritz Gnann

Assistant Conductor
Eric Weimer

Musical Preparation
**Robert Mollicone, Tamara Sanikidze,
Stephanie Rhodes Russell, John Churchwell**

Banda
Dennis Doubin

Prompter
Susan Miller Hult

Diction
Marianne Barrett

Supertitles
Francesca Zambello

Assistant Director
Morgan Robinson

Stage Manager
John W. Coleman

Assistant Stage Managers
**E. Reed Fisher, Jessica Barker*,
Anna Reetz**

Costume Supervisor
Galen Till

Head of Wig and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

Co-production with
Washington National Opera

FRIDAY, JUNE 15, 2018 AT 6:30 PM
FRIDAY, JUNE 22 AT 6:30 PM
FRIDAY, JUNE 29 AT 6:30 PM

Music drama in three acts by **Richard Wagner**
Text by the composer

SIEGFRIED

Der Ring des Nibelungen—Part II

(Sung in German with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

Mime	David Cangelosi
Siegfried	Daniel Brenna*
The Wanderer (Wotan)	Greer Grimsley
Alberich	Falk Struckmann
Fafner	Raymond Aceto
Forest Bird	Stacey Tappan
Erda	Ronnita Miller
Brünnhilde	Irène Theorin

*San Francisco Opera debut

ACT I

Mime's home

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

Fafner's hiding place

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III

Brünnhilde's rock

The performance will last approximately four hours and fifty minutes.

Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be re-seated until intermission.

The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.

Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG

PROLOGUE

The three Norns, daughters of the earth goddess Erda, are busy weaving the rope of fate. Predicting Valhalla's imminent fall, they notice that the rope of destiny is starting to fray and unravel. As the sisters try to make it taut, it snaps, and they descend in terror to find Erda.

At dawn, Siegfried and Brünnhilde awaken from their night together. Though fearful that she may lose him, Brünnhilde encourages Siegfried to travel in search of heroic challenges. He gives her the Ring as a pledge of his love.

ACT I

Gunther, leader of the Gibichungs, a human race, and his sister, Gutrune, are at their home. Their half-brother Hagen, son of Alberich, advises Gunther to marry Brünnhilde in his own plan to secure the Ring. By means of a magic potion, Siegfried could be induced to forget his vows and win her for Gunther in return for Gutrune's hand. Siegfried's horn call announces his approach. Gunther welcomes him, and Gutrune seals his fate by offering him the potion. He drinks and instantly forgets all about Brünnhilde and agrees to deliver her to Gunther.

On Brünnhilde's rock, Waltraute visits her sister and tells her that she must yield the Ring to the Rhinemaidens or all is doomed. When she refuses, Waltraute departs in despair. Dusk falls as Siegfried appears, but he is now disguised as Gunther by means of the magical Tarnhelm. He wrests the Ring from the terrified Brünnhilde and claims her as Gunther's bride.

ACT II

Alberich appears to Hagen and urges his sleeping son to get the Ring back from Siegfried. As dawn breaks, Siegfried returns and announces he has won Brünnhilde for Gunther. Hagen calls everyone to witness the joining of the two couples: Brünnhilde and Gunther, Siegfried and Gutrune. As they enter, Brünnhilde notices her ring on Siegfried's finger. She deplores the trickery through which she was won and proclaims Siegfried to be her true husband. The hero, still under the potion's spell, vows that he has never wronged the woman, and Brünnhilde angrily swears that he is lying. Bent on revenge, she reveals to Hagen the hero's one vulnerable spot: a blade in his back will kill him. Taunted by Brünnhilde and lured by Hagen's description of the Ring's power, Gunther joins in the murder plot.

ACT III

On the banks of the destroyed Rhine, the three Rhinemaidens mourn their lost treasure. Siegfried approaches and the maidens plead for the Ring, but he ignores them. When Siegfried's hunting party arrives, he describes his boyhood with Mime, the killing of Fafner, and finally—after Hagen gives him a potion to restore his memory—his wooing of Brünnhilde. Pretending indignation, Hagen plunges a spear into Siegfried's back and the hero dies.

At Gibichung Hall, Gutrune nervously awaits Siegfried's return. Hagen tells her that Siegfried has been slain by a wild boar, but she accuses Gunther of murder and Hagen admits the crime. Quarreling over the Ring, Hagen kills Gunther but recoils in fear from the Ring when the dead hero raises his arm. Brünnhilde appears and orders a funeral pyre built for Siegfried. Musing on the gods' responsibility for his death, she returns the Ring to the Rhinemaidens and walks into the flames. As the world is consumed by fire, the Rhine overflows its banks and the Rhinemaidens, dragging Hagen to his death, regain their treasure. Brünnhilde's death frees the world of the curse of the Ring.

First performance: Bayreuth; August 17, 1876.

First performance in the U.S.: New York, Metropolitan Opera; January 25, 1888.

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 9, 1935. The Company presented *Götterdämmerung* as part of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in 1935, 1972, 1985, 1990, 1999, and 2011 and by itself four other times: in 1936, 1947, 1969, and 2011. For more information, please visit our online performance archive at archive.sfopera.com.

Personnel: 12 principals, 77 choristers, 11 supernumeraries; **100 total.**

Orchestra: 3 flutes, 1 piccolo, 3 oboes, 1 English horn, 3 clarinets, 1 bass clarinet, 3 bassoons, 8 French horns (4 doubling Wagner tubas), 3 trumpets, 1 bass trumpet, 2 trombones, 1 bass trombone, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 tuba, 2 timpani, 2 percussionists, 2 harps, 51 strings (14 first violins, 12 second violins, 10 violas, 8 cellos, 7 basses); **89 total.**

Backstage: 3 trombones are used to simulate the sound of the *Stierhorn*, a rough-sounding primitive instrument made from the horn of a bull or cow; 2 added French horns perform the echoing horn calls.

Conductor
Donald Runnicles

Director
Francesca Zambello

Associate Director
Laurie Feldman

Choreographer
Denni Sayers

Set Designer
Michael Yeargan

Costume Designer
Catherine Zuber

Lighting Designer
Mark McCullough

Projections Designed by
S. Katy Tucker
Based on Original Designs by
Jan Hartley and S. Katy Tucker

Chorus Director
Ian Robertson

Dance Master
Lawrence Pech

Fight Director
Dave Maier

Associate Conductor
Moritz Gnann

Assistant Conductor
Joseph Marcheso

Musical Preparation
**Bryndon Hassman, Matthew Piatt,
Robert Mollicone, John Churchwell,
Fabrizio Corona**

Prompter
Dennis Doubin

Diction
Marianne Barrett

Supertitles
Francesca Zambello

Assistant Director
Shawna Lucey

Stage Manager
Darin Burnett

Assistant Stage Managers
**Thea Railey, Andrew Landis,
Jessica Barker**

Costume Supervisor
Galen Till

Head of Wig and Makeup
Jeanna Parham

Co-production with
Washington National Opera

SUNDAY, JUNE 17, 2018 AT 1 PM

SUNDAY, JUNE 24 AT 1 PM

SUNDAY, JULY 1 AT 1 PM

Music drama in three acts and a prologue by **Richard Wagner**

Text by the composer

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG TWILIGHT OF THE GODS

Der Ring des Nibelungen—Part III

(Sung in German with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of appearance)

First Norn	Ronnita Miller
Second Norn	Jamie Barton
Third Norn	Sarah Cambridge†
Brünnhilde	Irène Theorin
Siegfried	Daniel Brenna
Gunther	Brian Mulligan
Hagen	Andrea Silvestrelli
Gutrune	Melissa Citro
Waltraute	Jamie Barton
Alberich	Falk Struckmann
Woglinde	Stacey Tappan
Wellgunde	Lauren McNeese
Flosshilde	Renée Tatum

Vassals, workers, officers, courtiers, guards, huntsmen, servants

†Current Adler Fellow

PROLOGUE

Scene 1: The Norns

Scene 2: Brünnhilde's rock

ACT I

Scene 1: Gibichung Hall

Scene 2: Brünnhilde's rock

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

Gibichung Hall

—INTERMISSION—

ACT III

Scene 1: A mountain river

Scene 2: Gibichung Hall

The performance will last approximately five hours and ten minutes.

Latecomers may not be seated during the performance after the lights have dimmed.

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be re-seated until intermission.

The use of cameras, cell phones, and any kind of recording equipment is strictly forbidden.

Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

“Stark ruft das Lied”

A Listening Guide to the *Ring*

By 1848, Richard Wagner had conceived an idea for a large-scale opera based on his own idiosyncratic interpretation of several different medieval Germanic and Scandinavian epics and legends. Over the next few years, the world experienced paroxysms of political turmoil, especially in the land known as Germany (there was yet no actual political entity by that name), and Wagner himself was exiled to Switzerland. As people’s understanding of cultural identity changed, so Wagner’s view of the story evolved. He added what we would call “pre-quals,” searching for motivations behind the actions, and for additional ramifications of the actions committed in his original story of *Siegfried’s Tod*, which became now the finale of a vast epic. By 1853, the poem was complete as we know it: a four-part drama named *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), stretching as far back as a mythical analogue to Eden and, as in Eden, beginning with an original crime that set all subsequent history in motion, culminating in the Twilight of the Gods.

Wagner set this poem to music methodically, using themes representative of people, places, and, above all, ideas in a coher-

ent musical system. However, he understood that it would not merely require a new method of composition, but also an entirely new attitude toward staging and even experiencing such a work. He set the project aside in 1857, having completed the music through much of the third part, *Siegfried*, and the incomplete *Ring* remained in limbo for several years. When Wagner found an enthusiastic and wealthy patron in King Ludwig II of Bavaria, he composed other operas (*Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*) and finally returned to completing his *Ring*. Ludwig produced (against Wagner’s wishes) the first two parts of the *Ring*—*Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre*—at the Court Theatre in Munich, but finally sponsored the construction of a “Festival House” in Bayreuth, dedicated to producing the *Ring* and under Wagner’s complete and direct control. Wagner completed the score of the last and largest component of the cycle, *Götterdämmerung*, and, against all odds, the complete *Ring of the Nibelung* was produced in 1876. It was immediately acknowledged as an epochal accomplishment in music, theatrical history, and beyond.

Wagner himself acknowledged that the staging alone fell short of his aspirations for a new theatrical experience, even though some of his ideas for the Bayreuth Festival Theatre (the darkened, raked auditorium, all seats facing directly to the stage, etc.) have become standard well beyond the opera house. In lieu of finding the one perfect way to produce the *Ring* on stage, it has instead become the supreme vehicle for new stagings, each of which has brought forth new meaning to the work itself. The *Ring* has taught us that a true masterpiece becomes new every time it is experienced, revealing truths even its own creator only partially imagined.

The music itself is considered the largest single composition ever accomplished, and yet Wagner’s imagination clearly conceived it as a unity from beginning to end. When it concludes, you realize he knew where he was going all along, no matter what the facts of the composition history might suggest. The famous leitmotifs (musical themes) are nothing new or revolutionary in and of themselves. But how they evolve and interact with each other is where the musical—and dramatic and psychological—miracle occurs.

For a long time, people were interested in examining the composition history of this unique work to determine which aspects of it (thematically and musically) were “traditional,” new, and entirely unprecedented (for example, detecting a more evolved composer in the parts of the score that were written last). But there is only a finite amount of insight to be gained by this, and eventually terms such as “revolutionary,” “avant-garde,” and others become superfluous when applied to this piece. The *Ring* is truly a world unto itself.



Das Rheingold

Creating a World of Light and Dark

Before we see anything, the single note of E-flat sounds in the double basses, evolving into waves of arpeggios always centered on the same E-flat (the primal note in this cosmography) but fluctuating, over the course of 136 measures, with an augmented degree of frequency. This primal energy is creating diverse life in its wake. Waves of sound build climaxing into a key change to A-flat major, and a voice—a human voice—is heard, the high soprano of the Rhinemaiden Woglinde, proclaiming infantile sounds whose inanity almost immediately become recognizable as words and then a complete sentence. We have journeyed from the primordial ooze to the epoch of organized consciousness (speech) in a few minutes and done it by musical means with an outcome whose primary impact is acoustic and, only later, syntactic.

The piercing purity of joyous soprano voices is quickly smudged, so to speak, by a grumbling lower male voice, Alberich. We hear his character not only in tone but in his words, e.g. “Garstig glatter glitschriger Glimmer!” (“Nasty slippery smooth slime!”). (Throughout the *Ring*, a remarkably high degree of the words’ significance lies in their sound, which is very good news for non-German speakers.) Light and dark—in words, music, and dramatic situation—have summoned each other forth. The mechanism is set in motion, and the first action in this history, the theft of the gold, is a crime from which all subsequent history will be extrapolated.

Psychology, Power, and Music

The point of view shifts from the depths of the river to the high mountains, but the world of the gods, too, is cloudy, dim, and murky. The swirling lower strings and woodwinds take halting breaths, and then the bassoons gently offer a consoling theme in C major. Tubas and trombones repeat this motif in D-flat major (the “majestic key,” according to composer Hector Berlioz) in a passage marked *dolcissimo* (“very sweetly”). Wotan, still dreaming, intones mostly on a single note, as one might hear in church, how the door of the Great Hall will guard “eternal might and endless fame.” The theme, we already sense, is Valhalla, the castle in the sky. But no might is eternal, and the score unpacks how this seductive dream of security is born of subconscious fears of inadequacy and dread of darkness.

The shift to the subsequent scene, deep underground in the caves of Nibelheim, is a sonic shift of grim terror: this is what Wotan rightly fears the world will become without the lofty vision he imagined in his dreams of Valhalla. The Rhinemaidens’ cries of woe when they lost their pure gold (a sad minor-key

Left: The Rhinemaidens bewail the loss of their gold in this 1910 color lithograph by Arthur Rackham (1867–1939).

Above: “The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla” as seen in the Company’s 1999 production by Nikolaus Lehnhoff.



modulation of their earlier joyous shouts of “Rheingold!”) now becomes a great orchestral groan like the collective cry of the laboring Nibelungs. The chiaroscuro sounds of the conflicting realms is unmistakable.

Themes and Variations

Imagine the score of the glorious finale—“The Entry of the Gods into Valhalla”—as a shifting camera angle, going from close-ups to a panoramic shot that includes all the different layers of creation: the Rhinemaidens in the water (both their voices and orchestral reminiscences of their themes); a preponderance of harps in the orchestra evoking the waters of the Rhine; the shining towers of Valhalla; an unforgettable six-note theme depicting thunder; the indisputable grandeur of the gods as they cross on the rainbow (a motif we never hear again in the *Ring*—a trailblazing moment cannot be repeated); and the bathetic sarcasm of Loge and his fiery essence that undercuts all that grandeur. Taken on its own, the finale of *Das Rheingold* could be a wonderful concert piece, a sort of fanfare of rousing themes, but as the climax of what we have already heard, it is so much more. We have heard how a simple run up the scale indicates the Rhine (i.e., unpolluted innocence) while its opposite descent down the scale signifies Wotan’s spear, carved with runes of law (i.e., legal power, politics, and civilization itself). The great “waves” in the score at this point effortlessly depict both the conflict and the connection of nature and culture. The famous leitmotifs or musical themes of the *Ring* have already begun to layer against and affect each other even as they morph through time and memory.

Die Walküre

Almost Human

The opera begins with a nervous repeating figure in the cellos, meant to represent Siegmund on the run. There is a musical “clap of thunder” in this prelude (in fact, Donner’s six-note theme we heard late in *Das Rheingold*), implying a storm but also subliminally suggesting a hidden connection between this new character and the gods when we last saw them crossing into Valhalla. When Siegmund and Sieglinde see each other, their attraction is first expressed by a plaintive solo cello, an exquisite herald of desire Wagner also uses in *Tristan und Isolde*.

Their love duet is atypical. Instead of singing together, as in most operas, they sing almost antiphonally in phrases that spur each other on to greater frenzy. They are siblings and lovers, but they are also something else: separated halves of a former unit (reminiscent of the once all-powerful male/female “androgynes” of Plato’s *Symposium*) searching for wholeness in each other. This first act of *Die Walküre* is one orchestral and vocal crescendo, as the twins (half-divine, yet mortal) join their destinies in a climax that is both a psychological and erotic triumph.

Experience Becomes History Becomes Legend

For all its grandeur and monumentality, the vast majority of the *Ring* is comprised of “dialogues” of different kinds between two characters. The largest narration is in Act II of *Die Walküre*, in which Wotan explains his motivations and difficulties to his favorite daughter, Brünnhilde. Many have thought this abundance of past narration was a leftover of the epic having been written in reverse order, and therefore a sort of nuisance to be tolerated for the appreciation of the full experience. Actually, the narrations are at the heart of the cycle. Each one reveals the effects of the past on the characters’ development and their own internal processing of external events—in other words, how facts (those things we have seen happen on stage) become stories. Subtle changes in orchestral reminiscences of those facts (clearly recalled in leitmotifs) signal new “spins” on old truths. The process of recalling and interpreting the past, furthermore, influences the characters themselves. In Wotan’s case, it elicits the last thing he expected to experience: emotions. Telling stories gets the facts wrong, but that is where their true value lies. Telling stories is what makes one human.

The Costs of Desire

Becoming human is, in fact, one of the central themes of the *Ring*: it is about the age of gods and monsters evolving into the age of humankind, and this is seen mostly through individual characters, especially Brünnhilde. She announces her presence in this drama in Act II of *Die Walküre* with her startling war cry (“Hojotoho!”). She then changes when she meets Siegmund (her half-brother) who says he will die instead of obey her summons to Valhalla. When Brünnhilde appears to Siegmund and announces his death, their exchange has a ritualized formality: their lines are of a stately pace and even lengthen as they answer each other antiphonally. But Siegmund breaks the form when he says what no warrior has said to a Valkyrie before: no, he will not go to Valhalla. He will kill Sieglinde



San Francisco Opera’s first presentation of the *Ring* in 1935 featured Friedrich Schorr as Wotan and Kirsten Flagstad as Brünnhilde, together here in Act III of *Die Walküre*.

and then himself (a coward’s death) so they can remain together in the dark Underworld. Brünnhilde’s measured form is shattered, and she replies with a passionate vocal outburst over the full orchestra. This is Brünnhilde’s first encounter with the messy, illogical totality of love, and we hear in the music that it has essentially changed her.

The next act takes an analogous path. Music’s ultimate depiction of the shrill horror and rush of war begins the act with the “Ride of the Valkyries” and its eight competing female voices. But most of this act belongs to Wotan and Brünnhilde. He bids her farewell and deprives her of her divinity, making her a “mere” human. The music, however, tells us what Wotan himself could not articulate with words. His sadness is expressed in a striking orchestral phrase: a four-note descent, followed by another four-note descent higher up on the staff. If we listen closely, we can recognize that this is the motif of his spear. The spear itself will not break until the next opera, but the essence (the musical signature) of it is already severed in two. More importantly, the initial impression on the listener is not of a broken spear but of a broken heart. Furthermore, it does not resolve musically, but demands to be repeated by the orchestra even higher on the scale. It is a crescendo of emotion that nothing can end except the downward-cascading theme in the brass that slices through it: the Magic Fire, which is “magic” because it induces sleep—“narcosis,” the only antidote for such pain. In expressing his full emotions for the first time, Wotan has also made a human of himself. When we see him again, he will no longer be the chief god. And when we meet Brünnhilde again even later, she will not be a warrior maiden crying “Hojotoho!” but a passionate and entirely fascinating woman.



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Siegfried

Hearing the Past, Present, and Future in Siegfried's Sword

The surprising amount of musical time devoted to the sword in Act I of *Siegfried* is a lesson in how objects in the world of the *Ring* carry multiple meanings. The motif of the sword actually appeared for the first time at the end of *Das Rheingold*, when Wotan is struck by the idea of a sword for a mortal hero that will benefit the gods. The theme itself begins with the first two notes of one of the phrases we had just heard previously: Donner's lightning motif. (One might imagine Wotan experiencing this "bright idea" of planting the sword as an inspired flash.) We hear the sword invoked musically in various ways throughout *Die Walküre*, and then hear it again in fragments, appropriate both to its present shattered state and to Siegfried's merely partial understanding of what it is. As he performs the strenuous work of stoking the bellows, he sings lustily "Heiho! Ho! Ho!" built on the same two-note phrase that had once lit Wotan's imagination when he first thought of the sword. Siegfried then hammers the steel of the newly forged sword with the same rhythms (ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three) that in *Das Rheingold* had depicted the slavery of the Nibelungs toiling in the mines. Here, the rhythm is self-created and propels his own vocalism. The same rhythmic figure that was an ominous echo of industrialization becomes here self-powering propulsion. Later, in *Götterdämmerung*, motifs of the sword will appear even after Siegfried's death as a sign of his heroism outlasting his mortal life.

Purity and Minimalism

Interaction between the gods' world with the emerging human world forms the fascination of this opera. In the dramatically complex second act, several strains from much earlier in the story are concluded—and a few of the lingering characters are quickly dispatched. Amid all this, appropriately, Siegfried has a moment of reflection surrounding his origins and his unknown mother. The music of the "Forest Murmurs" is delicate, with notes of a solo flute shimmering like the light on a quivering leaf. Siegfried also plays his hunting horn—the first representation in the *Ring* of music-making (a human pursuit) and a remarkable, long instru-



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From the Bayreuth Festival's controversial 2013 staging of *Siegfried* (directed by Frank Castorf), a modified Mount Rushmore towers over the first act.

In this 19th-century caricature, the artist compares Wagner's victory over his critics to Siegfried's slaying of the dragon Fafner.

mental solo at the very center of this vast opera. The bright soprano voice of the Forest Bird that answers his horn call sounds like a peal of a high bell (a sort of alarm clock, even) radiating above the previously murky abundance of low male voices. The feminine side of the hero's psyche is being summoned forth.

At the Crossroads

All the strains of the story intersect in Act III, as the old order (Wotan) is about to be overthrown by the new (Siegfried).

When the Wanderer calls forth Erda, the orchestra swirls in a rush that seamlessly subsumes themes we remember as the Rhine, Wotan's Spear, Valhalla, and more. It is the nexus of all time. Siegfried traverses the Magic Fire (you can hear his "sword" slicing through the flames) and is finally united in no uncertain terms with Brünnhilde—male and female, in their full human glory, becoming one by means of a grand love duet.

What makes this love duet different from that of Siegfried's parents in *Walküre*? First, Siegfried and Brünnhilde are battling internal fears that present barriers to full surrender to passion, barriers of fear that Siegmund and Sieglinde did not heed in the frenzied rush toward physical and spiritual union. In this duet, there is a combativeness involved in the path to the climax, expressed in an acceleration of tempo as well as a demanding level of volume. It is as thrilling as it is challenging, and many sopranos claim that Brünnhilde's appearance in this opera, while relatively brief, is even more taxing in its own way than in the other two *Ring* operas in which she appears.

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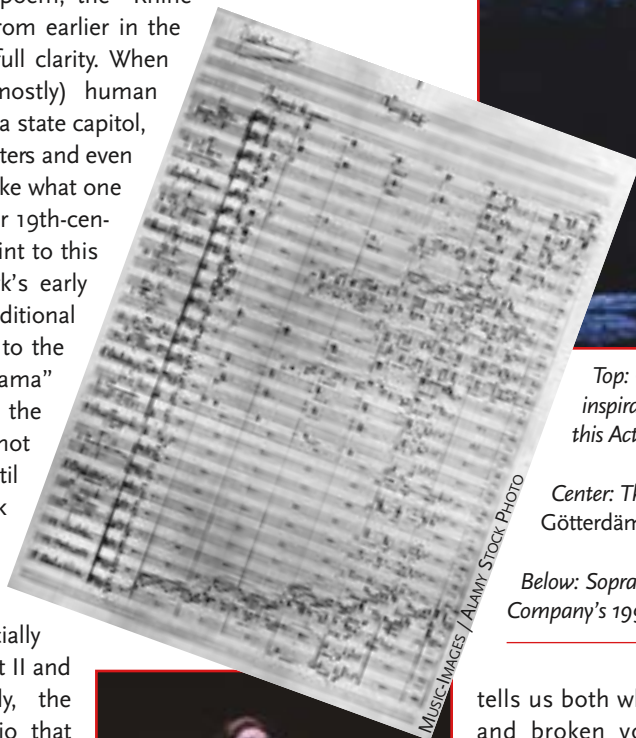
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Götterdämmerung

Grand Opera and the Complexity of the Human World

Siegfried's migration from the world of gods, dwarves, and dragons to the world of humans is depicted by a magnificent orchestral tone-poem, the "Rhine Journey," with themes from earlier in the cycle now amplified to full clarity. When Siegfried meets the (mostly) human Gibichungs in their hall (a state capitol, so to speak), their characters and even their music seem more like what one would encounter in other 19th-century operas. Scholars point to this as evidence of this work's early conception as a more traditional grand opera (compared to the text-focused "music drama" of the previous works in the cycle). Yet Wagner did not orchestrate this opera until the very end of his work on the cycle. The fact is that the more "typically operatic" aspects of *Götterdämmerung* (especially the grand choruses in Act II and even, quite surprisingly, the "oath of vengeance" trio that ends that same act) are the perfect musical expressions of what is happening in the saga. The human world to which Siegfried has progressed may have more of what we call "love" than the gods' realms that were explored in *Das Rheingold*, and it has much else besides: diversity, competition between individuals, multiplicities of lies and deceptions—in short, "politics," in the original Greek meaning of the term. Grand opera explores these themes superbly, as Wagner knew from his earlier *Lohengrin*.



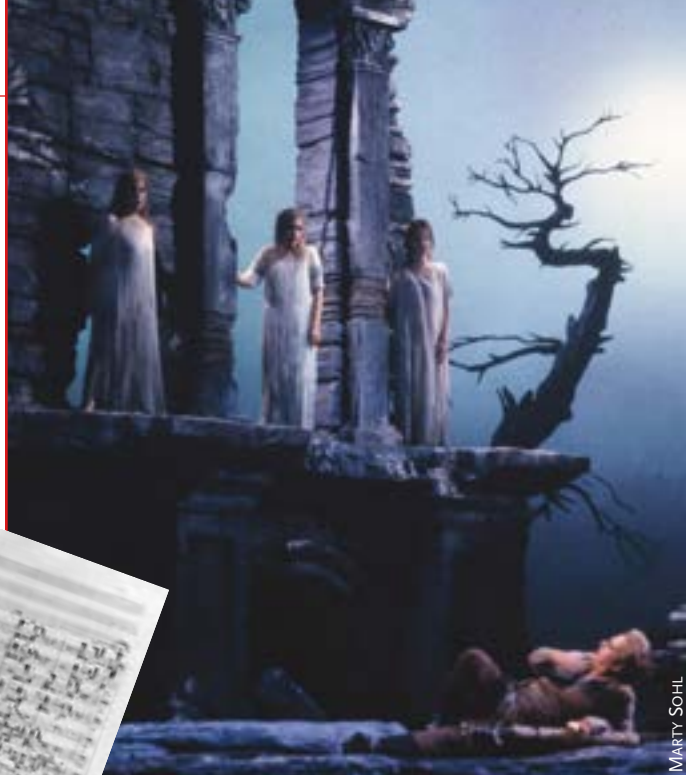
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MARTY SOHL

Love and Cataclysm

What is the last thing your ears would expect to hear in the final act of this massive saga? Why, the voices of the Rhinemaidens, of course, still mourning their loss of the gold yet maintaining all the bright charm of their perpetual youth. The soundscape becomes even more remarkably offset by what follows. Siegfried is asked by Hagen to recount his story. The music



MARTY SOHL

Top: German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich was an inspiration for the designs of the Company's 1990 Ring, including this Act III scene with the Rhinemaidens and Siegfried.

Center: The first page of Richard Wagner's original score of *Götterdämmerung*, which premiered in Bayreuth on August 17, 1876.

Below: Soprano Gwyneth Jones sings the Immolation Scene in the Company's 1990 presentation of *Götterdämmerung*.

tells us both what is still cloudy in his memory (low woodwinds and broken vocal phrases) and the painful reawakening of blacked-out memory. Siegfried's eventual death is marked by an unforgettable symphonic narrative—the so-called Funeral Music—with its twin blasts of the entire orchestra closing the lid, as it were, on his themes of the resurrected sword and victory. And yet, the finality of death, cataclysmic as it undeniably is, is not the final word. Renewing life is the prerogative of Woman, and the supreme woman of this tale answers the challenge on both a personal and cosmic level. In a stunningly virtuosic display of vocalism as she bids a restful eternity to her unseen father Wotan to a frenzied greeting-in-death of her beloved Siegfried (a Wagnerian analogue of an operatic mad scene in its uninhibited high notes), Brünnhilde summons forth universal ordeals of fire and water and sings herself into her own theme of apotheosis. We finally hear the music that had been originally sung by Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* when she said farewell to Brünnhilde and predicted her future deification, and once again we hear the pristine theme of the Rhinemaidens. We know that Brünnhilde's self-sacrifice has ended the old order and purged it of all its corruption. Primal innocence is restored, and the cycle begins anew. 🌸

William Berger is the author of the books Wagner Without Fear and Verdi with a Vengeance (Vintage), and he is a co-host during live Metropolitan Opera radio broadcasts.



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ARTIST PROFILES



DONALD RUNNICLES
(Edinburgh, Scotland)
Conductor

Recipient of the San Francisco Opera Medal in 2009, 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, including *Les Troyens* in 2015; the world premieres of John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* and Conrad Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*; the West Coast premiere of Stewart Wallace's *Harvey Milk*; the North American premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*; and the 1999 and 2011 *Ring* cycles. 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. In the 2018–19 season, Maestro Runnicles will conduct the world premiere of Detlev Glanert's *Oceane* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, new productions of Berg's *Wozzeck* and Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg*, and six revival titles. Guest engagements include the Cincinnati Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Toronto Symphony, BBC Scottish Symphony, Tonhalle Orchestra, and a production of Strauss' *Elektra* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago.



IRÈNE THEORIN
(Småland, Sweden)
Brünnhilde

Acclaimed for her portrayals of the most demanding roles in the dramatic soprano repertory, Irène Theorin made

her San Francisco Opera debut in 2011 in the title role of *Turandot*. Her performances of Brünnhilde have been seen in many of the world's great opera houses, including Teatro alla Scala; the Metropolitan Opera; Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Washington National Opera; Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu; Berlin State Opera; the Wagner Festival in Budapest; Oper Leipzig; Oper Köln; Semperoper Dresden; and New National Theatre Tokyo. Earlier this season, Theorin sang Brünnhilde at Vienna State Opera, Isolde in *Tristan und Isolde* at Gran Teatre del Liceu, the title role of

Elektra with the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, and she made her highly anticipated role debut as the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Berlin State Opera. Upcoming engagements include Ortrud in *Lohengrin* in Ghent, Turandot at Madrid's Teatro Real, and the title role of *La Gioconda* at Gran Teatre del Liceu. Her DVD recordings include *Elektra* at the Salzburg Festival, *Götterdämmerung* at Teatro alla Scala, *Tristan und Isolde* at Bayreuth, and the award-winning Decca recording of the Copenhagen *Ring*, filmed at the Royal Danish Opera in 2006.



GREER GRIMSLEY
(New Orleans, Louisiana)
Wotan/The Wanderer

Bass-baritone Greer Grimsley debuted at San Francisco Opera in 2001 as Scarpia in *Tosca*

and has returned as Count Monterone in *Rigoletto*, Jochanaan in *Salome*, and in the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer*. He has performed his signature role of Wotan at the Metropolitan Opera, Seattle Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro Comunale di Bologna, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, New National Theatre Tokyo, and the Nikikai Opera Foundation in Tokyo. He has furthered his reputation as a Wagner interpreter with engagements as Telramund in *Lohengrin* with the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Danish Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Seattle Opera, as well as Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* with Prague National Theatre, Royal Danish Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and Seattle Opera. This season, Grimsley sang the title role of *Macbeth* with Opera San Antonio, Kurwenal with Gran Teatre del Liceu, Orest in *Elektra* at Houston Grand Opera, and Scarpia with Michigan Opera Theatre. Upcoming engagements include the title role of *Der Fliegende Holländer* with the Bayreuth Festival and Dallas Opera, and Wotan at the Metropolitan Opera and Bayreuth.



DANIEL BRENNA
(Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin)
Siegfried

Tenor Daniel Brenna makes his Company debut as Siegfried, a role he



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has also performed in Budapest, Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Hong Kong, and at Washington National Opera, the Longborough Festival, and Opéra de Dijon. Brenna bowed at the Metropolitan Opera in 2015 as Alwa in William Kentridge's new production of *Lulu*, and he returned the following season as Laca Klemeň in *Jenůfa*. He has performed Desportes in Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* at the Salzburg Festival, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, and Milan's Teatro alla Scala. Other notable engagements include the title role of *Tannhäuser* in Prague, Herod in *Salome* in Bilbao, and Aron in *Moses und Aron* in Zurich. Next season, Brenna appears as Laca Klemeň in Dijon and Caen, Siegfried in Karlsruhe, and the Drum Major in *Wozzeck* at Finnish National Opera in Helsinki.



KARITA MATTILA
(Perniö, Finland)
Sieglinde
Soprano Karita Mattila made her San Francisco Opera debut as Ilia in the 1989 production of *Idomeneo* and

subsequently has appeared with the Company as Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, in role debuts as Emilia Marty in *The Makropulos Case* and Elsa in *Lohengrin*, and in the title roles of *Kát'a Kabanová* and *Manon Lescaut*. Her most recent appearance with the Company was in summer 2016 as the Kostelnička in *Jenůfa*, which she has reprised at the Metropolitan Opera and Bavarian State Opera. She has also sung Sieglinde at Houston Grand Opera; the title role of *Jenůfa* at the Metropolitan Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Finnish National Opera, and Bavarian State Opera; Lisa in *The Queen of Spades*, Leonore in *Fidelio*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, Chrysothemis in *Elektra*, and the title roles of *Salome* and *Tosca* at the Metropolitan Opera; Elisabeth in *Don Carlos* and the title role of *Arabella* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris; Amelia in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Marie in *Wozzeck*, and the title role of *Ariadne auf Naxos* at Royal Opera, Covent Garden; and Leokadja Begbick in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at the Zurich Opera House. Upcoming engagements include the Kostelnička at Bavarian State Opera, the Foreign Princess in *Rusalka* at Opéra Bastille, and Madame de Croissy in *Dialogues des Carmélites* at the Metropolitan Opera.

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BRANDON JOVANOVIĆ
(Billings, Montana)
Siegmond and Froh

Tenor Brandon Jovanovich made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2007 as Pinkerton in *Madama*

Butterfly, and he has most recently appeared as Luigi in *Il Tabarro*, Siegmund and Froh in 2011's *Ring* cycle, the title role of *Lohengrin*, Sam Polk in *Susannah*, and Walther von Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Recent career highlights include Sergei in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* at the Salzburg Festival, Covent Garden, and Metropolitan Opera; Don José in *Carmen* at Los Angeles Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera; Lohengrin at Deutsche Oper Berlin; Siegmund at Lyric Opera of Chicago; and the Prince in *Rusalka* at the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. In the 2018–19 season, Jovanovich performs Enée in *Les Troyens*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, and the Prince at Vienna State Opera; Dick Johnson in Andreas Dresen's new production of *La Fanciulla del West* at Bavarian State Opera; his role debut as Parsifal at Deutsche Oper Berlin; and the Prince in *Rusalka* at San Francisco Opera.



FALK STRUCKMANN
(Heilbronn, Germany)
Alberich

One of today's foremost Wagnerian singers, bass-baritone Falk Struckmann has performed as Wotan, Fafner, Hunding, and

Hagen, and, for his San Francisco Opera debut, will take on the role of Alberich for the first time. He made his debut 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. A frequent performer at Berlin State Opera, he has been featured in new productions of *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Fidelio*, and *Parsifal*. His numerous engagements at Vienna State Opera include King Henry in *Lohengrin*, Jochanaan in *Salome*, Scarpia in *Tosca*, and Orest in *Elektra*. Most recently, Struckmann performed as Rocco in *Fidelio* at the Metropolitan Opera and Hamburg State Opera, Scarpia at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Hagen in Stockholm, Dresden,

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and Vienna. Scheduled engagements for the 2018–19 season include Hagen and a Hermit in *Der Freischütz* at Vienna State Opera, Daland in *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Don Pizarro in *Fidelio* at Berlin State Opera.



JAMIE BARTON
(Rome, Georgia)
Fricka, Waltraute, and Second Norn
A winner of the 2017 Beverly Sills Artist Award, 2015 Richard Tucker Award, and 2013 BBC Cardiff

Singer of the World Competition, mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton debuted at San Francisco Opera in 2014 as Adalgisa in *Norma*. Her recent engagements include Adalgisa at the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and Houston Grand Opera; Eboli in *Don Carlo* at Deutsche Oper Berlin and Washington National Opera; Léonor in *La Favorite* at Madrid's Teatro Real; Giovanna Seymour in *Anna Bolena* at the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago; Fenena in *Nabucco* at Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, and Seattle Opera; Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare* at Oper Frankfurt; and Fricka, Waltraute, and Second Norn in Houston Grand Opera's *Ring*. Future engagements include two appearances at San Francisco Opera, first in her role debut as Sara in *Roberto Devereux* and as Ježibaba in *Rusalka*; returns to the Bavarian State Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago as Azucena in *Il Trovatore*; and performances at the Metropolitan Opera as Fricka and Sister Helen Prejean in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (a role debut).



DAVID CANGELOSI
(Cleveland, Ohio)
Mime
Since his 1999 San Francisco Opera debut as Sellem in *The Rake's Progress*, tenor David Cangelosi has returned as Valzacchi

in *Der Rosenkavalier* and as Mime in 2008's *Das Rheingold* and 2011's *Ring* cycle. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Mime in 2004, and he has also sung the role at Washington National Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and with the Hong Kong Philharmonic and conductor Jaap van Zweden. Other recent performances include the Schoolmaster and Mosquito in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Cleveland

Orchestra in Cleveland, Vienna, and Luxembourg; Goro in *Madama Butterfly* and Flask in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* with the Dallas Opera; the Marschallin's Major Domo in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra; and Goro and Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus* with Lyric Opera of Chicago. Upcoming engagements include Mime in *Das Rheingold* with Opéra de Montréal and Spoletta in *Tosca* with Washington National Opera.



ŠTEFAN MARGITA
(Prague, Czech Republic)
Loge
Tenor Štefan Margita made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2007 as Walther in *Tannhäuser*.

He subsequently appeared as Loge in the Company's 2008 production of *Das Rheingold* (a role debut) and in the 2011 *Ring* cycle, and he has repeated the role at the Metropolitan Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Dutch National Opera, and Houston Grand Opera. He experienced his first career breakthrough as Laca Klemeň in *Jenůfa* with acclaimed performances at the Glyndebourne Festival, Munich's Bavarian State Opera, Saito Kinen Festival, Berlin State Opera, Prague National Theatre, and Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Margita's other notable appearances include Walther at Milan's Teatro alla Scala; the Drum Major in *Wozzeck* in Berlin, Paris, and Lisbon; Filka Morozov in *From the House of the Dead* in New York, Berlin, Milan, and Prague; Tikhon Kabanov in *Kát'a Kabanová* in Turin; and Edrisi in Szymanowski's *King Roger* at Paris Opéra and Madrid's Teatro Real. Future engagements include Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* in Prague, Filka Morozov in Brussels and Lyon, and Loge in Chicago.



BRIAN MULLIGAN
(Endicott, New York)
Gunther and Donner
Baritone Brian Mulligan made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2008 as Marcello in *La Bohème*, and he has since

returned as Valentin in *Faust*, Albert in *Werther*, Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, the King's Herald in *Lohengrin*, the title role of John Adams' *Nixon in China*, Count Anckarström in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Chorébe in *Les Troyens*, the title role of

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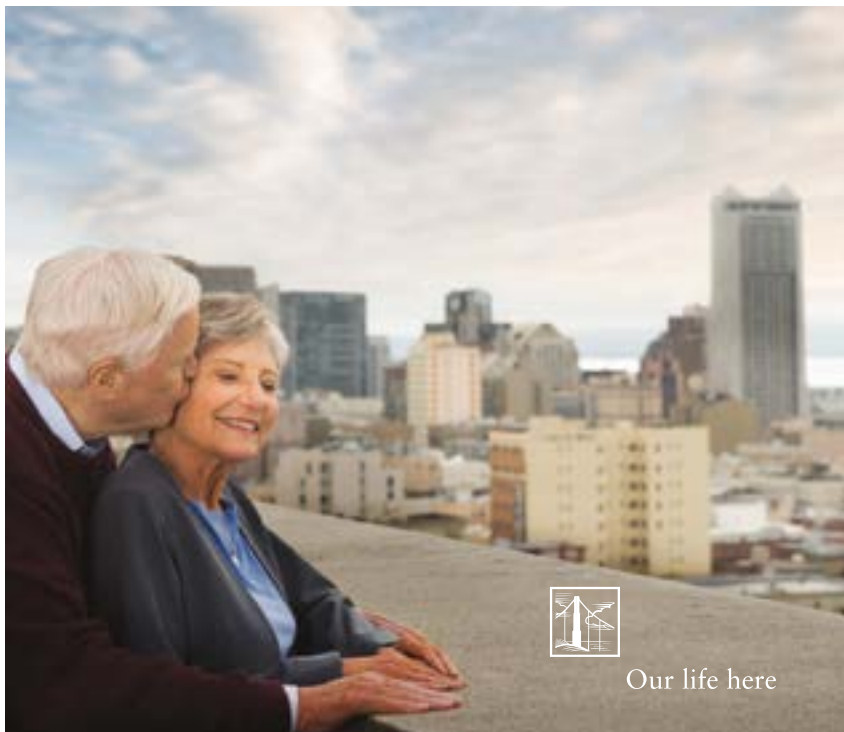
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Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and the title role of Debussy's *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and Gordon Getty's *Usher House*. He has also appeared as Amfortas in *Parsifal*, Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and Prospero in Thomas Adès' *The Tempest* at Oper Frankfurt; Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; Paolo Albiani in *Simon Boccanegra* at the Metropolitan Opera; Jack Torrance in the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Shining* at Minnesota Opera; and John Proctor in Robert Ward's *The Crucible* at the Glimmerglass Festival. His 2018–19 schedule includes his role debut as Mandryka in *Arabella* at San Francisco Opera, Zurga in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* at Zurich Opera House, Guglielmo in Puccini's *Le Villi* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* for his debut at Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam.



ANDREA SILVESTRELLI
(Candia di Ancona, Italy)
Hagen and Fasolt
Bass Andrea Silvestrelli made his San Francisco Opera debut in

1998 as Oroveso in *Norma*, and he has since returned as Il Talpa in *Il Taborro*, Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*, Osmin in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Hagen and Fasolt in the 2011 *Ring* cycle, Basilio in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, Wurm in *Luisa Miller*, the Night Watchman in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, the Grand Inquisitor in *Don Carlo*, and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*. Recent seasons have included appearances as Fasolt and Hunding in *Die Walküre* with the National Taichung Theater in Taiwan; Oroveso in *Norma*, Timur in *Turandot*, and Nourabad in *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* at Lyric Opera of Chicago; the Grand Inquisitor at Washington National Opera; and Hagen at Houston Grand Opera. In the upcoming season, Silvestrelli sings Fafner in *Siegfried* with the National Taichung Theater, as well as Pistola in *Falstaff* and Geronte in *Manon Lescaut* with the Dallas Opera.



RONNITA MILLER
(St. Petersburg, Florida)

Erda and First Norn

Mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller made her San Francisco Opera debut as Erda in the 2011 *Ring*

cycle. Currently in her fifth season as a member of the permanent ensemble at Deutsche Oper Berlin, she has performed there as Erda and First Norn, Marthe in *Faust*, Madelon in *Andrea Chénier*, Fenena in *Nabucco*, Mamma Lucia in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, among other roles. Recent career highlights include Erda with the Semperoper Dresden and conductor Christian Thielemann; Amando in Ligeti's *Le Grand Macabre* with the London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Philharmonic, and conductor Simon Rattle; Fricka in *Die Walküre* with the Odense Symphony Orchestra and conductor Alexander Vedernikov; Mary in *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Chicago's Ravinia Festival and Los Angeles Opera; and Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* with Los Angeles Opera. Next season, she appears as Erda at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Madrid's Teatro Real.



RAYMOND ACETO
(Cleveland, Ohio)

Hunding and Fafner

Bass Raymond Aceto debuted with San Francisco Opera in 1997 as Monterone in *Rigoletto*, and he has since returned as

Timur in *Turandot*, the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*, Ramfis in *Aida*, Hunding in *Die Walküre*, Reverend Olin Blicht in *Susannah*, Banquo in *Macbeth*, and the King of Egypt in *Aida*. During the 2017–18 season, Aceto performed in a European tour with the Cleveland Orchestra as Harašta in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, sang as Zaccaria in *Nabucco* in Shanghai, and was a soloist in the Verdi Requiem with the Oregon Symphony. Other recent performances include Banquo in *Macbeth* and the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* with Royal Opera, Covent Garden on tour of Japan; Méphistophélès in *Faust* at New Orleans Opera; Bruckner's *Te Deum* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; the Mozart Requiem with the Rochester Philharmonic; and a concert version of *Der Fliegende Holländer* with the St. Louis Symphony. Next season, Aceto performs Méphistophélès

at Washington National Opera, and he returns to the Metropolitan Opera for performances of *Les Pêcheurs de Perles* and *Carmen*.



MELISSA CITRO
(Quincy, Illinois)

Gutrune and Helmwig

Soprano Melissa Citro made her San Francisco Opera debut in the 2011 *Ring* cycle as Freia

in *Das Rheingold*, Ortlinde in *Die Walküre*, and Gutrune in *Götterdämmerung*. Last season, she bowed as Minnie in *La Fanciulla del West* with Opera Colorado and Michigan Opera Theatre and as Marina in Dvořák's *Dimitrij* with Bard SummerScape. Highlights from the 2015–16 season include her Washington National Opera debut as Gutrune, her return to New Orleans Opera as Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus*, and her debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in Mahler's Second Symphony. A 2001 graduate of the Merola Opera Program, Citro has also sung the title role of *Rusalka* at New Orleans Opera, the title role of *La Wally* in her Dallas Opera debut, Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* at Virginia Opera, Magda Sorel in *The Consul* at the Glimmerglass Festival, Ortlinde and Third Norn in the *Ring* at Los Angeles Opera, and the title role of *Jenůfa* at Staatsoper Stuttgart. Future engagements include a return to the Metropolitan Opera for the *Ring*.



JULIE ADAMS
(Burbank, California)

Freia and Gerhilde

A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, Julie Adams made her Company debut as Mimì in *La Bohème for Families*.

She has also appeared with San Francisco Opera as Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*, Kristina in *The Makropulos Case*, First Lady in *The Magic Flute*, and Karolka in *Jenůfa*. A winner of the 2015 Elizabeth Connell prize for aspiring dramatic sopranos, the 2015 Sarah Tucker Study Grant, and the 2014 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Adams made her role and house debut this past season as the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with Michigan Opera Theatre and her house

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debut with Opera Idaho as Blanche in André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Other credits include Mimì and Anna Sørensen in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* at Opera San Jose. The 2018–19 season sees Adams' house debuts with Arizona Opera as Anna Sørensen, Des Moines Metro Opera as Mimì, and Hawaii Opera Theatre as the Countess.



STACEY TAPPAN
(Pasadena, California)
Woglinde and the Forest Bird
Soprano Stacey Tappan made her San Francisco Opera debut as Woglinde and the Forest Bird

in the 2011 *Ring* cycle, two roles that she has previously performed with Los Angeles

Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. Other recent highlights include Griselda in Alma Deutscher's *Cinderella* with Opera San Jose; Aveline Mortimer in Kevin Puts' *Elizabeth Cree* with Chicago Opera Theater; Queen Tye in *Akhnaton*, Florestine in *The Ghosts of Versailles*, First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, Stella Kowalski in André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Clorinda in *La Cenerentola*, and Miss Wordsworth in *Albert Herring* with Los Angeles Opera; and Madame White Snake in Scott Wheeler and Cerise Lim Jacobs' *Naga* with Beth Morrison Projects. During the 2018–19 season, Tappan makes her Metropolitan Opera debut as Dawn in the North American premiere of Nico Muhly's *Marnie*. In addition, she will perform roles in *Suor Angelica* and the *Ring*.



LAUREN MCNEESE
(Tulsa, Oklahoma)
Wellgunde and Rossweisse
Mezzo-soprano Lauren McNeese debuted at San Francisco Opera as Wellgunde in

2008's *Das Rheingold*, which she has also performed at Lyric Opera of Chicago and Los Angeles Opera, and she returned to the role and performed as Rossweisse in *Die Walküre* for the 2011 *Ring* cycle. Recent engagements include her house debut with San Diego Opera in the title role of *La Cenerentola*, the Fox in *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Opera Santa Barbara, her return to Intermountain Opera Bozeman as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and the title role of Holst's *Sāvītri* and Hélène in Chabrier's *Une Éducation Manquée* with Opera in Concert in Dallas. Other notable appearances include Angelina in *La Cenerentola* at Tulsa Opera, Laura in *Iolanta* at the Dallas Opera, and Giovanna Seymour in *Anna Bolena* at Minnesota Opera.



RENÉE TATUM
(Carlsbad, California)
Flosshilde and Waltraute
Mezzo-soprano Renée Tatum, a former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, made her Company debut in

2009 as Annina in *La Traviata*, and she has returned as Inez in *Il Trovatore*, the Novice in *Suor Angelica*, a Slave in *Salome*, Emilia in *Otello*, and Flosshilde and Grimgerde in

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the 2011 *Ring* cycle. Recent engagements include Flosshilde with the Tanglewood Music Festival, Jenny in *The Threepenny Opera* at Boston Lyric Opera, Third Flower Maiden in *Parsifal* at the Metropolitan Opera, soloist in Penderecki's Credo with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Flosshilde and Grimgerde in *Die Walküre* at Washington National Opera, and Flosshilde in *Das Rheingold* at the National Taichung Theater in Taiwan and in *Götterdämmerung* at Houston Grand Opera. A graduate of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, she made her Metropolitan Opera debut in 2009 as Inez. Next season sees Tatum returning to the Metropolitan Opera for Nico Muhly's *Marnie* and the *Ring* cycle.



SARAH CAMBIDGE
(Vancouver, Canada)

Ortlinde and Third Norn

Soprano Sarah Cambidge is currently a second-year Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera.

She made her Company debut last fall as the Fourth Maidservant in *Elektra*, and, most recently, she made her role debut as Amelia in Livermore Valley Opera's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. As part of the 2016 Merola Opera Program, she performed Elsa in *Lohengrin* at the Schwabacher Recital Series. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance from the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music, and she was the winner of the 2016 Denver Lyric Opera Guild Competition and a national semifinalist in the 2015 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Upcoming engagements include Sieglinde in *Die Walküre* at Opéra National de Bordeaux and a Foreign Princess in the Company's *Rusalka*.

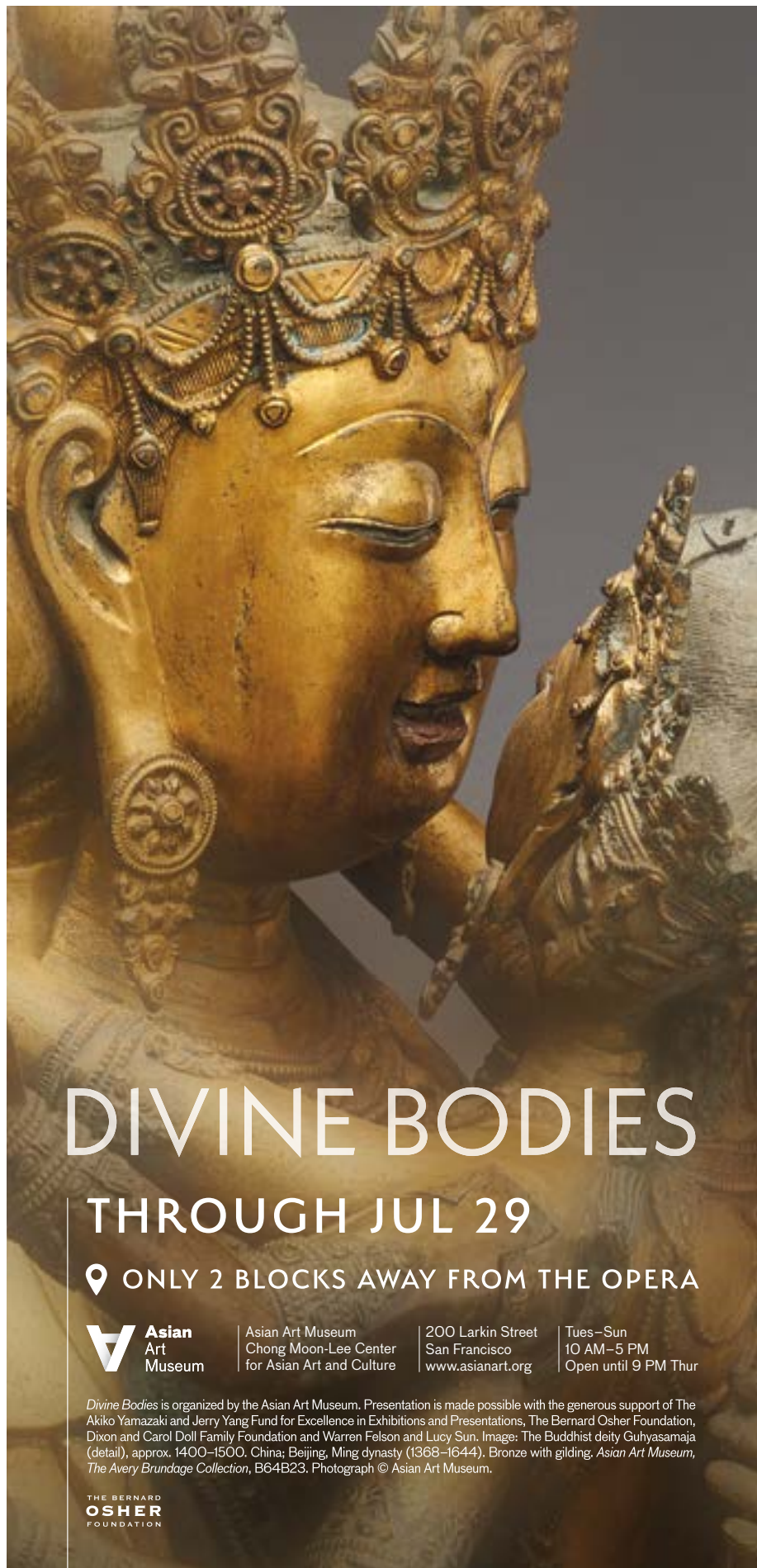


LAURA KRUMM
(Iowa City, Iowa)

Siegrune

A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm has appeared on the War Memorial Opera

House stage as the Second Maidservant in *Elektra*, Javotte in *Manon*, Rosina in *The Barber of Seville for Families*, Countess Ceprano and a Page in *Rigoletto*, and a Maid in the world premiere of Tobias



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Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*. For the San Francisco Opera Center, she created the role of Martha in the world premiere of Nolan Gasser's *The Secret Garden*, and she sang Laura in Jack Perla's *Love/Hate* at the ODC Theater in association with the Opera Center. In recent seasons, Krumm made role and company debuts as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* at Nashville Opera, Mrs. Webb in Ned Rorem's *Our Town* at Fresno Grand Opera, and Meg in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* at Michigan Opera Theatre. Next season, Krumm returns to San Francisco Opera as Lola in *Cavalleria Rusticana* and the Kitchen Boy in *Rusalka*.



RENÉE RAPIER

(Marion, Iowa)

Grimgerde

Mezzo-soprano Renée Rapiert returns to San Francisco Opera after appearing last fall as Flora in *La Traviata* and

Rosette in *Manon*, and as Mercédès in the Company's 2016 production of *Carmen*. Other recent engagements include Dinah/Rose in a double bill of *Trouble in Tahiti* and *At the Statue of Venus* at Opera Parallèle, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the San Francisco Symphony, and debuts with Noe Valley Chamber Music and San Francisco Performances. A former San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, Rapiert made her Company debut in 2013 as a Maid in Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*. This summer, she performs her role debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at Opera Steamboat, and she will be a soloist at the Newport Music Festival singing music by Jake Heggie.



NICOLE BIRKLAND

(Moorland, Iowa)

Schwerteile

Mezzo-soprano Nicole Birkland made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2012 as Third Secretary to Mao in John Adams' *Nixon*

in *China*. More recently, she appeared as Third Maidservant in the Company's *Elektra*. A favorite at Opera San Jose, she has appeared there as Mary in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*, Gertrud in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*,

Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, La Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, and Azucena in *Il Trovatore*. A graduate of the 2008 Merola Opera Program, she has participated in Metropolitan Opera productions of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, *The Rake's Progress*, and *Der Fliegende Holländer*. Next season, Birkland returns to the Metropolitan Opera for *Die Zauberflöte*.



FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO

(New York, New York)

Director

Recipient of the San Francisco Opera Medal in 2015, 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, including *Aida*, *Luisa Miller*, *Show Boat*, *Porgy and Bess*, the 2011 Ring cycle, *La Traviata*, *La Voix humaine*, *La Bohème*, *Prince Igor*, *Jenůfa*, the West Coast premiere of Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince*, 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 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 Australia's Helpmann Award. Zambello began her career as an assistant director to the late Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.



DENNI SAYERS

(London, England)

Associate Director and Choreographer

One of today's leading choreographers, Denni Sayers made her U.S. and San Francisco Opera

debut in 2000 with *Parsifal*, and she returned in Company productions of *Arshak II*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and *Porgy and Bess*. Her choreography has been seen in opera houses around the world, including *Die Zauberflöte* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Francesca da Rimini* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala, *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Brussels' La Monnaie, and

Hamlet at the Glyndebourne Festival and Adelaide Festival. Sayers has longstanding relationships with many leading directors, most notably Francesca Zambello, Jonathan Kent, Niel Armfield, David Pountney, and the late Nikolaus Lehnhoff. Recent collaborations include *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Los Angeles Opera, *Porgy and Bess* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Don Carlos* at Houston Grand Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Toronto, and *La Fanciulla del West* at Opéra Bastille. As director and associate director, Sayers has staged *The Pearl Fishers* and *Don Giovanni* at Tulsa Opera, *Peter Grimes* and *Tosca* in Toronto, *Of Mice and Men* in Washington, *Porgy and Bess* in Chicago, *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Boston and at Welsh National Opera, and *Hippolyte et Aricie* and *Don Giovanni* at Glyndebourne.



LURIE FELDMAN

(San Francisco, California)

Associate Director

Laurie Feldman served on the directorial staff at San Francisco Opera for 22 years and was the stage director

for *Das Rheingold* (1990), *Götterdämmerung* (1990), *Die Walküre* (1995), *Rusalka*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Mefistofele*, *La Traviata*, and *Luisa Miller*. In 2016, she served as associate director for Washington National Opera's Ring cycle. As a guest director at the Metropolitan Opera, productions include *La Traviata*, *Rusalka*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Elektra*, *The Rake's Progress*, *La Forza del Destino*, *La Clemenza di Tito*, *Norma*, and *Un Ballo in Maschera*. She recently directed Robert Carsen's acclaimed production of *The Makropulos Case* at Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg. In 2009, she staged Laurent Pelly's production of *La Traviata* at Turin's Teatro Regio, where she also directed Carsen's *Mefistofele*. She has worked at many international opera houses, including Teatro Lirico di Cagliari; Madrid's Teatro Real; Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; Opéra National de Lyon; Teatro Massimo in Palermo; Staatstheater Nürnberg; Opéra de Nice; Oper Köln; Munich's Bavarian State Opera; the Canadian Opera Company; National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing; and the Icelandic Opera.



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MICHAEL YEARGAN
(Dallas, Texas)

Set Designer

Since his San Francisco Opera debut with the 1993 staging of *I Puritani*, Michael Yeargan has designed sets and costumes for the Company's productions of *Aida*, *The Merry Widow*, *La Bohème*, *Carmen*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Luisa Miller*, *Simon Boccanegra*, and the world premieres of André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Yeargan's North American opera credits include designs for the Metropolitan Opera (*Otello*, *Così fan tutte*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and the world premiere of John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby*); Los Angeles Opera (*Nabucco*, *The Merry Widow*, *Stiffelio*, *Hansel and Gretel*); Lyric Opera of Chicago (*Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Nabucco*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Sound of Music*); the Dallas Opera (*Madama Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Hansel and Gretel*); Houston Grand Opera (Carlisle Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* and *Susannah*); and the Glimmerglass Festival (*Tosca*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Central Park*), among others. Internationally, he has designed productions for Welsh National Opera; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Scottish Opera; Théâtre Musical de Paris; Oper Frankfurt; and Opera Australia. A two-time Tony Award winner (*South Pacific*, *The Light in the Piazza*), Yeargan has also designed New York productions of Terrence McNally's *Bad Habits*, *The Ritz*, *Awake and Sing*, and *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*.



CATHERINE ZUBER
(London, England)

Costume Designer

Catherine Zuber made her San Francisco Opera debut with the 2008 production of *Das Rheingold*, and her costume designs were seen in the Company's 2011 *Ring* cycle. Recent operatic credits include *Otello*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Le Comte Ory*, and Nico Muhly's *Two Boys* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Roméo et Juliette* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago; *South Pacific* at Opera Australia; *Carousel* at Houston Grand Opera; *La Forza del Destino* at Washington National Opera; and Daniel Catán's

Florencia en el Amazonas at Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera. Zuber's work on *The King and I*, *The Royal Family*, *South Pacific*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *Awake and Sing!*, and *The Light in the Piazza* earned her Tony Awards for best costume design. She was also nominated eight times for Tony Awards for *My Fair Lady*, *War Paint*, *Golden Boy*, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, *Born Yesterday*, *Edward Albee's Seascape*, *Dinner at Eight*, and *Twelfth Night*. Zuber has received the 2017 Irene Sharaff Lifetime Achievement Award, and she is a 2016 Theater Hall of Fame inductee.



MARK MCCULLOUGH
(Charlotte, North Carolina)

Lighting Designer

Mark McCullough made his San Francisco Opera debut with *Luisa Miller* in 2000, and he has returned for numerous productions, including *Arshak II*, *The Mother of Us All*, *Rigoletto*, *Das Rheingold*, *Porgy and Bess*, the 2011 *Ring* cycle, and the world premiere of *Heart of a Soldier*. He has designed lighting for the Vienna State Opera (*Macbeth*); Metropolitan Opera (*Le Nozze di Figaro*); Milan's Teatro alla Scala (*Cyrano de Bergerac*); Madrid's Teatro Real (*Luisa Miller*); Royal Opera, Covent Garden (*The Queen of Spades*); Strasbourg's Opéra National du Rhin (*The Beggar's Opera*); Opera North (*Eugene Onegin*); as well as numerous productions with Boston Lyric Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, the Dallas Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Canadian Opera Company, and New York City Opera. Current and upcoming engagements include *Der Freischütz* at Vienna State Opera, *West Side Story* and *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the Glimmerglass Festival, and *La Traviata* with Washington National Opera.



S. KATY TUCKER
(Louisville, Kentucky)

Projection Designer

S. Katy Tucker made her San Francisco Opera debut designing the projections for *Götterdämmerung* in 2011, and she returned for productions of *Heart of a Soldier*, *Mefistofele*, *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and *Two Women*. Tucker began her career as a painter and installation artist, exhibiting her work at

a variety of galleries, such as the Corcoran Museum in Washington, D.C. and Artist's Space in New York City. Her work in theater and opera has been seen around the world, including Dmitri Tcherniakov's production of *Prince Igor* at the Metropolitan Opera, *Der Fliegende Holländer* at the Atlanta Opera, and *West Side Story* at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Upcoming productions include *Der Fliegende Holländer* at Houston Grand Opera and Cincinnati Opera, *Orphée* at the Banff Centre, and *Rigoletto* at Wolf Trap Opera.



JAN HARTLEY
(Hollywood, Florida)
Projection Designer
Jan Hartley made her San Francisco Opera debut with 2008's *Das Rheingold*, and her designs were seen throughout the

Company's 2011 *Ring* cycle. She has also collaborated with Francesca Zambello on Shostakovich's *Moskva, Cheryomushki* at Bard College; David Henry Hwang's adaptation of *Tibet Through the Red Box* in Seattle; and *Napoleon* by Andrew Sabiston and Timothy Williams at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London. She also designed projections for Pixar Animation Studio's *Finding Nemo*. As a member of Ping Chong & Company since 1983, her work was featured in *Cocktail*, *Kwaidan*, *After Sorrow*, *98.6*, *Chinoiserie*, *Deshima*, *Skin—A State of Being*, and the Ping Chong and Meredith Monk collaboration *The Games*. She has also worked on a wide array of productions both on and off Broadway and in London's West End. Hartley has received a Drama Desk Award for *Bunny, Bunnie* and an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence. Other design highlights include *The Miracle Worker* at the Paper Mill Playhouse in New Jersey; Anna Deavere Smith's *Let Me Down Easy*; and *Celia: The Life and Music of Celia Cruz* by Carmen Rivera and Candido Tirado.



IAN ROBERTSON
(Dundee, Scotland)
Chorus Director
Recipient of the San Francisco Opera Medal in 2012, Ian Robertson has been chorus director and conductor with

San Francisco Opera since 1987, having prepared more than 300 productions for the Company. He was awarded the Olivier Messiaen Foundation Prize in 2003 for his

artistic contribution to the preparation of the Company's North American premiere of *Saint François d'Assise*. Robertson has also conducted ten mainstage productions with the Company. Other North American opera credits include productions with Sarasota Opera, Edmonton Opera, and Philadelphia's Curtis Opera Theatre. Before joining San Francisco Opera, Robertson was head of music and chorus director of Scottish Opera. He currently serves as artistic director of the San Francisco Boys Chorus.



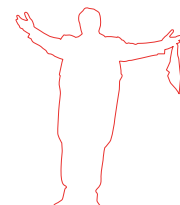
LAWRENCE PECH
(San Francisco, California)
Co-Choreographer and Dance Master
Lawrence Pech is in his 22nd season as dance master and resident choreographer for San Francisco Opera. He has created period and interpretive dances on more than 60 productions with the Company. Pech

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received his formal training from American Ballet Theatre (ABT) and was invited by Mikhail Baryshnikov to join that company in 1980. In 1986, he joined San Francisco Ballet, where he became a principal dancer in 1989. Pech founded two of his own dance companies and has choreographed more than 50 ballets, 30 musicals, and numerous self-produced evenings of music and dance around the world. He has a bachelor's degree in composition from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



DAVE MAIER

(Great Neck, New York)

Fight Director

Resident fight director for San Francisco Opera, Dave Maier made his Company debut

in 2013 with *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*. His work has most recently appeared in the Company's *La Traviata*, *Turandot*, *Elektra*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Bohème*, *Aida*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Dream of the Red Chamber*, *Carmen*, *Don Carlo*, *Jenůfa*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Maier has directed fight scenes for American Conservatory Theater, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, San Jose Repertory, Aurora Theatre, Marin Theatre Company, and Magic Theatre, among others. He is a five-time recipient of the San Francisco Bay Area Drama Critics Circle Award for Fight Direction, as well as an adjunct faculty member at the University of California Santa Cruz and St. Mary's College of California. He currently teaches combat-related courses in Berkeley.

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Although the program magazines regularly list members of the administration and Company, we know that those lists are by necessity incomplete. To give recognition to the many skilled professionals whose work has contributed so greatly to the quality of San Francisco Opera productions, we provide once every year a list of everyone involved with our season.

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Charles McGraw, **Kyle Minor**,
Jennifer Pollack, **Dale Whitmill**,
Telephone Sales Assistants

FRONT OF HOUSE

Jamyé Divila, *House Manager*
Marialice Dockus, *Head Usher*
Rodney Anderson, **Danica Burt**,
Anthony Cantello, **Frank Chow**,
Laurent Dela Cruz, **Martin Dias**,
Starsky Dias, **Jonathan Drogin**,
Chip Heath, **Elaine Kawasaki**,
Eileen Keremitsis, **Ryszard Koprowski**,
Bill Laschuk, **Sharon Lee**,
Marilyn Leong, **Lenore Long**,
Doug Luyendyk, **Leontyne Mbele-Mbong**, **Sam Mesinger**, **Dale Nedelco**,
Wayne Noel, **Beth Norris**, **Jan Padover**,
Julie Peck, **Robert Remple**, **Bill Repp**,
Rilla Reynolds, **Robyn Sandberg**,
Kelly Smith, **Stephanie Somersille**,
Theresa Sun, **Claire Tremblay**,
Richard Wagner, **Steve Weiss**,
Elaine Yee, *Ushers*
Hui Ming Wu, *Show Maid*

OPERA SHOP

Jay Stebley, *Retail Manager*
Karen Topp, *Assistant Manager*

PRODUCTION

*Senior Production Staff Member

PRODUCTION ADMINISTRATION

Jeremy Patfield, *Production Finance Director**
Sylvia Jiang, *Production Finance Assistant*
Celine Strouts, *Production Associate*
Paul Dana,
Support Services Coordinator

AUDIO

Doug Mitchell,
Master Audio/Video Engineer
Ziggy Tomcich, *Assistant Master Audio/Video Engineer*

CARPENTRY

David Hatch, *Master Carpenter*
Mark Baumann, *Assistant Master Carpenter*

COSTUME DEPARTMENT

Jai Alltizer, *Costume Shop Manager*
David Doré, *Senior Production Accountant*
Galen Till, *Production Supervisor*
Amy Ashton-Keller, *Master Draper*
Sally Thomas, *Master Tailor*
Irene Murray, **Star Rabinowitz**,
Senior Cutters
Kristen Tracy, **Carol Wood**,
Gillian Haratani, **Santiago Suanes**,
Assistant Cutters
Manuel Gutierrez, *Production Coordinator*
Paula Wheeler, *Senior Milliner*
Amy Van Every, *Senior Dyer*
Jersey McDermott,
Senior Craft Artisan
Nicole Diascenti, *Stock Coordinator*
Eliza Ryus, *Production Assistant*
Valerie Spencer, *Shopper*
Nikki Anderson-Joy, *Costume Assistant*
Miriam Acosta, **Adela Cantor**,
Alicia Castaneda, **Michael Evans**,
Guillermina Flores, **Ting Hsueh**,
Hoa Lam Fong, **Aries Limon**,
Xing-Fong Luo, **Romana Majovsky**,
Sonia Olivares,
Costume Technicians

ELECTRICS

Leon Parsons, *Master Electrician*
Michael Anderson, *Assistant Master Electrician*
Russell E. Adamson III, *Projection Programmer*

FIGHT DIRECTION

Dave Maier, *Fight Director*

LIGHTING

Justin Partier, *Lighting Director**
Mark Hueske Thomas,
Associate Lighting Designer
Eric Watkins,
Assistant Lighting Designer
Andrei Borges, **Winston Limaugé**
Lighting Interns

PROPERTIES

Lori Harrison, *Master of Properties*
Frederick Wielandt, *Assistant Master of Properties*

REHEARSAL

Marin Venturi, *Rehearsal Department Director**
Kali Wilson, *Rehearsal & Schedule Manager*
Trey Costerisan, *Supernumeraries & Facilities Coordinator*
Jordan Amann, *Rehearsal Assistant and Project Coordinator*
Savannah Criswell,
Rehearsal Assistant

SCENE SHOP

John Del Bono, *Scene Shop Foreman*
Steve McNally,
Scenic Artist in Charge

STAGING STAFF

Darin Burnett, *Production Stage Manager**
Lawrence Pech, *Dance Master*
Darin Burnett, **John W. Coleman**,
Stage Managers
Jodi Gage, **Jenny Harber**,
Shawna Lucey, **Morgan Robinson**,
Assistant Stage Directors
Jessica Barker, **E. Reed Fisher**,
Andrew G. Landis, **Jimmy Marcheso**,
Thea Railey, **Anna Reetz**,
Assistant Stage Managers

TECHNICAL DIRECTION

Erik Walstad, *Technical and Safety Director**
Ryan O'Steen, *Associate Technical Director**
Chris Largent, *Assistant Technical Director*

WARDROBE

Tony Gorzycki, *Head Of Department*
Cynthia Fusco, **Robert Horek**,
David McKain, **Catherine Verdier**,
Assistants

WIG AND MAKEUP

Jeanna Parham, *Head of Department*
Ashley J. Landis, *Assistant Head of Department*
Christina Martin, *Administrative Assistant*
Sophia Smith, **Elisa Mack**, **Maur Sela**,
Wig Assistants
Richard Battle, **Christina Martin**,
Connie Strayer, **Ashley J. Landis**
Foremen
Richard Battle, **Denise Gutierrez**,
Elizabeth Poindexter, **Melanie Birch**,
Karalynne Fiebig, **Tim Santry**,
Susan E. Stone, **Maurisa Rondeau**
Principal Make-up Artists
Melanie Birch, **Rick Burns**,
Denise Gutierrez, **Toby Mayer**,
Connie Strayer, **Karalynne Fiebig**,
Kerry Rider-Kuhn, **Richard Battle**,
Sophia Smith, **Susan Stone**,
Elizabeth Poindexter,
Christina Martin, **Gretchen Davis**,
Journeyman
Elisa Mack, **Maur Sela**,
Erika Villanueva, **Sharon Peng**,
Tatyana Fateyeva, **Ashley J. Landis**,
Vanessa Blanche Lee, **Lisa Poe**,
Chri Holmgren Greene, **Jodi Maxwell**,
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Armanino LLP, *Independent Public Accountants*

Asero Insurance Services,
Insurance Brokers

Cory Weaver,
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Yamaha is the Official Piano of
San Francisco Opera

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ARTISTS

Raymond Aceto
 Julie Adams†♫
 Julius Ahn
 Paul Appleby
 Atalla Ayan*
 Jamie Barton
 Nicole Birkland♫
 Daniel Brenna*
 J'Nai Bridges
 Robert Brubaker*
 Julia Bullock*
 Sarah Cambridge*†♫
 David Cangelosi
 Melissa Citro
 James Creswell♫
 Leah Crocetto†♫
 Ellie Dehn
 Monica Dewey*
 Amina Edris†♫
 Michael Fabiano
 Aurelia Florian**
 Christine Goerke
 Greer Grimsley
 Jill Grove♫
 Soloman Howard*
 Brian Jagde†♫
 Rhoslyn Jones†♫
 Brandon Jovanovich
 Joo Won Kang
 Laura Krumm†♫
 Hye Jung Lee♫
 Alexandra Loutsion*
 Elliot Madore
 Andrew G. Manea†♫
 Štefan Margita
 Michaela Martens
 Karita Mattila
 Ryan McKinny
 Lauren McNeese
 Ronnita Miller
 Timothy Mix
 Brian Mulligan
 Toni Marie Palmertree†♫
 Amitai Pati†♫
 David Pershall♫
 Adrienne Pieczonka
 Renée Rapiert†♫

Anthony Reed†♫
 Artur Ruciński*
 Martina Serafin
 Andrea Silvestrelli
 Philip Skinner†♫
 Joel Sorensen
 Nina Stemme
 Falk Struckmann*
 Stacey Tappan
 Renée Tatum†♫
 Iréne Theorin
 Davóne Tines*
 Kyle van Schoonhoven*†♫
 Alfred Walker*
 Brad Walker†♫

CONDUCTORS

Patrick Fournillier
 Christopher Franklin*
 Grant Gershon*
 Nicola Luisotti
 Henrik Nánási*
 Donald Runnicles

DIRECTORS

Vincent Boussard
 Garnett Bruce
 John Copley
 Laurie Feldman
 Anja Kühnhold**
 Shawna Lucey
 Denni Sayers
 Peter Sellars
 Keith Warner*
 Francesca Zambello

SET DESIGNERS

John Conklin
 David Gropman*
 David Hockney
 Boris Kudlička*
 Vincent Lemaire
 Michael Yeargan

COSTUME DESIGNERS

Vincent Boussard
 Ian Falconer
 Kaspar Glarner**
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 Denni Sayers
 Carola Zertuche*

FIGHT DIRECTOR

Dave Maier

SOUND DESIGNER

Mark Grey

* San Francisco Opera debut

** U.S. debut

† = Former Adler Fellow

‡ = Current Adler Fellow

♫ = Merola Opera Program participant (past or present)

Ian Robertson, *Chorus Director*

Fabrizio Corona, *Associate Chorus Master*

Jim Meyer, *Chorus and Dance Manager*

Mary Finch, *Assistant Chorus Manager/*

Chorus Librarian

REGULAR CHORUS

Nadima Avakian	C. Michael Belle
Buffy Baggott	Torlef Borsting†*
Kathleen Bayler*	Alan Cochran*
Roberta Bowman	Chris Corley
Janet Campbell	Christopher Filipowicz*
Sara Colburn	Anders Fröhlich*
Dvora Djorae	Daniel Harper
Mary Finch	Christopher Jackson*
Claudia Haider	Ken Johnson
Claire Kelm	David Kekuewa
Elisabeth Rom Lucio	Bojan Knežević*
Angela Eden Moser	Frederick Matthews
Sally Mouzon*	William O'Neill*
Sally Porter Munro	Phillip Pickens
Erin Neff*	William Pickersgill
Rachelle Perry	Chester Pidduck*
Virginia Pluth†*	Valery Portnov
Laurel Cameron Porter	Colby Roberts*
Laurel Rice	Sigmund Seigel
Shelley Seitz	Dan Stanley
Carole Schaffer*	Jere Torkelsen*
Jesslyn Thomas	Andrew Truett
Donna Turchi	Richard Walker
Mitzie Weiner	

† Chorus member on Leave of Absence

* Chorus member appearing in a Solo Role

EXTRA CHORUS

Ben Brady	Jim Meyer
James Callon	Jim Monios
Spencer Dodd	Samuel Palmer
Adam Flowers	Jess G. Perry
Nicolas Gerst	Keith Perry*
Kevin Gino	Samuel Rabinowitz
Peter Girardôt	Pedro Rodelas
Patrick Hagen	Clifton Romig
Phillip Harris	Jason Sarten
Harlan Hays	Erich Stratmann
Michael Jankosky	Alexander Taite*
Mitchell Jones	Michael Taylor
Jimmy Kansau	Taylor Thompson
Bradley Kynard*	Igor Vieira
William Lawley	Nicholas Volkert
Michael P. Mendelsohn	Daniel Yoder

* Chorus member appearing in a Solo Role

ORCHESTRA

Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director*
Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair

FIRST VIOLIN

Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*
Laura Albers,
Associate Concertmaster
Heidi Wilcox,
Assistant Concertmaster
Jennifer Cho
Dawn Harms†
Mariya Borozina
Lev Rankov
Barbara Riccardi
Dian Zhang
Leonid Igudesman
Jennifer Hsieh
Asuka Annie Yano
Wenyi Shih**

SECOND VIOLIN

Jeremy Preston, *Principal*
Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*
Beni Shinohara, *Assistant Principal*
Eva Karasik
Leslie Ludena
Maya Cohon
Linda Deutsch Twohy†
Craig Reiss
Heeguen Song**

VIOLA

Carla Maria Rodrigues, *Principal*
Sergey Rakitchenkov,
*Associate Principal**
Paul Nahhas, *Assistant Principal*†
Patricia Heller,
Acting Assistant Principal
Jonna Hervig
Natalia Vershilova
Joy Fellows*
Elizabeth Prior**

CELLO

David Kadarau, *Principal*
Thalia Moore, *Associate Principal*
Peter Myers, *Assistant Principal*
Nora Pirquet
Emil Miland
Victoria Ehrlich
Ruth Lane

BASS

Joseph Lescher, *Principal*
Jonathan Lancelle,
Associate Principal
Steven D'Amico, *Assistant Principal*
Shinji Eshima
Mark Drury

FLUTE

Julie McKenzie, *Principal*
Patricia Farrell†
Barbara Chaffe**
Stephanie McNab

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*
Deborah Henry, *Assistant Principal*†
Deborah Shidler**
Janet Popesco Archibald†
Laura Griffiths**

ENGLISH HORN

Janet Popesco Archibald†
Laura Griffiths**

CLARINET

Jose Gonzalez Granero, *Principal*
Joanne Burke Eisler,
Assistant Principal
Anthony Striplen

BASS CLARINET

Anthony Striplen

BASSOON

Rufus Olivier, *Principal*
Daniel MacNeill
Michael Severance

CONTRABASSOON

Michael Severance

HORN

Kevin Rivard, *Co-Principal*
Mark Almond, *Co-Principal*
Keith Green
Brian McCarty
Lawrence Ragent†
William Klingelhoffer**

WAGNER TUBA

Mark Almond, *Principal*
Keith Green

TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*
William Holmes†
Scott Macomber**
John Pearson

TROMBONE

Samuel Schlosser, *Principal*
Donald Kennelly
David Ridge

CONTRABASS TROMBONE

David Ridge

TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman

TIMPANI

John Burgardt

PERCUSSION

Richard Kvistad,
Principal/Associate Timpani
Patricia Niemi

HARP

Olga Ortenberg-Rakitchenkov

LIBRARIAN

Carrie Weick
Timothy Spears, *Assistant*

ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Tracy Davis
Timothy Spears, *Assistant*

* Principal for one or more Ring
operas
† Leave of absence
**Season substitute

EXTRA RING MUSICIANS

FIRST VIOLIN

Robin Hansen
Laura Keller
Julie Kim
Dan Flanagan

SECOND VIOLIN

Joseph Edelberg
Karen Shinozaki
Alicia Yang
Candace Guirao
Robin Mayforth

VIOLA

Yi Zhou
Anna Kruger
Caroline Lee
Ruth Kahn
Ellen Rose
Pamela Freund-Striplen

CELLO

Eric Sung

BASS

Timothy Spears
Jens Tenbroek
Mark Wallace

FLUTE

Dawn Walker

OBOE

Peter Lemberg

CLARINET

Ann Lavin
Clark Fobes

HORN

Geoffrey Pilkington
Alicia Telford

HORN/WAGNER TUBA

Jonathan Ring
Meredith Brown

BASS TRUMPET

Jeffrey Budin

BASS TROMBONE

Scott Thornton

PERCUSSION

Mckenzie Camp
Nicholas Matthiesen
Victor Avdienko
Todd Manley

HARP

Daniel Levitan

STAGE BANDA MUSICIANS

Caitlyn Smith-Franklin, *Horn*
Bruce Chrisp, *Trombone*
Donald Benham, *Trombone*
Thomas Hornig, *Trombone*
Mark Veregge, *Percussion*
Tracy Davis, *Percussion*
Elizabeth Hall, *Percussion*
Alex Orfaly, *Percussion*
Annabelle Taubl, *Harp*

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THE ART DIRECTORS GUILD & SCENIC,
TITLE AND GRAPHIC ARTISTS
LOCAL 800

UNITED SCENIC ARTISTS LOCAL
USA – 829, I.A.T.S.E.

BOX OFFICE AND FRONT OF HOUSE
EMPLOYEES UNION, LOCAL B-18





Kay Stern
Concertmaster



Laura Albers
Associate Concertmaster



Heidi Wilcox
Assistant Concertmaster



Jennifer Cho
First Violin



Dawn Harms
First Violin



Mariya Borozina
First Violin



Barbara Riccardi
First Violin



Dian Zhang
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman
First Violin



Jennifer Hsieh
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano
First Violin



Wenyi Shih
First Violin
Regular Substitute



Jeremy Preston
Principal
Second Violin



Martha Simonds
Associate Principal
Second Violin



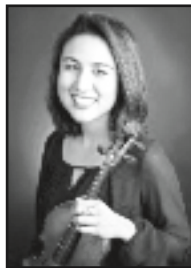
Beni Shinohara
Assistant Principal
Second Violin



Eva Karasik
Second Violin



Leslie Ludena
Second Violin



Maya Cohon
Second Violin



Linda Deutsch
Second Violin



Craig Reiss
Second Violin



Carla Maria Rodrigues
Principal
Viola



Sergey Rakitchenkov
Associate Principal
Viola



Paul Nahhas
Assistant Principal
Viola



Patricia Heller
Viola



Jonna Hervig
Viola



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



Joy Fellows
Viola



Elizabeth Prior
Viola
Regular Substitute



David Kadarauach
Principal
Cello



Thalia Moore
Associate Principal
Cello



Peter Myers
Assistant Principal
Cello



Nora Pirquet
Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Victoria Ehrlich
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



Joseph Lescher
*Principal
Bass*



Jonathan Lancelle
*Associate Principal
Bass*



Steven D'Amico
*Assistant Principal
Bass*



Shinji Eshima
Bass



Mark Drury
Bass



Julie McKenzie
*Principal
Flute*



Patricia Farrell
Flute



Stephanie McNab
Flute & Piccolo



Mingjia Liu
*Principal
Oboe*



Deborah Henry
*Assistant Principal
Oboe*



Janet Popesco
Archibald
Oboe & English Horn



Deborah Shidler
*Oboe
Regular Substitute*



Laura Griffiths
*Oboe
Regular Substitute*



Jose Gonzalez
Granero
Principal Clarinet



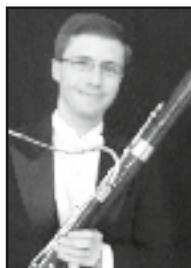
Joanne Burke Eisler
*Assistant Principal
Clarinet*



Anthony Striplen
*Clarinet &
Bass Clarinet*



Rufus Olivier
*Principal
Bassoon*



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



Michael Severance
*Bassoon &
Contrabassoon*



Kevin Rivard
*Co-Principal
Horn*



Mark Almond
*Co-Principal
Horn*



Keith Green
Horn



Brian McCarty
Horn



Lawrence Ragent
Horn



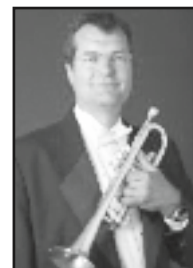
William Klingelhofer
*Horn
Regular Substitute*



Adam Luftman
*Principal
Trumpet*



William Holmes
Trumpet



John Pearson
Trumpet



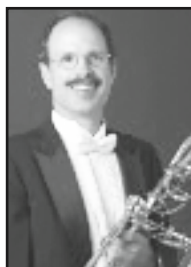
Scott Macomber
*Trumpet
Regular Substitute*



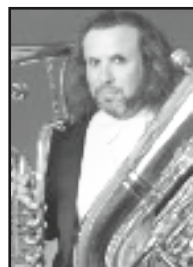
Samuel Schlosser
Principal Trombone



Donald Kennelly
Trombone



David Ridge
*Trombone &
Bass Trombone*



Zachariah Spellman
Tuba/Cimbasso



John Burgardt
Timpani



Richard Kvistad
*Principal Percussion &
Associate Timpani*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA ORCHESTRA CONTINUED



Patricia Niemi
Percussion



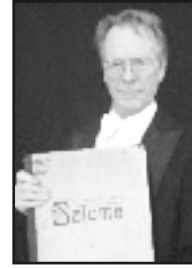
Olga Ortenberg
Rakitchenkov
Harp



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager



Carrie Weick
Librarian



Timothy Spears
Assistant Orchestra
Manager & Librarian

Most photos by John Martin.

Not pictured:

Lev Rankov, First Violin;
Barbara Chaffe, Flute, Regular Substitute

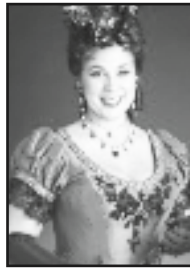
REGULAR CHORUS



Nadima Avakian
Soprano



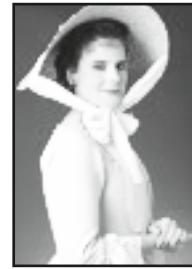
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



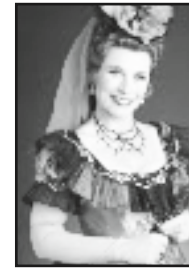
Sara Colburn
Soprano



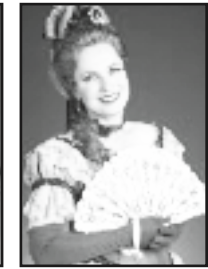
Dvora Djoraev
Soprano



Mary Finch
Soprano



Claire Kelm
Soprano



Elisabeth Rom Lucio
Soprano



Angela Eden Moser
Soprano



Rachelle Perry
Soprano



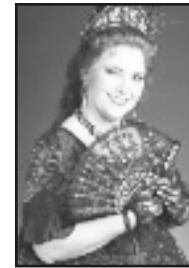
Virginia Pluth
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Carole Schaffer
Soprano



Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Mitzie Kay Weiner
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano



Roberta Bowman
Mezzo-Soprano



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



Sally Munro
Mezzo-Soprano



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



Laurel Porter
Mezzo-Soprano



Laurel Rice
Mezzo-Soprano



Shelley Seitz
Mezzo-Soprano



Claudia Siefer
Mezzo-Soprano



Donna Turchi
Mezzo-Soprano



C. Michael Belle
Tenor



Alan Cochran
Tenor



Chris Corley
Tenor



Daniel Harper
Tenor

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA REGULAR CHORUS CONTINUED



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Colby Roberts
Tenor



Sigmund Seigel
Tenor



Dan Stanley
Tenor



Andrew Truett
Tenor



Richard Walker
Tenor



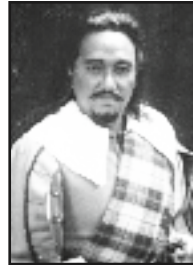
Torlef Borsting
Baritone
Leave of Absence



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



Ken Johnson
Baritone



David Kekuewa
Baritone



Frederick Matthews
Baritone



Jere Torkelsen
Baritone



Christopher Filipowicz
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass



Valery Portnov
Bass

*Most photos by John Martin.
Carole Schaffer and Claudia Siefer
photos by Pamela Dale.*

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

CORPS DANCERS



Brook Broughton



Blanche Hampton



Bryan Ketron



Michael Levine



Rachel Speidel Little



Jekyngs Pelaez



Chiharu Shibata

Past Casts at San Francisco Opera THE RING OF THE NIBELUNG



FRANKLIN & ROGNON

Chase Baromeo was the voice of Fafner in 1935's Siegfried.

The Rhinemaidens with Lauritz Melchior (Siegfried) in 1935's Götterdämmerung.



FRANKLIN & ROGNON

FRANKLIN & ROGNON



Marek Windheim as Mime in 1935.

FRANKLIN & ROGNON



FRANKLIN & ROGNON

Friedrich Schorr (Wotan) and Kirsten Flagstad (Brünnhilde) with the Valkyries, as seen in the Company's 1935 Ring premiere.



MORTON

Melchior and Flagstad with 1936 Walküre conductor Fritz Reiner.



FRANKLIN & ROGNON

Schorr and Hans Clemens as Loge in 1935's Das Rheingold.



NORTON

A light moment backstage with William Wildermann (Hunding), Régine Crespin (Sieglinde), and Jess Thomas (Siegmund) from 1968's Walküre.



LÄCKENBACH

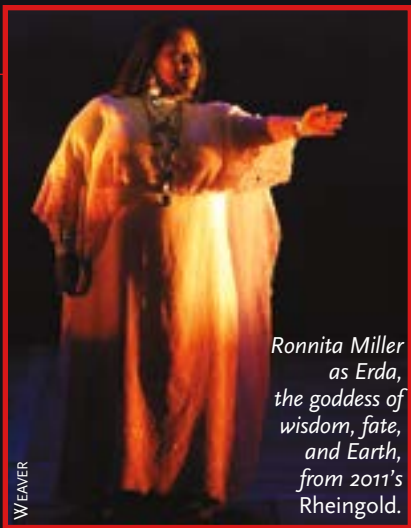
Birgit Nilsson made her U.S. debut as Brünnhilde in 1956, opposite Hans Hotter as Wotan.



PETERS

Jon Vickers and Siw Ericsdotter were 1963's Siegmund and Sieglinde.

For complete cast information of past Company seasons, please visit archive.sfopera.com.



Ronnita Miller as Erda, the goddess of wisdom, fate, and Earth, from 2011's Rheingold.

WEAVER



The formidable Nina Stemme appeared as the Company's previous Brunnhilde in 2011.

WEAVER



1985's Siegfried (René Kollo) and Brunnhilde (Eva Marton) greet a new day.

SCHERL



Hans Sotin was Wotan in 1976's Walküre.

SCHERL



1985's Siegmund, Peter Hofmann, pulls Notung from the tree.

SCHERL



Entry of the Gods into Valhalla, 2011 with Brandon Jovanovich (Froh), Elizabeth Bishop (Fricka), Melissa Citro (Freia), and Gerd Grochowski (Donner).

WEAVER



Birgit Nilsson's final Company appearance was as Brunnhilde in 1981.

SCHERL



From 1985's Rheingold, Walter Berry as a triumphant Alberich.

SCHERL



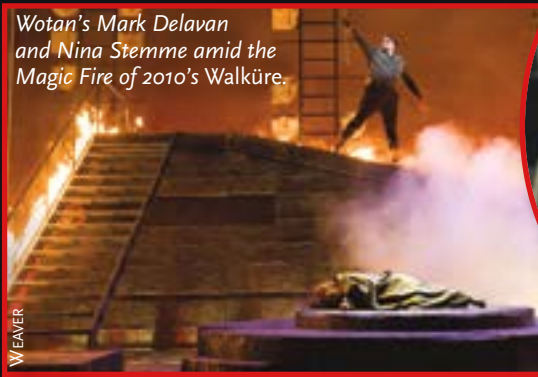
Helga Dernesch in full regalia as Fricka in 1985.

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Gwyneth Jones was Brunnhilde for both 1985 (seen here) and 1990 cycles.

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Wotan's Mark Delavan and Nina Stemme amid the Magic Fire of 2010's Walküre.

WEAVER



Thomas Sunnegårdh as Loge carries the Tarnhelm in 1999's Rheingold.

SOHL



From 1985, James Morris' Wotan opposite Hanna Schwarz's Fricka.

SCHERL



Morris with 1999 Brunnhilde Jane Eaglen.

MERKLE



The blood oath of Jess Thomas (Siegfried), Clifford Grant (Hagen), and Thomas Stewart (Gunther) from 1972's Götterdämmerung.

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RING CROSSWORD

BY BRAD WILBER

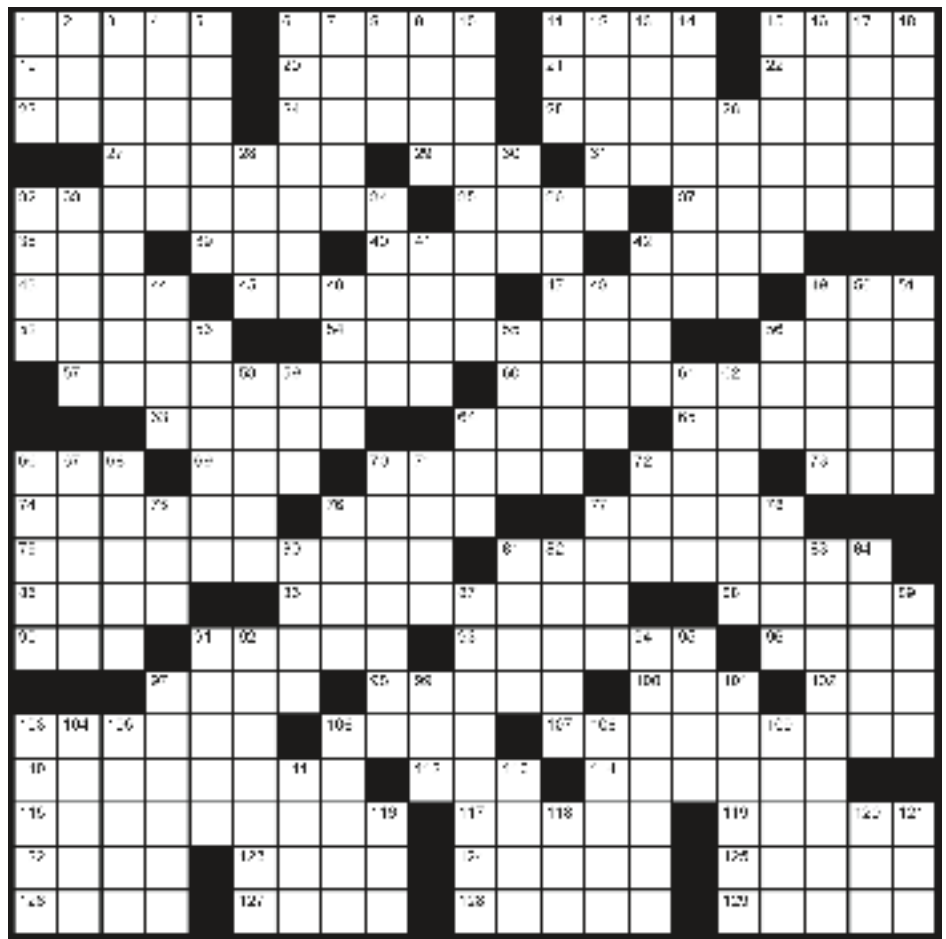


SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Many boxes celebrating
one little circle

ACROSS

1. Wagner's Mime is one
6. Figures on sports trading cards
11. Attention-getting whisper
15. Spherical opening?
19. Big name in calculators
20. Sign in a boardinghouse window
21. Withdrawn orchard spray
22. Certain speckled equine
23. Coastline recess
24. Like Fricka upon hearing of the Siegmund-Sieglinde liaison
25. Protective circle in *Die Walküre*
27. Essential oils from rose petals
29. Sinuous swimmer
31. One side of the *Ring's* rainbow bridge
32. Outing for spotting waterfowl, maybe
35. Cunning demigod in *Das Rheingold*
37. "Because I'm worth it" sloganer
38. "What's more..."
39. Herb that often triggers dermatitis
40. Tagging along
42. Spongy toy brand
43. Perk with some hotel upgrades
45. Sultanate on the South China Sea
47. "___ the Top" (Cole Porter standard)
49. With it
52. Word after comic or landing
54. "Hurry, cabbie!"
56. Unhinged
57. Fruit generally without a neck, contrary to what its name might suggest
60. Tenor who co-starred with Birgit Nilsson in 1972's San Francisco Opera *Ring*
63. Famously impassive Buckingham Palace employee
64. Lavish attention (on)
65. Geological epoch when mammals emerged
66. *Frasier* call screener
69. Not clerical
70. Try to deceive users, in a way
72. "It's nippy!"
73. Since Jan. 1: Abbr.
74. Like paisley-pattern shapes, fancifully
76. Capital ESE of Warsaw
77. Swiss town where Einstein went to high school
79. Canadian who headlined San Francisco Opera's *Lohengrin* and *Meistersinger* in the 1990s
81. Scot who made his Company debut in 1990
85. "___ Rhythm"
86. *Ring* entrance line sung by 36- and 83-Down
88. Agent from an embassy
90. Prosecutors, briefly
91. Govt.-backed investment
93. Todd who directed *Far from Heaven*
96. "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" rhyme scheme
97. *Exodus* novelist
98. Hush Puppies material
100. Sashimi staple
102. "Cool" fortune
103. Pertaining to the chief deity of the Eddas
106. *Li'l Abner* possessive pronoun
107. Practice game
110. Bass who frequented San Francisco Opera *Parsifals* between 1974 and 2000
112. Nautical journal
114. Woo successfully
115. What one might become after donning the Tarnhelm
117. Muscovite's bread
119. Simon who was the Company's Dutchman in 1979
122. Author Bagnold or Blyton



123. Get around like the Flying Dutchman, say
124. Catches red-handed
125. Submerged sailing hazard
126. PlayStation maker
127. "... shake a friendly hand ___ sink": Britten's *Billy Budd*
128. Dash off
129. *Lohengrin* royal, Anglicized
130. Scenic upholstery fabric
131. Mrs. Trump between Ivana and Melania
132. Tatum of *Little Darlings*
133. Tedious task
134. Jonathan Swift's "The Tale of ___"
135. John in Britain?
136. LeBron James' team, informally
137. ___ Väilki (famed 1960s Brünnhilde)
138. Atlantic-crossing caravel of old
139. Jones who sang two Brünnhildes at San Francisco Opera in 1990
140. Not 'e'en once
141. Baklava ingredients
142. Kristen of *Ghostbusters*
143. Broken in
144. River to the Seine
145. Offering smells of baking cookies, maybe
146. "Sorry, previous engagement"
147. Not candid, as a photo
148. ___ Walnuts (*The Sopranos* underboss)
149. Eyes, in Acapulco
150. Site: Abbr.
151. Grp. with annual Image Awards
152. Ask too many personal questions
153. Country chanteuse Clark or Gibbs
154. Ancient poet who said "Force without wisdom falls of its own weight"
155. AL East or NL Central, e.g.
156. Beyond zealous
157. Watch brand in James Bond films since 1995
158. ___ paradoxes
159. Segment in a Requiem mass
160. Almost every *Heldentenor* role
161. One was once imposed on non-Bayreuth performances of *Parsifal*
162. Antioxidant preservative, briefly
163. *The ___ Garden* (Michael Tippett opera)
164. Soon, quaintly
165. It parallels the radius
166. Soups in Vietnamese restaurants
167. You may find a fork in it
168. Reluctant affirmative
169. Hungarian star who sang her first *Götterdämmerung* Brünnhilde at San Francisco Opera in 1985
170. Edna Ferber novel
171. Destiny monitors in the *Ring*
172. Alma mater of tenor Matthew Polenzani
173. Downsizes
174. Type of salad with tomatoes and anchovies
175. Heartfelt
176. Branch of Islam
177. Shambolic
178. www.bayreuther-festspiele.de, e.g.
179. Become snared, as in a net
180. Steinbeck have-nots
181. "You've stuffed me!"
182. Michael of Dallas Cowboys fame
183. One-toothed dragon of '50s TV
184. Orchestra member with a spike
185. Israeli statesman Dayan
186. Shelf support with a 90-degree angle
187. Green dip, informally
188. Lilly or Whitney
189. Jacket-flap text, often
190. Opera critic's asset
191. Inclined to trickery, like 35-Across

Answer key is at
sfopera.com/ring_puzzle.

Brad Wilber has served as the crossword editor for the Chronicle of Higher Education since 2014. He has had over 300 of his own puzzles published in national newspapers, books, and emerging online venues. His 50th appearance in the New York Times, in April 2017, was a crossword co-written with the pianist Emanuel Ax.

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The **OPERA BOX OFFICE** is located in the Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue, and is open Monday 10 AM–5 PM, Tuesday through Saturday 10 AM–6 PM, and through the first intermission on performance days. Tickets may also be charged by phone at (415) 864-3330 or ordered online at sfopera.com. We accept American Express, VISA, MasterCard, and Discover.

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- Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices before the performance, including digital watches and cell phones.
- No cameras or recording equipment are permitted in the Opera House.
- As a courtesy to those who may have fragrance allergies, please avoid wearing perfume or cologne.
- Children of any age attending a performance must have a ticket; no babes in arms.

Management reserves the right to remove any patron creating a disturbance.

also served before performances and during intermissions at Patina's Café Express (Lower level) and Dress Circle Café. Call (415) 861-8150 or visit opentable.com for reservations or to pre-order. Patrons dining in the Opera House may enter through the North Carriage entrance (adjacent to the War Memorial courtyard) up to two hours prior to curtain.

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COURTESY TELEPHONE, for local calls only, is located in the main lobby across from the South passenger elevator

DRINKING FOUNTAINS are available on all levels except the Lower level, where there is a courtesy water station on the north side. Water bottles are permitted in the auditorium.

OPERA GLASSES may be rented for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested.

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FIRST AID STATION is located on the South Lower level. In case of emergency, please ask the nearest usher to assist you.

LOST AND FOUND items may be claimed at the North coat check during the performance. All unclaimed items are delivered to the War Memorial Performing Arts Center at 401 Van Ness Ave., Room 110, (415) 621-6600 (8 AM–5 PM, Monday–Friday).

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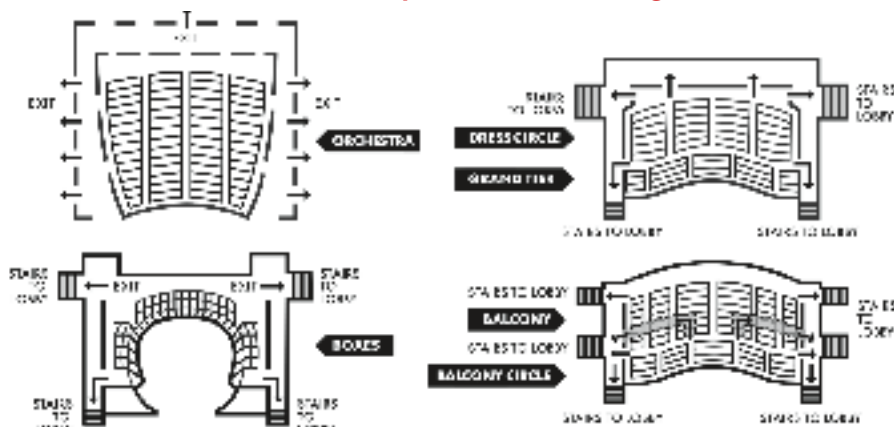
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SIMON PAULY



As I awoke, my ear caught a sound, which swelled fuller and fuller; no longer could I imagine myself to be dreaming: music was sounding, and such music! ... I was in tears, but so was all the rest of the household. —Cosima Wagner

A MOST PERSONAL EPIC

On Christmas Day, 1870, Wagner's wife Cosima had a very unusual awakening. She stirred to the sound of a 13-piece chamber ensemble crammed onto her staircase, the soaring strains of what we now know as the *Siegfried Idyll* wafting through the house. It was a 33rd birthday present from a husband to his wife and a gift of the most intimate, personal, and creative variety. It was also an early glimpse of one of Brünnhilde's major thematic motifs, to be heard in the final act of *Siegfried* some six years later.

I bring up the *Siegfried Idyll* because it is a poignant reminder of the duality of intimacy and majesty that is the *Ring*. There is no larger story told in all opera than the birth and destruction of the world. It is an epic of human consciousness that demands gigantic resources and the highest standards of artistic excellence. It is only possible with a community of deep generosity, and it requires its audience to commit to a singular artistic journey for the best part of a week. I am so proud that we have a company and community who are willing to invest so deeply of their talents, their resources, and their passions to come together in the creation of this *Ring*.



Richard Wagner conducts *Siegfried's Idyll* at Triebchen with his wife Cosima and son Siegfried at his side.

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The true power in the *Ring* comes from its moments of extreme intimacy, moments when we are allowed to linger at length on scenes so personal, so emotional, so raw, we begin to feel that moments from our own life are being acted out on stage: a married couple fighting over values and politics; a father bidding his daughter farewell; an adopted teenager forging his own path as he ignores his father; a young man nervously meeting a woman for the first time.

These are the stories of *our* lives—past, present, and future. As epic in scale as is the *Ring*, its true might lies in its ability to utilize immense forces to open probing doors into very personal experiences. Many of us come back hungrily to the *Ring* time and time again, seeking it out in every incarnation possible. This quest for repeat exposure is, I would posit, less about the desire to see a grand epic over and over again. It is more about the ability of the *Ring* to connect with us anew on each journey, unlocking different aspects of our own changing lives. It is like a portrait whose eyes follow you, wherever you are.

As you watch the ecstasy-in-music that is Act III of *Siegfried* and the awakening of what is to be a love that redeems the world, give a thought to that theme being performed on a staircase, in a house in Switzerland. In the redemptive power of epic, heroic love is also the expression of real, intimate love, a love that can transform our own very personal lives. For Cosima Wagner, writing in her diary that day, the impact of that birthday present was profound in its intensity. I hope that you too find many moments in this *Ring* that will leave you in tears of beauty, joy, reflection, and catharsis, as art intersects with life.

Connect with Matthew via Twitter, Instagram, and email.

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