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BY RHIANNON GIDDENS AND MICHAEL ABELS



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FEATURES

32

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

BY KANEZA SCHAAL

Director Kaneza Schaal invites audiences to experience Omar ibn Said's story.

33

CREATING OMAR

BY RHIANNON GIDDENS AND MICHAEL ABELS

Reflections on *Omar* from co-composer and librettist Rhiannon Giddens and co-composer Michael Abels.

34

"OR THEY WILL NEVER KNOW"

OMAR IBN SAID AND THE POWER OF THE WORD

BY MARK BURFORD

A look at the literary historiography of the source text behind this Pulitzer Prize-winning opera.

50

WITNESSES TO HISTORY

San Francisco Opera's commitment to expanding the opera repertoire.

DEPARTMENTS

- 5 At a Glance
- 6 Welcome Message from the Board
- 7 San Francisco Opera Association
- 8 Opera News
- 10 San Francisco Opera Donors
- 30 Synopsis
- 31 Cast
- 39 Artist Profiles
- 46 In Memoriam
- 52 Your Guide to San Francisco Opera

- 54 Administration
- 56 Artist Roster and Chorus
- 57 Orchestra, Dancers, and Supernumeraries
- 58 Backstage Personnel
- 65 Adler Fellows
- 66 San Francisco Opera Guild
- 68 Merola Opera Program
- 70 Postlude by General Director Matthew Shilvock

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At a Glance

OMAR

MUSIC BY RHIANNON GIDDENS AND MICHAEL ABELS

LIBRETTO BY RHIANNON GIDDENS

Structure: 2 acts, with 1 intermission

Running time: 2 hours, 45 minutes

Language: Sung in English, with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Omar*, West African scholar who is enslaved and brought to America
- *Julie*, a friend who helps Omar
- *Fatima*, Omar's mother who speaks to him in dreams
- *Johnson/Owen*, Americans who enslave Omar

Omar is the true story of 19th-century Islamic scholar Omar ibn Said, who was taken from his home in West Africa in 1807, forcibly brought to America through the Middle Passage, and sold into slavery in South Carolina. Despite the brutality he faced,

Omar maintained his faith and identity, eventually writing his autobiography in Arabic. This 200-year-old text is the source and inspiration for the first opera by MacArthur Fellowship recipient and Grammy Award-winning musician Rhiannon Giddens and co-composer Michael Abels who is best known for his soundtracks to Jordan Peele's films *Get Out*, *Us*, and *Nope*. The expansive sound world of *Omar*, set to a libretto by Giddens, synthesizes strains of bluegrass, spirituals, the West African kora, folk music, and jazz into a uniquely American musical language.

Did you know? *Omar* had its world premiere in May 2022 at Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina, the city where Omar ibn Said was forced to enter the United States and sold into slavery. The work, which has been staged in multiple American cities, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music earlier this year.

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

MUSIC BY GAETANO DONIZETTI

LIBRETTO BY FELICE ROMANI

Structure: 2 acts, with 1 intermission

Running time: 2 hours, 30 minutes

Language: Sung in Italian, with English supertitles

Key Characters:

- *Adina*, an independent and wealthy woman who owns the town hotel
- *Nemorino*, a timid waiter who is in love with Adina
- *Dulcamara*, a quack doctor who sells Nemorino an "elixir" to help him win Adina's affection
- *Belcore*, a sergeant in the town's garrison and a swaggering suitor of Adina

Donizetti's tuneful and effervescent comedy follows the hapless Nemorino who pines for Adina, a wise and sophisticated beauty out of his league. Nemorino puts his hopes in a magic elixir sold to him by Dr. Dulcamara to win

her affection. With the elixir—in truth a bottle of Bordeaux wine—Nemorino finds both confidence and new possibilities open to him. This staging by director Daniel Slater and designer Robert Innes Hopkins sets the story in a sun-soaked world of pleasure on the Italian Riviera. Harkening back to Federico Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, the updated setting finds the heroine as the proprietor of the Hotel Adina where Nemorino works as a waiter.

Listen for: Nemorino's aria in the second act, "Una furtiva lagrima" ("A secret tear"), is one of the most famous arias in all of opera, but *The Elixir of Love* is filled with memorable melodies. Adina's entrance aria, "Della crudele Isotta" ("Of the cruel Isolde"), is a joyous number that begins like a gentle narrative ballad, telling the story of Tristan and Isolde (well before Wagner wrote his opera), which breaks into lively exchanges with the chorus and culminates in some dazzling vocal fireworks.

Connection and Inspiration

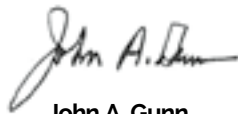
We are delighted to welcome you to the close of our fall season with two very special and entirely different operas in *Omar* and *The Elixir of Love*.

Omar, by Grammy Award-winning American singer, instrumentalist, and co-composer Rhiannon Giddens and co-composer Michael Abels, is inspired by the true story of West African scholar Omar ibn Said, enslaved and brought to North Carolina in 1807. He left a number of writings in Arabic, including his autobiography, which form the basis of this deeply moving work. *Omar* won the Pulitzer Prize in Music earlier this year and has found profound resonance in every city in which it is played. It is the second of three new co-commissioned works we present this season, part of the Company's commitment to expanding the repertoire and sharing urgent stories created by leading artistic voices of our time.

Our final opera of the fall season takes us to the sunny Italian Riviera, with Daniel Slater's production of Gaetano Donizetti's effervescent *The Elixir of Love*. It is a delicious comedic romp and a musical banquet of melodies. We're so excited to welcome back San Francisco favorite, tenor Pene Pati, as well as meet a number of wonderful new artists who will bring joyful exuberance to the stage. And on December 1 we have the next in our "Encounter" series—part opera, part party—a fabulous introduction to the Company and to this beautiful theater.

The overarching thread that connects all of these artistic offerings is you, our community of patrons. We are deeply grateful for all that you do to champion this incredible art form. It is your attendance, your advocacy, and your financial support that allow San Francisco Opera to create connection and inspiration for our entire community. Thank you for being champions for this great art form.

Sincerely,



John A. Gunn
Chairman of the Board
San Francisco Opera Association



Jack Calhoun
President
San Francisco Opera Association



San Francisco Opera Association

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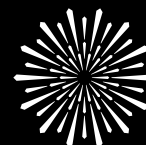
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SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

San Francisco Opera News



KRISTEN LOKEN

CONCERTS ON DECEMBER 2 AND 8

Mark your calendars! On **Saturday, December 2** San Francisco Opera's resident artists, the Adler Fellows, take to the stage of Herbst Theatre with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and maestro Ramón Tebar, conductor for this fall's *The Elixir of Love*, for an evening of arias and scenes. Then, on **Friday, December 8**, the San Francisco Opera Chorus will hold the spotlight in the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater for their annual concert under Chorus Director John Keene with Associate Chorus Master Fabrizio Corona at the piano. For tickets, visit sfopera.com.



MATTHEW WASHBURN

Around the World with Eun Sun Kim

Over the next six months, Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim will be traveling back and forth across the Atlantic with some very exciting musical engagements. Beginning in November, Kim is in Paris to conduct Offenbach's *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* and a concert honoring the centenary of soprano Maria Callas. Her New Year begins in Houston with a production of Wagner's *Parsifal*. This is followed by several important engagements including her New York Philharmonic debut in February; concerts in Torino, Duisburg, and Montreal; and performances of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* in Barcelona, Minnesota, and in her debut with the Berlin Philharmonic. Kim returns to San Francisco in May to open the Opera's 2024 Summer Season with Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. And stay tuned for news about an exciting new San Francisco Opera film project about Eun Sun Kim, slated for release next spring.



STEFAN COHEN



Scene from Omar. / CORY WEAVER/LA OPERA

**JOIN US FOR SELECT
POST-SHOW CHATS
WITH THE CAST
AND CREATIVE TEAM
OF OMAR**

“Tell your story, Omar—you must /
Or they will never know.”

Following select performances of *Omar* (November 7, 11, 15, 17, and 21), audiences are invited to stay for a post-show conversation that gives space for deeper exploration and processing of Omar ibn Said’s life and legacy. Hear firsthand the experiences of the artists and creative minds behind this opera, including conductor John Kennedy, and performers Jamez McCorkle and Rehanna Thelwell.



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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, and they have proudly continued that support for General Director Matthew Shilcock. This season, the Gunns’ inspired generosity is helping make possible four productions—*Il Trovatore*, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, *Lohengrin*, and *The Magic Flute*. The Gunns invite everyone to give and join them as a member of San Francisco Opera’s donor community. John comments, “Opera is a dynamic art form, and all of us play a role in keeping it a meaningful part of our social fabric. With you we can propel San Francisco Opera into its next 100

years of artistic history.” John is the former chairman and CEO of Dodge & Cox Investment Managers. He joined the firm in 1972, the year he received his MBA 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 10 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 a former trustee of Stanford University and is Chairman Emeritus of the Advisory Board for the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. Cynthia currently serves as a trustee of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, is a former overseer of Stanford’s Hoover Institution, and has been a member of the advisory board of Family and Children Services and the board of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health. Opera lovers are grateful to Cynthia and John and applaud their commitment to keeping San Francisco Opera a leading-edge company.

Donor Spotlight



KRISTEN LOKEN

Bob Ellis (Production Sponsor, *Omar*)

Bob has been a longtime supporter of contemporary opera since he became a member of the board of directors in 2001. He has supported all of John Adams' new productions for San Francisco Opera, beginning with the commission of *Doctor Atomic* in 2005 and continuing with *Girls of the Golden West* in 2017 and this past fall's *Antony and Cleopatra*. Along with Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, other production sponsorships have included Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Olivier Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise*, and the 2011 premiere of Francesca Zambello's production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle. He has also served on the boards of Opera Parallèle, OPERA America, and Central City Opera.



DREW ALTIZER

Louise Gund (Production Sponsor, *Omar*)

Louise Gund is an accomplished theater producer with a wide range of artistic talents. She has produced twelve Broadway plays and musicals, winning a Tony Award and Drama Desk Award for *All the Way*, and receiving three additional Tony Award nominations. A subscriber to San Francisco Opera since 2010, Louise has served on the Opera's board of directors since 2013. She has also served on the boards of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Cal Performances, Earthjustice, and the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra. In addition to her major support of these organizations, she is an environmental activist and a staunch advocate on behalf of women's and children's issues. She was awarded the San Francisco Opera Spirit of the Opera Award in 2019 for devoted service to the Company and was the inspiration behind the Opera's Producers

Circle. Louise is passionate about enabling creativity to flourish, telling stories of meaning, and ensuring a vibrant future for the arts.

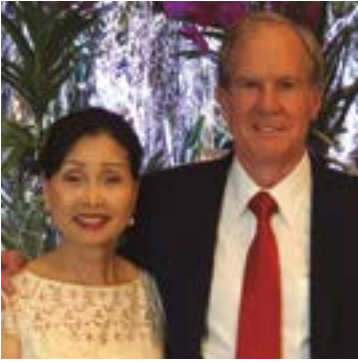


Koret Foundation (Production Sponsor, *Omar*)

San Francisco Opera is deeply grateful to the Koret Foundation for its support of *Omar*. This funding is part of the Foundation's generous three-year grant supporting new works, which began in the Centennial Season. "Koret is pleased to support this exciting new work and looks forward to more opportunities to bring new voices and stories to the opera stage," says Jeffrey A. Farber, Koret Foundation CEO. Koret has been a longtime supporter of San Francisco Opera's transformational stage productions, as well as education and community programs. Most recently, Koret supported San Francisco Opera's sold-out co-commission *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* by composer Gabriela Lena Frank and librettist Nilo Cruz. "We are honored by Koret's

longstanding partnership which helps us bring the best quality opera to the broadest audiences in ways that are reflective of and relevant to our community," says General Director Matthew Shilvock.

Donor Spotlight



DREW ALTIZER PHOTOGRAPHY

Jerome and Thao Dodson (Production Sponsor, *The Elixir of Love*)

“A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust, and a hearty, ‘Hi-Yo, Silver!’”

Those words, accompanied by the galloping excitement of Rossini’s *William Tell* Overture, transfixed a young Jerry Dodson as he listened to *The Lone Ranger* on the family radio in Oak Park, Illinois. Just as Bugs Bunny’s *Rabbit of Seville* had done for many, a lighthearted entertainment sparked a future operatic devotion.

That little boy grew up to attend Berkeley in the 60s, serve with the American Embassy in Vietnam where he and Thao met, and attend Harvard Business School. Eventually, the couple married, settled in the Bay Area, and raised a family. In the 1980s, Jerry was a pioneer in the field of socially responsible investing with little interest in opera. But in 1992, when San Francisco Opera decided to celebrate Rossini’s

bicentennial with the rarely performed *Guillaume Tell*, Thao, already an opera lover, suggested to Jerry that they go.

Tell was praised for its striking Mansouri production, and the Dodsons began attending regularly. They became season ticket holders in 1999 and supporters, “in a small way,” as Jerry puts it. A friendship with David Gockley, which endures to this day, led to a larger role as Company Sponsors. “I so admired what he did for the opera, but it was not very good for my pocketbook,” Jerry laughs. Jerry also lends his financial expertise to the audit committee.

In 2016, Dodson considered the import of Gockley’s departure. He met with Matthew Shilvock and joined the Board that year. “We hit it off right away!” Jerry says. He felt a similar affinity with Keith Geeslin, then President of the San Francisco Opera Association. Eager to continue support, the Dodsons see this as a perfect time to revitalize and energize the Company within the San Francisco community. The initial fire ignited by *William Tell* continues to burn brightly.



Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem (Production Sponsor, *The Elixir of Love*) Sponsor, through the Conductors Fund: John Kennedy (*Omar*); Ramón Tebar (*Elixir*). Sponsor, through the Emerging Stars Fund: Jamez McCorkle, Taylor Raven, and Brittany Renee (*Omar*); Pene Pati and Slávka Zámečnicková (*Elixir*)

Jan and Maria both developed a love of opera at a young age, although they grew up half-a-world apart. Jan Shrem, after a career devoted to his publishing businesses in Japan and Europe, created Clos Pegase Winery in California’s Napa Valley, collecting some of the world’s greatest modern and contemporary art. Maria Manetti Shrem internationally succeeded with her fashion-based entrepreneurial companies, bringing Gucci and Fendi in the departments and specialty stores in the USA.

In joyous partnership the Manetti Shrem couple is bringing their focus and affection to philanthropic causes that advance education, the performing and visual arts, and medicine.

While their lives led them each around the globe, their individual passions eventually brought them to San Francisco Opera and to each other. As Company Sponsors for more than a decade, Jan and Maria have established four generous funds.

- The Conductors Fund helps ensure the continued appearances of noted 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.
- The Emerging Stars Fund supports the Company in showcasing exciting rising young stars on our stage throughout the season.
- The Luminaries Concert Fund enables San Francisco Opera to bring legendary artists to the stage for special events and performances.

In December 2022, Maria received The Spirit of the Opera award for her devotion to San Francisco Opera, her high level of commitment to advancing the success of the Company, and her ongoing support of the art form. She is the 2023 UC Davis Medal recipient for her profound arts legacy and passion for creating opportunities for exploration and education.

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SCAN TO DONATE



Omar Giving Circle

San Francisco Opera is honored to recognize donors for their support of Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* and their participation in this special **Omar Giving Circle**. This broad-based effort welcomes new supporters who, together, are helping to bring this important work to our community. There is still time to join the Omar Giving Circle by calling (415) 565-3212. Donors will be added to our digital recognition and will receive a special commemorative pin! Please see page 15 for more details. This listing reflects gifts received through October 2, 2023.

OLIVE TREE **\$30,000 +**

Marcia Barinaga & Corey Goodman
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Koret Foundation
National Endowment for the Arts
Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem

TAMA **\$7,280 +**

Sylvia R. Lindsey

BLUEGRASS **\$4,000 +**

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SCHOLAR **\$1,831 +**

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Arthur Strange



KRISTEN LOKEN

The Future Is Now: Adlers in Concert

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Omar Giving Circle

Join a special new giving circle, available for new and increased gifts to support Rhiannon Giddens' and Michael Abels' *Omar*. *Omar* is the true story of a 19th-century Islamic scholar from West Africa, enslaved in South Carolina, but who found and expressed identity and faith through the written word. The Omar Giving Circle is a broad-based effort beginning at only \$22, embracing gifts of all sizes are vital to bring this important work to our community.



TAMBOURINE \$22

Encircled by repeating pairs of metal discs, the "22" level is inspired by the prominence of the tambourine in the opera. Most scholars agree that the origins of the tambourine date back to 1700 BCE or even earlier, and it appears in sacred texts from West Africa, Turkey, Greece, Italy, India, and throughout the Middle East.



KUFI \$120

The traditional hat worn by Omar in the opera is called a Kufi, from the Kufi script it resembles. It plays a significant role in the opera as Julie, an enslaved woman, becomes close to Omar. The Kufi script is thought to have gone into general use in the 12th century. The hat is a part of the national dress of many West African countries and symbolizes African descent in many American cultures.



AKONTING \$517

The akonting is an African gourd lute known as the ancestor of the modern banjo played by co-composer Rhiannon Giddens, who studied the instrument. The three strings of the akonting are tuned to the pattern 5-1-7, which inspires the name for this level! (7-note scale with 7th, 5th, and 1st notes.)



SCHOLAR \$1,831

The best known of the scholar Omar Ibn Said's writings is his autobiographical essay, "The Life of Omar ibn Said." Written in 1831, the work forms the basis of the opera.



BLUEGRASS \$4,000

In honor of co-composer Rhiannon Giddens' frequent genre, bluegrass. Bluegrass was born out of North American blues music which was directly influenced by West African music. Recognized as a new American art form in the 1940s, Bluegrass is a fusion of music styles and experiences, much like the fusion of opera, Senegalese, and American styles found in *Omar*.



TAMA \$7,280

The Senegalese tama, or talking drum, is known to project sounds imitating human speech across a seven-to-eight kilometer distance, or 7-2-8. Omar ibn Said was originally abducted from West Africa, in the Futa Toro region (modern-day Senegal) where the tama is played widely and used to send messages as well as make music.



OLIVE TREE \$30,000+

Omar sings of the olive tree during the moment of darkness when his humanity is attacked, "The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, which is within a glass, which is like a brilliant star fueled by a blessed tree, an olive tree, neither Eastern nor Western, whose oil would almost glow, even if untouched by fire." The themes of our shared humanity can be seen in the symbol of the olive tree.

GIFT LEVELS AND BENEFITS

To join the circle with your philanthropic support, visit sfopera.com/omarcircle or call (415) 551-3212.



LEARN MORE ABOUT THE DONOR BENEFITS AT EACH LEVEL HERE!

Our Donor Family

The collective support of San Francisco Opera's generous donor family keeps world-class opera on the stage and brings community programs to students and families. Each year, support from individuals and institutional funders accounts for 86% of the revenue needed to create transformative opera.

Listed gifts were received between **August 1, 2022 and October 2, 2023**. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of our donor listings. If we have misspelled or omitted a name, please accept our apology and notify us at **(415) 565-3212** so that we may update our records accordingly.

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 Great Artist Performance

Renée Fleming, *soprano*
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Radiant soprano Renée Fleming graces Berkeley with her star power once again, lending her warmth and sensitivity to a recital program of songs and arias in several languages.



Feb 9
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Erin Morley, *soprano*
Malcolm Martineau, *piano*

One of today's most in-demand lyric coloratura sopranos, Erin Morley has appeared in more than 100 Met performances, most notably as Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Olympia in *Tales of Hoffmann*, Constance in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, and Pamina in *The Magic Flute*. Here the supremely sensitive Martin Martineau joins Morley for this magical recital performance.



Feb 18
 HERTZ HALL

Ema Nikolovska, *mezzo-soprano*
Howard Watkins, *piano*

Possessing a rare combination of artistic sensitivity and technical skill and with an impressive array of honors already in hand, the young mezzo-soprano Emma Nikolovska visits with a program featuring songs by Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Debussy in her Cal Performances debut.



Mar 10
 HERTZ HALL

Mark Padmore, *tenor*
Mitsuko Uchida, *piano*
 Schubert's *Winterreise*

Renowned Schubertians, tenor Mark Padmore and pianist Mitsuko Uchida together tread a path of existential discovery in Schubert's setting of Wilhelm Müller's poems about love and loss, inviting us into the anguished inner world of the poem's protagonist and bringing to vivid life the barren winter landscape of his solitary wanderings.



Mar 17
 HERTZ HALL

Jakub Józef Orliński, *countertenor*
Il Pomo d'Oro
Beyond

Riveting Polish countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński returns to Berkeley this season with the sensational ensemble Il Pomo d'Oro, in a program of rarely performed works from the 16th and 17th centuries—by Monteverdi, Caccini, Frescobaldi, Cavalli, Strozzi, and others.



Apr 9
 ZELLERBACH HALL

Amina Edris, *soprano*
Pene Pati, *tenor*
Robert Mollicone, *piano*
Voyages

Works by Duparc, Ravel, Saint-Saëns, Quilter, and Vaughan Williams, and traditional songs from Egypt and Samoa



Darlings of the opera world, the wife and husband duo of soprano Amina Edris and tenor Pene Pati returns to the Bay Area with a varied program of songs traversing eras and continents.

Apr 23
 ZELLERBACH HALL

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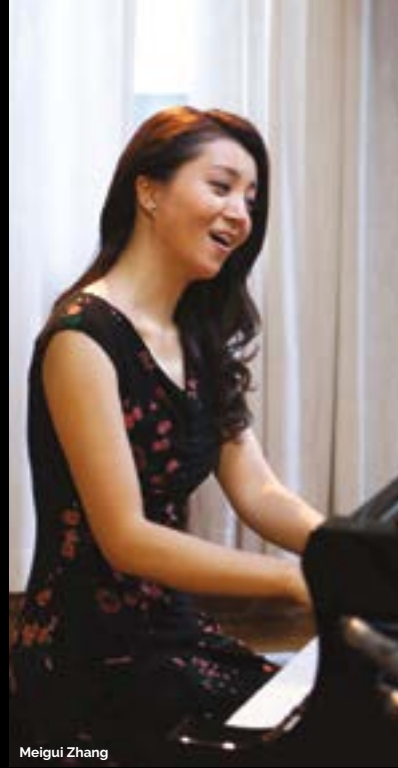




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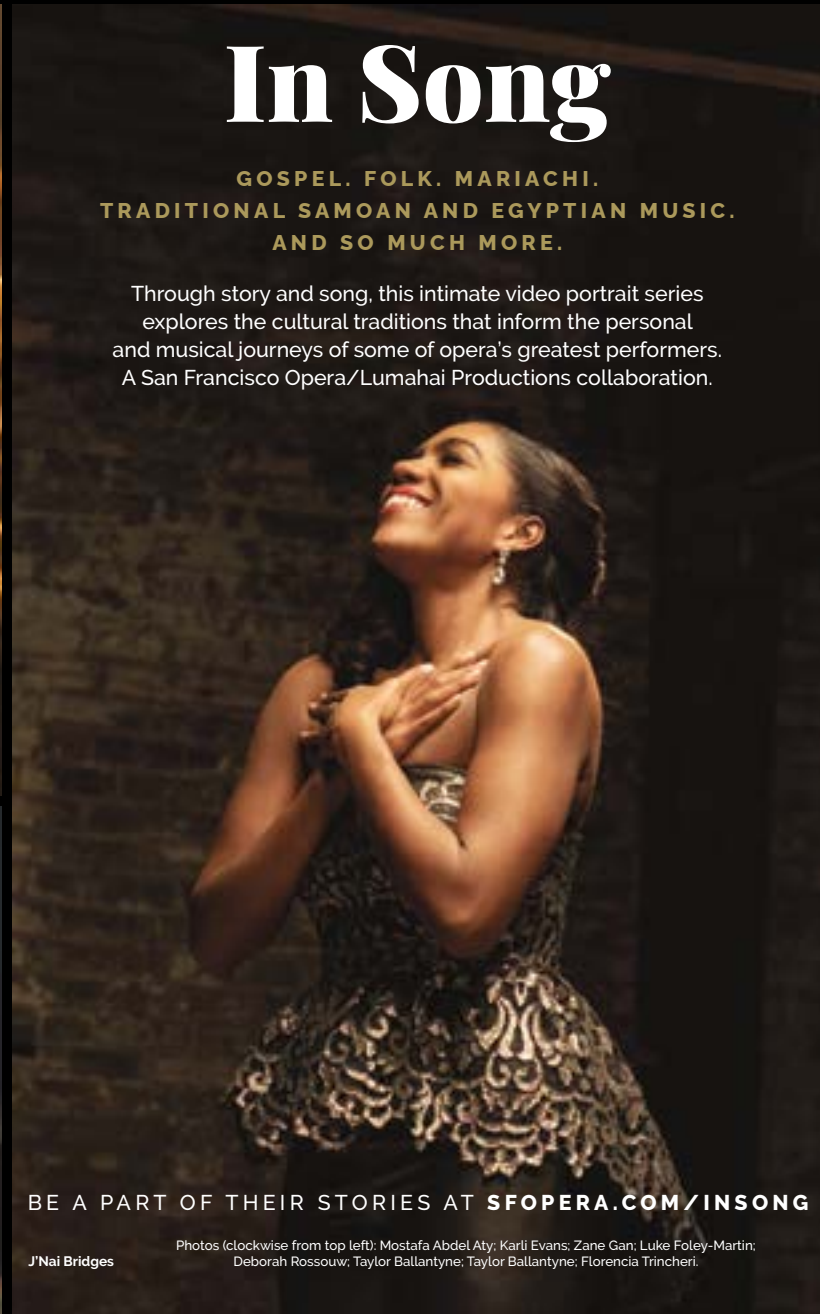
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Omar

OPERA IN TWO ACTS

MUSIC BY RHIANNON GIDDENS AND MICHAEL ABELS
LIBRETTO BY RHIANNON GIDDENS

This production is made possible, in part, by
Marcia Barinaga & Corey Goodman, Bob Ellis, Louise Gund,
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Omar is co-commissioned by Spoleto Festival USA, Carolina Performing Arts,
San Francisco Opera, LA Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Boston Lyric Opera, and Detroit Opera

Co-production by San Francisco Opera, the LA Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago

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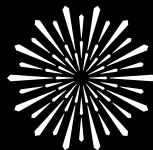
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From *A Muslim American Slave: The Life of Omar ibn Said* translated with an introduction by Ala Alryyes.

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NOVEMBER 5, 7, 11, 15, 17, 21, 2023



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

Omar

ACT I

SCENE ONE: 1806, Futa Toro (a region of West Africa now part of Senegal) In his peaceful village, Omar ibn Said chants verses from the Quran. Omar's mother, Fatima, a spiritual matriarch of the village, leads the community in a prayer to Allah. Worried that his village will fall prey to the slavers pillaging the region, Omar's brother Abdul has been negotiating with them for the safety of his people. Omar believes that Allah has a plan for him, but Fatima cautions him that the plan might not be what he anticipates.

Abdul discovers that he has been deceived, and he warns his family to flee the coming raiders. But it is too late. Warriors overrun the compound and begin taking people prisoner. Fatima is killed in the chaos.

SCENE TWO: The Middle Passage Omar is shackled closely together with other prisoners in the cramped cargo hold of a slave ship. The desperate prisoners, each of them with their own individual life stories, pray to survive their horrendous journey.

SCENE THREE: The Charleston Slave Market The enslaved woman Julie has been kidnapped and dragged to the market for sale. She plans to escape her kidnapper and return to the Owen plantation in Fayetteville, which seems like a better option than the uncertain future that awaits her at the market. Julie recognizes that the newly arrived Omar doesn't comprehend what is about to happen to him. She tries to explain to Omar (who cannot understand her words) that if he manages to run away, he should try to make it to Fayetteville.

The slave auction begins. A family is brought up for sale. The father, Abe, pleads to be allowed to remain together, but the parents are sold separately from their young son. When Omar is led to the podium, his cap is removed and flung into the crowd, and Julie picks it up. In his anguish, Omar sees the spirit of his mother, who signals that Julie has managed to get free of her bonds. He creates a distraction so that Julie can escape. Omar is sold to Johnson.

SCENE FOUR: Johnson plantation Enslaved workers sing a work song as they labor. Omar keeps to himself. Johnson shouts at one of the men and strikes him. He then turns his wrath to Omar, asserting his authority in an unfamiliar language and sending him to pick cotton in the fields.

SCENE FIVE: Johnson plantation, five months later As Omar sleeps, the spirit of Omar's mother watches over him. Johnson's voice is heard, furiously calling for Omar. At his mother's urging, Omar escapes.

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

SCENE ONE: Fayetteville County Jail Omar has escaped but is eventually captured. He prays and writes Quranic verses in Arabic on the walls of the jail cell. This catches the attention of the townspeople, who wonder where he came from. The plantation owner Owen is urged by his daughter Eliza to buy Omar, who has by now learned to speak English. Owen questions Omar about his background, and their discussion turns to matters of spirituality. Owen sees an opportunity to convert Omar to Christianity.

SCENE TWO: Owen plantation The enslaved workers come to the end of the day's labors. One of them, Katie Ellen, is surprised that Julie has returned to the plantation. Owen and his friend Taylor arrive with Omar and introduce him to the other enslaved workers, who remind Omar that they all must be wary. Julie is impressed that Omar has followed her advice. She tells him that her father used to wear a cap like Omar's. When she was a child, her father was sold and taken away. She has kept Omar's cap all this time because it reminded her of her father, and she gives it back to Omar.

SCENE THREE: Owen's study Owen and Taylor are excited about the prospect of converting Omar to their faith, which will give Owen a great deal of prestige in his community. Owen gives Omar a Christian Bible written in Arabic and asks him to write "The Lord is my Shepherd" in that language. Omar actually writes the words "I want to go home."

SCENE FOUR As Omar reads his new Bible under a tree, he asks Allah the meaning of his life journey. He recites and reinterprets Psalm 23 from the point of view of an enslaved Muslim. The scene ends with a choral amen, as Omar intones an Islamic prayer.

SCENE FIVE Julie is fascinated that Omar can read and write. She encourages him to write a book. The spirit of Fatima joins Julie in urging Omar to write about his experiences and his faith. As he finds his voice, Omar calls on people of the Carolinas and of America to honor the tenets of their faith. The company joins Omar in praising the omnipresence of Allah in all that has been and in all that will be.

Synopsis by Mark Lyons, courtesy of Los Angeles Opera

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John Kennedy *

Director

Kaneza Schaal *

Choreographer

Kiara Benn *

Designer

Christopher Myers *

Set Designer

Amy Rubin *

Co-Costume Designer

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Co-Costume Designer

Micheline Russell-Brown *

Lighting Designer

Pablo Santiago *

Projection Designer

Joshua Higgason *

Chorus Director

John Keene

Assistant Conductor

Robert Mollicone

Prompter

Andrew King

Musical Preparation

Brendon Shapiro *

César Cañón

Yang Lin †

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15 • 7:30 PM

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17 • 7:30 PM

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 21 • 7:30 PM

Omar

Opera in two acts

Music by **Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels**

Libretto by **Rhiannon Giddens**

(Sung in English with English supertitles)

CAST

(in order of vocal appearance)

<i>Omar</i>	Jamez McCorkle *
<i>Fatima (Omar's Mother)</i>	Taylor Raven
<i>Abdul (Omar's brother)/Abe</i>	Norman Garrett *
<i>Amadou</i>	Edward Graves †
<i>Olufemi</i>	Calvin Griffin *
<i>Suleiman</i>	Kenneth Overton
<i>Julie</i>	Brittany Renee *
<i>Auctioneer/Taylor</i>	Barry Banks
<i>Johnson/Owen</i>	Daniel Okulitch
<i>Eliza</i>	Laura Krumm
<i>Katie Ellen/Caller</i>	Rehanna Thelwell *
<i>Ancestral Figure</i>	Jermaine McGhee *

Chorus Soloists

William O'Neill, Chester Pidduck, Jessica-Elisabeth*, Thalia Moore*, Earl Hazell, Christopher Craig*, Aleta Braxton*, John Fluker*, Alexander Taite, Sydnee Turrentine-Johnson*, William Lee Bryan, Joanna Lynn-Jacobs*, Melissa Dufort*, John Fulton, Ernest C. Jackson, Jr.*, Chloe Vaught*, Wilford Kelly*, Johanne Daniel*

Senegalese Villagers, Freed, and Enslaved people

* San Francisco Opera debut † Current Adler Fellow

ACT I

—INTERMISSION—

ACT II

The performance will last approximately two hours and forty-five minutes with one intermission.

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

Patrons who leave during the performance may not be reseated until intermission.

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Please turn off and refrain from using all electronic devices.

Over the last few years, we have been in the bones of the country. The bones of our own psyches. And we have been in the bones of our industry, of opera, of what it means to gather and share breath.

The opera we share with you touches all these bones: the story of Omar ibn Said, a Fulani man, forced to the United States and enslaved, literate before stolen from his home in West Africa, and author of an autobiography.

The West has a fantasy of its singularity, it imagines itself as consistent and fixed. Opera lost itself to that lie. Tonight, we return the opera to itself. A form built on hundreds of years of cultural exchange, sonic exchange, formal and aesthetic encounters with “others.” A form dependent on many different kinds of artists teaming up. A form built of hybridity. Perhaps one of the only places big enough for Said’s journey, the contradiction, the violence, the holiness, the omissions, the terror, and the triumph.

Slavery, of course, existed before people were torn from their homes in West Africa at gunpoint and enslaved in the United States. The institution of American Slavery created and named a permanent condition attached to your body.

The ferocious clarity in American Slavery on the power of language was such that one of the most sacrosanct laws was that you could not teach enslaved people to read. Or write.

And here, we have a text! From Omar ibn Said. Written by Omar. An Islamic scholar who was literate before mercenaries enslaved him. His autobiography is the prayer from which the music and words you hear tonight were created. The glory and triumph that his words exist, even if generated under duress, is holy.

We gather to tell you Said’s story through the contest of languages in his life, spiritual languages, cultural languages, spoken and written languages, the language of materials like wood and fabric. And ultimately, his holding of all these languages simultaneously brims with resistance, omission, refusal, and reincarnation.

Listening to the story of Omar ibn Said tonight, together, let us begin resetting the bones. 🌱



Creating *Omar*



A NOTE FROM CO-COMPOSER/LIBRETTIST RHIANNON GIDDENS

Omar is at once a story of one man and of many. He is himself, trying to understand the shape his life has taken; he is the enslaved Muslim (of which there were so many more than we will ever know) seeking his community in any way he can; he is the eternal outsider. The fractured yet steadfast nature of the culture that formed around the members of the African diaspora struggling for survival in the Americas wraps around his journey, as I have envisioned it; the anonymous voices of the countless Black musical creators from my musical lineage are shot through a score that is nevertheless firmly situated at a crossroads of the folk and western classical traditions.

Who was Omar? We will never really know. This Omar is merely one of a thousand different possible interpretations of his writings and what we know of his life. Nevertheless, I heard an echo of his voice reaching out to me over the centuries—I felt the spirits rise in me with every word written and every note composed. I felt the connection to a time that I cannot easily imagine; a time that tested the ancestors, gave no quarter, and took an unfathomable strength of spirit to survive. I hope this is merely the beginning of the artistic renderings of this remarkable man—let this not be the last operatic word on Omar, but merely the first. And I am honored it is so.

Rhiannon Giddens / EBRU YILDIZ

A NOTE FROM CO-COMPOSER MICHAEL ABELS

Omar is the story of one man's physical and spiritual journey, as told from veiled references in his own autobiography and interpreted through Rhiannon Giddens' moving libretto. Musically, the piece shows as many influences as the many cultures it flows through, from the music of Senegal and the broader Muslim diaspora to the earliest melody transcribed from enslaved people in North America, to spirituals, bluegrass, Protestant hymns, Gershwin, and even a touch of Wagner. The chorus plays a prominent, active role in the work, as a way to center it in a Black community that is multifaceted and real. These diverse elements are unified via the use of a traditional orchestral palette and immensely singable vocal lines.

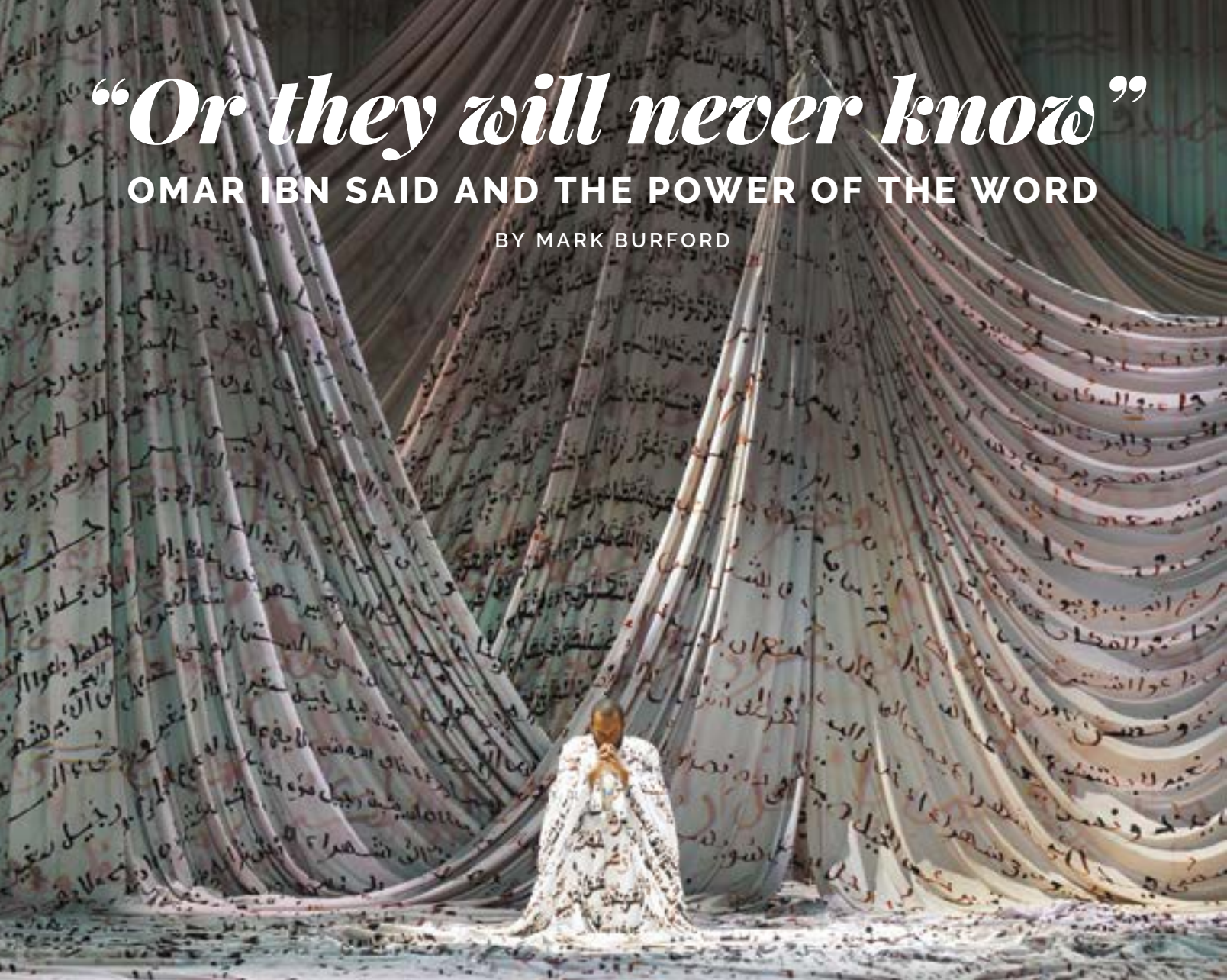


Michael Abels / ERIC SCHWABEL

“Or they will never know”

OMAR IBN SAID AND THE POWER OF THE WORD

BY MARK BURFORD



Scene from Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*. / CORY WEAVER/LA OPERA

In the final scene of the opera *Omar*, Julie, an enslaved woman who met the title character at a slave auction in Charleston, South Carolina, confesses her fascination with his literacy: “You know, they told me you could write / Didn’t really believe it, I don’t think / But then they gave you pen and ink / and you wrote a word.” Earlier in Act II, Julie shared that her father, sold away when she was 10 years old, wore the same traditional *kufi* cap and adhered to similar dietary restrictions as Omar—that he, too, had been a Muslim. Julia urges Omar to use his ability to write as a buttress against the erasure of their shared histories. “Tell your story, Omar—you must / Or they will never know, and we will fade into dust.” The flesh and blood Omar ibn Said, born in West Africa and enslaved in the American South,

did write his story, and the opera that bears his name, by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels, draws inspiration from those words and reveals their lasting power.

One might situate *The Life of Omar ibn Said* among the roughly 6,000 surviving examples of the literary genre known as the slave narrative by African-descended people in the United States, including those contributed by Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Jacobs, and *Twelve Years a Slave* protagonist Solomon Northup. But, for many reasons, Omar’s 13-page manuscript—written in 1831 and rediscovered in a forgotten trunk in Alexandria, Virginia in 1995—stands apart. Above all, it is the only known slave narrative written in Arabic. The overwhelming majority of slave narratives were dictated to white writers and were often mediated by their editorial intervention and

**“The flesh and blood Omar ibn Said,
born in West Africa and enslaved in the American South,
did write his story, and the opera that bears his name,
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predilections in shaping the story. Omar’s autobiography has received multiple translations into English, but the unfamiliarity of Arabic to his contemporaries means that we have a version of his story in his own hand. It is also a unique instance of a slave narrative produced while the subject was still enslaved and written by an author who was literate well before being sold into bondage.

From his autobiography we learn that Omar was born around 1770 in the Futa Toro region in present-day Senegal as a member of the predominantly Muslim Fulbe ethnic group and a scion of a wealthy family. A devout scholar of the Qur’an, Omar was immersed in study of this sacred book of Islam for 25 years, with his mother, featured prominently in the opera, as one of his teachers. At the time of his capture by raiding ethnic rivals in 1807—just a year before the abolition of the United States slave trade—Omar was a teacher-scholar and a prosperous trader. His new life began when the conquering army “walked me to the big Sea, and sold me into the hand of a Christian man who bought me and walked me to the big Ship.” A month and a half later, he landed in Charleston and was sold to “a weak, small, evil man called Johnson,” from whom he escaped, walking more than 200 miles to Fayetteville, North Carolina, where he lived in servitude to James Owen until his death in 1864.

The more humane and God-fearing Owen’s purchase of Omar, who went from backbreaking field labor to life as a house servant and gardener, was precipitated by Omar’s literacy and faith. Islam was introduced to the United States most significantly by enslaved Black Africans and some scholars estimate that as many as twenty percent of African arrivals were Muslim. Not many, however, were literate like Omar, who before he was sold to Owen gained local celebrity when, while on the run, he was captured and jailed for 16 days in Fayetteville and wrote prayers beseeching deliverance on the walls of his cell in Arabic. In the opera, Owen’s

daughter Eliza is transfixed by the indecipherable beauty of Omar’s right-to-left script—“words that fly”—telling her father: “Surely, if God wrote, he would write like that.”

What we know about Omar from his autobiography is supplemented by the newspaper stories, journal articles, and memoirs that chronicle the singular slave who could write words his captors could not understand. Another feature of Omar’s biography underscored by white observers was his purported conversion to Christianity. Owen’s character in the opera respects Omar’s erudition but dismisses the substance of his beliefs. “He knows a few things, I’ll grant you,” Owen tells his friend Taylor, “but it’s clear he gives allegiance to a false God.” The conventional narrative of Omar’s spiritual journey is typified by an 1863 *New York Observer* article by Presbyterian minister William Plumer. “Gradually he seemed to lose his interest in the Koran, and to show more interest in the Sacred Scriptures, until he finally gave up his faith in Mahomet [Muhammad], and became a believer in Jesus Christ,” Plumer wrote. Islam “has been supplanted in his heart by the better faith in Christ Jesus.”

Omar did claim that he converted to Christianity, and in his later years he regularly attended a Presbyterian church. But Plumer’s certainty that he abdicated Islamic scripture is belied by the fact that of the 13 surviving documents in Omar’s handwriting, the last, written in 1857 when he was in his eighties, is a transcription the *Surah* (chapter from the Qur’an) *al-Nasr*, which celebrates the victory of Islam. Indeed, Omar’s autobiography, which expresses his unequivocal gratitude for Master Owens’ benevolence, begins with a prologue that we might read as slyly subversive anti-slavery protest: an extended quotation of *Surah al-Mulk*, which proclaims Allah to be the Master of all. Religion scholar Kambiz GhaneaBassiri has argued that Omar negotiated the condition of being a Black African Muslim enslaved by white American Christians through Islam’s “poly-religious” capacity. This

Behind the Scenes with *Omar*

REHEARSALS BRING THE OPERA TO LIFE



Kiara Benn (choreographer), Ian Andrew Askew (assistant director), Kaneza Schaal (director), Rhiannon Giddens (co-composer and librettist), John Kennedy (conductor), and Jose Maria Condemi (assistant director) at an early rehearsal of Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar*. / RENEFF-OLSON PRODUCTIONS

Jamez McCorkle as Omar.
STEFAN COHEN



John Kennedy (conductor) and
Rhiannon Giddens
(co-composer and librettist)
RENEFF-OLSON PRODUCTIONS





John Kennedy (conductor)
with James McCorkle (Omar)
STEFAN COHEN



Malcolm MacKenzie (Johnson and Owen cover) and
Rehanna Thelwell (Katie Ellen and Caller) / STEFAN COHEN



Ian Andrew Askew (assistant director) and Kaneza Schaal (director)
RENEFF-OLSON PRODUCTIONS



The creative team and cast at an early rehearsal.
STEFAN COHEN



Brittany Renee (Julie), James McCorkle (Omar),
and Taylor Raven (Fatima) / STEFAN COHEN

Artist Profiles

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



RHIANNON GIDDENS

(Greensboro, North Carolina)

Co-Composer and Librettist

Recent and Upcoming: *Omar*

(Spoleto Festival USA, LA Opera, Boston Lyric Opera); *You're the One* (Nonesuch Records); *Black Lucy and The Bard* (Nashville Ballet, PBS Great Performances); appearances in Ken Burns' *Country Music* miniseries (PBS); *Red Dead Redemption 2* game; *My Music with Rhiannon Giddens* (PBS); *Aria Code* podcast (WQXR)

MacArthur Fellow "Genius" grant recipient 2017

Grammy Award for Best Folk Album (*They're Calling Me Home*)

Grammy Award for Traditional Folk Album (*Genuine Negro Jig*)

Pulitzer Prize for Music (*Omar*)



MICHAEL ABELS

(Phoenix, Arizona)

Co-Composer

Recent and Upcoming:

Co-composer of *Omar* (Spoleto

Festival USA, LA Opera, Boston Lyric Opera); composer of *Delights and Dances* (Atlanta Symphony), *Falling Sky* ballet (Butler University), *At War with Ourselves* (Kronos Quartet), *Bad Education* (HBO); conductor of his score for Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (Chicago Sinfonietta, National Symphony, San Francisco Symphony)

Co-founder of the Composers Diversity Collective, an advocacy group to increase visibility of composers of color in film, game, and streaming media
Pulitzer Prize for Music (*Omar*)



JOHN KENNEDY *

(Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Conductor

Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon Giddens and Michael

Abels' *Omar* (Spoleto USA); Liza Lim's *Tree of Codes* (Spoleto USA); Zemlinsky's *Lyric Symphony* (Spoleto USA); Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline* (West Edge Opera)

Instagram: @johnkennedy_sf

Website: johnkennedymusic.com



JAMEZ MCCORKLE *

Tenor

(New Orleans, Louisiana)

Omar

Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (Spoleto Festival USA, LA Opera, Carolina Performing Arts, Boston Lyric Opera); Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Copenhagen's Royal Danish Opera); Laca in *Jenůfa* (Vlaamse Opera); Froh in *Das Rheingold* (Dallas Symphony Orchestra); Duke of Cornwall in *Lear* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Telemaco in *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* (Theatre Basel); Peter the Honeyman in *Porgy and Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Leonard Woolfe in Kevin Puts' *The Hours* (Philadelphia Orchestra); Britten's *War Requiem* (Israel Philharmonic Orchestra); Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Kentucky Opera); Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (Michigan Opera Theatre)

@operabear



BRITTANY RENEE *†

Soprano

(Minneapolis, Minnesota)

Julie

Recent and

Upcoming: Musetta in

La Bohème (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); *Destiny/Loneliness/Greta* in Terence Blanchard and Kasi Lemmon's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); Sadie Griffith in Blanchard's *Champion* (Metropolitan Opera); Giannetta in *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Metropolitan Opera); Ancella in *Medea* (Metropolitan Opera); Countess Ceprano in *Rigoletto* (Metropolitan Opera)
Instagram: @brittanyreneesoprano
Facebook: @Brittany Renee, Soprano
YouTube: @Brittany Renee



TAYLOR RAVEN †+

Mezzo-Soprano

(Hope Mills, North Carolina)

Fatima

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Charmian

in John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; Sister Mathilde in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; Flora Bervoix in *La Traviata*
Recent and Upcoming: Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Seattle Opera, Finger Lakes Opera, Wolf Trap Opera); Flossilde in *Das Rheingold* (Los Angeles Philharmonic); Angelina in *La Cenerentola* (Kentucky Opera); Joan Clarke in Justine F. Chen's *The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing* (Chicago Opera Theater); title role of *Carmen* (Des Moines Metro Opera); Wowkle in *La Fanciulla del West* (Cleveland Orchestra); Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera); Mallika in *Lakmé* (Washington Concert Opera); Moravec's *Sanctuary Road* (North Carolina Opera); Pauline in *Pique*

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

Dame (Des Moines Metro Opera); Annio in *La Clemenza di Tito* (LA Opera); Tebaldo in *Don Carlo* (LA Opera); Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel* (LA Opera); Concepción in *L'Heure Espagnole* (Wolf Trap)
Merola Opera Program: 2016



DANIEL OKULITCH +
Bass-Baritone
(Ottawa, Canada)
Johnson/Owen
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Donald Gallup in Virgil

Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*; Bosun/Gunner's Mate in *Billy Budd*
Recent and Upcoming: Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Zurich Opera); General Leslie Groves in John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* (Santa Fe Opera); Beck in Joby Talbot and Gene Scheer's *Everest* (BBC Symphony Orchestra); The Protector in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* (Montréal Opera); Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence* (Barcelona's Gran Theatre del Liceu); Axel Oxenstierna in Julien Bilodeau and Michel Marc Bouchard's *La Reine-Garçon* (Montréal); Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera); *Billy Budd* (Festival Enescu)
Merola Opera Program: 2016



REHANNA THELWELL *
Mezzo-Soprano
(Avenel, New Jersey)
Katie Ellen/Caller
Recent and

Upcoming: Title role of *Carmen* (Washington National Opera); Girlfriend/Congregant 3 in Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Dutch National Opera, Washington D.C.); Anna I in *The Seven Deadly Sins* and Dinah in *Trouble in Tahiti* (Madison Opera); Ruby/Sinner in Terence Blanchard and Kasi Lemmons' *Fire Shut*

Up in My Bones (Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); Hippolyta in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Atlanta Opera); Forester's Wife/Owl in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Detroit Opera @Rehanna Thelwell



NORMAN GARRETT *
Baritone
(Lubbock, Texas)
Abdul/Abe
Recent and

Upcoming: Bob in William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA* (LA Opera); Masetto in *Don Giovanni* (Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera); Abdul in Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera); Garby in Will Liverman and DJ King Rico's *The Factotum* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Dr. T in *Proximity* (Chicago); Ned in *Treemonisha* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Seattle Opera); Riolobo in Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Houston Grand Opera); Escamillo in *Carmen* (Opera Orlando); title role of Chausson's *Le Roi Arthus* (Bard SummerScape); Foreman/Adult James in Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Metropolitan Opera, Chicago); title role of *Don Giovanni* (Dayton Opera); Jochanaan in *Salome* (Dayton); Larkens in *La Fanciulla del West* (Munich's Bavarian State Opera); Crown in *Porgy and Bess* (Theater an der Wien, Fort Worth Opera); Jake in *Porgy and Bess* (Elbphilharmonie Orchestra on tour at Lucerne Festival); Jim in *Porgy and Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Lieutenant Gordon in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night* (Washington D.C.)



LAURA KRUMM ♫
Mezzo-Soprano
(Iowa City, Iowa)
Eliza
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*;

Lola in *Cavalleria Rusticana*; Kitchen Boy in *Rusalka*
Recent and Upcoming: Dimitri in *Fedora* (Metropolitan Opera); Siegrune in Act III of *Die Walküre* (Hollywood Bowl); Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, Mendocino Music Festival); Javotte in *Manon* (Metropolitan Opera)
San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship: 2012, 2013
Merola Opera Program: 2011



BARRY BANKS
Tenor
(New York, New York)
Auctioneer/
Taylor
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Arnalta in

L'Incoronazione di Poppea
Recent and Upcoming: Hades in Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* (Metropolitan Opera); Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera); Mime in *Das Rheingold* (Dallas Opera, LA Philharmonic)
Adjunct professor of vocal studies at Peabody Conservatory



EDWARD GRAVES ♫+
Tenor
(Oxon Hill, Maryland)
Amadou
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Gastone in *La Traviata*;

Stone/Eunuch in Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; *Centennial Celebration Concert*; Rodolfo in *Bohème Out of the Box*; Ruiz in *Il Trovatore*; Noble #2 in *Lohengrin*

Recent and Upcoming: Anatol in *Vanessa* (Spoleto Festival USA); Policeman 2 in Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Michigan Opera Theatre, Glimmerglass Festival); title role of Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* (Berkshire Choral International); *What*

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

the Heart Desires (Merola Opera Program); *Back Home: Through the Stage Door* (Merola Opera Program); Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*/Michael Ching's *Buoso's Ghost* (Michigan Opera Theatre); Robbins in *Porgy and Bess* (Seattle Opera); John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* (Florentine Opera)
 San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship: 2022, 2023
 Merola Opera Program: 2021



CALVIN GRIFFIN *♪
 Bass-Baritone
 (Columbus, Ohio)

Olufemi
Recent and Upcoming: Adult Robert in Terence

Blanchard and Kasi Lemmons' *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); Colline in *La Bohème* (Spoleto USA); Tommy McIntyre in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* (Opera Columbus); title role of *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Florentine Opera, Florida Grand Opera); Der Lautsprecher in Viktor Ullmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (Atlanta Opera); Dancaïro in *Carmen* (Atlanta); Laura Karpman's *On the Edge* (Opera Theater of Saint Louis); Death in Gustav Holst's *Sāvitri* (Wolf Trap Opera); Eddie in *The Fix* (Minnesota Opera); Doctor Bartolo in *La Nozze di Figaro* (Arizona Opera)
 Website: calvingriffinbassbaritone.com



KENNETH OVERTON ♫
 Baritone
 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Suleiman
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Frazier in

Porgy and Bess; Sid in *La Fanciulla del West*; Second Mate in *Billy Budd*
Recent and Upcoming: Marcello in *La Bohème* (Intermountain Opera Bozeman); Will Todd's *Migrations* (Welsh National

Opera); Duncan in Boff Whalley's *The Shoemaker* (Welsh National Opera); Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* (Opera Carolina, North Carolina Opera); *Porgy and Bess* (NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra in Hamburg); Strauss' *Daphne* (American Symphony Orchestra); Frazier in *Porgy and Bess* (Metropolitan Opera); Ralph in Douglas Tappin's *I Dream* (Opera Carolina); Homecoming Soldier in Zach Redler's *The Falling and the Rising* (Opera Carolina); Germont in *La Traviata* (Fort Worth Opera); *The Road We Came* (On Site Opera); *A Night of Black Excellence* (Fort Worth Opera)
 Co-founder and artistic director of Opera Noire of New York, a performing arts organization created to empower African American artists
 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance (Richard Danielpour's *The Passion of Yeshua*)
 Instagram: @kennytheeoverton
 X: @KennyOverton
 Facebook: @Kenneth Overton, Baritone



JESSICA-ELISABETH *
 Mezzo-Soprano
 (Whittier, California)

Woman #1 (Act 1)/ Mary #1
Recent and Upcoming:

Engagements with LA Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera Pacific, Pacific Chorale, Albert McNeil Jubilee Singers



THALIA MOORE *♪
 Soprano
 (Loma Linda, California)

Woman #2 (Act 1)
Recent and Upcoming:

Nella in Michael Ching's *Buoso's Ghost* (Cal State Fullerton); recital of African American art songs (Pacific Opera Project)



ALETA BRAXTON *♪
 Mezzo-Soprano
 (Los Angeles, California)

Woman #3/Mary #3
Recent and Upcoming:

Performed in over 160 productions (LA Opera) and over 100 film soundtracks, including *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Nope*
 Member of Los Angeles Master Chorale
 Music faculty member of the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts
 Member of San Francisco Opera Extra Chorus



SYDNEE TURRENTINE-JOHNSON *♪
 Soprano

(Dallas, Texas)

Woman #4/Tess #2/ Chorus Soprano Solo

Recent and Upcoming: The Mother in *Hansel and Gretel*; Anna Gomez in Menotti's *The Consul*



EARL HAZELL ♫
 Basso Cantante
 (New York, New York)

Man #1 (Act 1)/ Renty #1

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Jim in *Porgy and Bess*; *Lohengrin*; *Il Trovatore*; *Fidelio*

Recent and Upcoming: Terence Blanchard's *Champion* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Druid City Opera); Second Man/Whistle Patron in Gregory Spears and Tracy K. Smith's *Castor and Patience* (Cincinnati Opera); Okojie in *The Dowry* workshop (Cincinnati)

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED



CHRISTOPHER CRAIG *
Tenor
(Los Angeles, California)
**Man #2 (Act 1)/
Man #1 (Act 2)**
Recent and

Upcoming: Engagements with LA Opera



JOHN FLUKER * ♪
Tenor
(Los Angeles, California)
Man #3
Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera); vocalist in *One Night in Miami*; *The Harder They Fall*; *Unstable*; *Harriet*; *Just Mercy*; *Euphoria*; *Sing 2*; *Bad Boys for Life*; *Perry Mason*; *The Simpsons*



ALEXANDER TAITE ♪
Tenor
(Oakland, California)
Man #4
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Freed Slave in Philip Glass'

Appomattox; Chorus Seeker in Mark Adamo's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*
Recent and Upcoming: Director of Chorus Eclectic

Vocal and choral coach with the Nova youth choir at Cantare Con Vivo
Music Director for Piccola Carolers
Member of San Francisco Opera Extra Chorus



WILLIAM O'NEILL ♪
Bass-Baritone
(Providence, Rhode Island)
Slaveship Crewman #1/Slaver
San Francisco Opera

Highlights: Ernie in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Manon*; *Pagliacci*; *Show*

Boat; *Celebrating the Voices of San Francisco Opera*

Recent and Upcoming: Emile de Becque in *South Pacific*
Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



CHESTER PIDDUCK ♪
Tenor
(Saint Louis, Missouri)
Slaveship Crewman #2
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Mr. Martini

in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life*; A Waiter in *Arabella*; Parpignol in *La Bohème*; Nantucket Sailor in Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *Moby-Dick*

Recent and Upcoming: *Carmina Burana* (Sing Napa Valley); Stephen Main's *The Image* cantata
Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



WILLIAM LEE BRYAN ♪
Baritone
(Saint Paul, Minnesota)
Man in Crowd
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Officer in

The Barber of Seville; Sergeant in *Manon Lescaut*; various roles in *Billy Budd*; A Captain/Zaretsky in *Eugene Onegin*; Messenger in *La Traviata*

Recent and Upcoming: Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus
Facebook: @williamleebryan



JOANNA LYNN-JACOBS * ♪
Mezzo-Soprano
(Santa Barbara, California)
**Tess #1/
Woman #1 (Act 2)**

Recent and Upcoming: Anthie in Theodosia Roussos' *Polymnia* (UCLA

Center for the Study of Hellenic Culture); Meredith Monk's *Cellular Songs*; Iphigenia of the Sea in Wayne Shorter and esperanza spaulding's *(...Iphigenia)*; Ash Fure and LILLETH's *Hive Rise* installation (The Industry at Los Angeles' MOCA); Elizabeth Lavenza/Female Monster in *Frankenstein* (Four Larks at Beverly Hills' Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts); Alexandra in Monk's *ATLAS* (LA Philharmonic); Opera Singer in *Europeras* (The Industry at LA Philharmonic)



MELISSA DUFORT * ♪
Mezzo-Soprano
(San Francisco, California)
Mary #2
Recent and

Upcoming: Member of San Francisco Opera Extra Chorus



JOHN FULTON ♪
Baritone
(San Francisco, California)
John
San Francisco Opera
Highlights: Aldeano

#1 in Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*

Recent and Upcoming: Senator Potter/General Airlie/Bartender in Gregory Spears' *Fellow Travelers* (Virginia Opera)
Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



ERNEST C. JACKSON JR. * ♪
Tenor
(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
Renty #2
Recent and

Upcoming: Foreman in Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis); Mingo in *Porgy and Bess* (North Carolina Opera, Opera Carolina,

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

Cincinnati Opera, Greensboro Opera, Fort Worth Opera); Nelson in *Porgy and Bess* (Seattle Opera, Atlanta Opera); Policeman/Buddy #2 in Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Pittsburgh Opera, Toledo Opera); Malcolm in *Macbeth* (Empire Opera)



CHLOE VAUGHT *

Soprano
(Los Angeles, California)

Woman #2 (Act 2)

Recent and

Upcoming: Margaret

Bonds' *Credo* (Los Angeles Master Chorale at Los Angeles' Walt Disney Hall); *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*; Member of LA Opera Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, HEX Vocal Ensemble, SAG-AFTRA, AGMA Member of San Francisco Opera Extra Chorus



WILFORD KELLY *J

Bass-Baritone
(Miami, Florida)

Man #2 (Act 2)

Recent and

Upcoming:

Engagements with

San Francisco Conservatory of Music, West Edge Opera, Jacksonville Symphony, San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, Wolf Trap Opera Member of San Francisco Opera Regular Chorus



JERMAINE MCGHEE *

(Charlotte, North Carolina)

Ancestral Figure

Recent and

Upcoming: Ancestral

Figure in Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera); *Kanye West Sunday Service Mother's Day Special*

Instagram: @emeraldj27



KANEZA SCHAAL *

(New York, New York)

Director

Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael

Abels' *Omar* (Spoleto

Festival USA, LA Opera, Carolina Performing Arts, Boston Lyric Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago); William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA* (LA Opera); *KLII* (New York's Public Theater Under the Radar Festival, Minneapolis' Walker Art Center, Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center, Los Angeles' REDCAT); Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Michigan Opera Theatre); *Cartography* (Washington D.C.'s The Kennedy Center, Cleveland's Playhouse Square, Philly Fringe, NYU Abu Dhabi, New York's Victory Theater, Toronto's Young People's Theatre, Ubumuntu Arts Festival); *Triptych* (Los Angeles Philharmonic, University of Michigan, Big Ears Festival, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Amsterdam's Holland Festival, Athens' Stavros Festival, Austin's Texas Performing Arts, Stanford University, Boston's ArtsEmerson); *Maze* (New York's The Shed); *Jack &* (Brooklyn, REDCAT, Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art, On The Boards, Catskill's Lumberyard, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, Cincinnati, Minneapolis, New York Live Arts)



KIARA BENN *

(Brooklyn, New York)

Choreographer

Recent and

Upcoming:

Choreographer of

Rhiannon Giddens

and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera), *just for (you)* (New York's The Performing Garage); choreographer and dancer for *Omar* (Carolina Performing Arts, Boston Lyric Opera); assistant director for *Omar*

(Spoleto Festival USA)

Instagram: @kiaramcb



CHRISTOPHER

MYERS *

(New York, New York)

Designer

Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael

Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera, Boston Lyric Opera); Percent for Art commission (Brooklyn Brownsville Public Library)



AMY RUBIN *

(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Set Designer

Recent and

Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael

Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera, Spoleto Festival USA); Joel Thompson's *Snowy Day* (Houston Grand Opera); Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Michigan Opera Theatre); Paola Prestini's *Aging Magician* (San Diego Opera); *Lucy* (Audible Theatre); *Most Happy* (Williamstown Festival); *Octet* (Signature Theatre/Berkeley Rep); *Cyrano* (The New Group); *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* (Signature Theatre); *Gloria: A Life* (New York's Daryl Roth Theatre); *Miles for Mary* (Playwrights Horizons); *Acquanetta* (Prototype Festival) Assistant Professor of Theater at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee Website: amycrubin.com



APRIL M. HICKMAN *

(Denver, Colorado)

Co-Costume

Designer

Recent and

Upcoming: Costume

designs for *The*

Thanksgiving Play (Dorset Theatre Festival); Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera, Spoleto Festival USA, Boston Lyric Opera); *Trouble in Mind*

ARTIST PROFILES CONTINUED

(Dallas Theater Center); *Nine Night* (Round House Theatre); associate costume designer for *The Shark Is Broken* Assistant Professor in the Practice of Costume Design at Wesleyan University @Aprilmhickmandesign



MICHELINE RUSSELL-BROWN *
(Chicago, Illinois)

Co-Costume Designer

Recent and Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera, Boston Lyric Opera); costumer for *The Good Fight*



PABLO SANTIAGO *
(Chiapas, Mexico)

Lighting Designer

Recent and Upcoming: Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* (LA

Opera); *The Threepenny Opera* (Boston Lyric Opera); Ellen Reid's *p r i s m* (LA Opera, Prototype Festival, Sao Paulo); *Desert In* (Boston Lyric Opera); Mazzoli's *Proving Up* (Opera Omaha, New York's Miller Theatre); Ted Hearne's *Place* (BAM); *Giustino* (Long Beach Opera); John Corigliano's *The Lord of Cries* (Santa Fe Opera); *Rev 23* (Prototype Festival); *The Valkyries* (Hollywood Bowl, Detroit Opera)

Instagram: @pablosdesign

Website: pablosantiagodesign.com



JOSHUA HIGGASON *
(Cambridge, Massachusetts)

Projection Designer

Recent and Upcoming: Rhiannon

Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (LA Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Spoleto USA); Offenbach's *Orpheus in der Unterwelt* (Vienna's

Volksooper); Strauss' *Die Ägyptische Helena* (Milan's Teatro alla Scala); *Falstaff* (Florence); *Così fan tutte* (Florence); Purcell's *King Arthur* (Berlin State Opera); Michael Gordon's *Acquanetta* (Bard SummerScape); Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson's *Blue* (Detroit Opera); Michael R. Jackson's *White Girl in Danger* (New York); Designer of augmented reality and projections for *Parsifal* (Bayreuth Festspiele)

Teacher of design at MIT

@videodesignernyc

Website: joshuahiggason.net



JOHN KEENE

(Lancaster, Pennsylvania)

Chorus Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: *Don Giovanni*; Bright

Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*; *Eun Sun Kim Conducts Verdi*; John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Eugene Onegin*; *Dialogues of the Carmelites*; *La Traviata*; *Orpheus and Eurydice*; *Madame Butterfly*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*; Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*; *100th Anniversary Concert*; *Il Trovatore*; Mason Bates and Mark Campbell's *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*; *Lohengrin*

Recent and Upcoming: *The Elixir of Love*; *The Magic Flute*; Kaija Saariaho, Sofi Oksanen, and Aleksis Barrière's *Innocence*

Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and San Francisco Conservatory of Music Voice Concerto Competition judge

Instagram: @keenejohn



DAVE MAIER

(El Cerrito, California)

Fight Director

San Francisco Opera

Highlights: John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Carmen*;

Tosca; the *Ring* cycle; *Pagliacci*; *Rigoletto*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Billy Budd*
Recent and Upcoming: *Romeo and Juliet* (Opera San José); *POTUS* (Berkeley Rep); *Hamlet* (Marin Shakes); *Twelfth Night* (Marin Shakes); *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (Oakland Theater Project); *King Lear* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare); *The Taming of the Shrew* (Santa Cruz Shakespeare)

First performance: Spoleto Festival, USA Charleston, South Carolina, May 27, 2022

First San Francisco Opera performance: November 5, 2023.

Personnel: 12 principals, 32 choristers (including 18 chorus soloists), 4 dancers, 2 supernumeraries; **50 total**

Orchestra: 2 flutes (1 doubling alto flute, 1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets (1 doubling Eb clarinet, 1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, 3 horns, 2 trumpets, 2 trombones, 1 contrabass trombone, 1 timpani, 3 percussion, 1 piano, 1 harp, 40 strings (12 first violins, 9 second violins, 7 violas, 7 cellos, 5 basses); **62 total**

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In Memoriam

We honor the members of San Francisco Opera we lost this past year.



RON SCHERL

James Bowman, countertenor

An Oxford graduate and a Westminster Abbey chorister, Bowman first attracted attention with Benjamin Britten's English Opera Group in 1967, making his stage debut as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Vel-

vety timbre and admirable flexibility were expected from the still-relatively new countertenor voice type at the time, but the sheer amplitude of Bowman's voice was astonishing—indeed, unique. In addition, his imposing height enhanced his characterization with all the necessary regality. Among his other early successes was playing the endearing shepherd Endimione in Cavalli's *La Calisto* at Glyndebourne, where his scenes with Janet Baker's Diana were gloriously sung. As Bowman continued to appear with major companies in America (San Francisco Opera as Oberon in 1971, Tolomeo in *Giulio Cesare* in 1982) and in Europe, he repeatedly filled sizeable theaters as easily as more "standard" voice types. He made a significant impact even when appearing with the great Marilyn Horne, his colleague in the United States premiere of Vivaldi's *Orlando Furioso* (Dallas, 1980). Bowman's performances made clear that roles previously assigned to female mezzos and contraltos could be assigned to him and the other countertenors who would eventually follow him. A pillar of the early music scene in Britain and internationally, he also appeared in the world premieres of Britten's *Death in Venice* (Aldeburgh) and Sir Peter Maxwell Davies's *Taverner* (London). His more than 150 recordings cover the gamut of countertenor repertoire. Possessing a famous sense of humor and enormous charm, Bowman was also a cherished adviser for young singers. England's Vache Baroque Festival inaugurated a young artist program named for him in 2021.

Grace Bumbry, mezzo-soprano and soprano

Having won attention as a teenager on "Arthur Godfrey's Talent Scouts," Bumbry became a prized pupil of Lotte Lehmann, who knew that European houses would provide Bumbry with the "big break" she needed. In 1960, at



HANK KRANZLER

only age 23, she made a sensational operatic debut in Paris as Amneris in *Aida*. The entire musical world would learn her name the following year when, as Venus in *Tannhäuser*, she became the first Black artist to perform at the Bayreuth Festival. Stupendously charismatic,

Bumbry won that famously demanding audience with her sumptuous, wide-ranging voice. Her historic triumph at Bayreuth moved the career into high gear, with Bumbry exuding an aura of a bold, glamorously jet-setting diva who sang exclusively star mezzo parts. One of them, *Carmen*, marked her debut in San Francisco in 1966. The following year, she was both Laura (*La Gioconda*) and Lady Macbeth, the latter also a huge success for her in Salzburg and at the Metropolitan Opera. Once she and an equally celebrated American mezzo, Shirley Verrett, began taking on soprano roles, they gave a series of exciting duo appearances, including a San Francisco Opera concert in 1984. Three years later, Bumbry made her final appearance here, starring as Abigaille (*Nabucco*). A favorite in virtually every other prestigious theater, Bumbry documented her artistry extensively, leaving particularly memorable recordings of two signature roles, Verdi's Eboli in *Don Carlo* and Amneris.



ROBERT CAHEN

Soňa Červená, mezzo-soprano

Červená began her distinguished stage career in her native Prague before moving on to the Berlin State Opera. She was a resident lyric mezzo there in 1962, when she was able to escape from East to West Berlin.

That same year she launched a wonderfully varied, two-decade association with San Francisco Opera. Her first season saw her debuting as *Carmen* (mainstage and on tour to Los Angeles) and also singing Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (Los Angeles, San Diego), but it soon became evident that her considerable gifts could leave a greater

mark in important supporting roles. She sang 25 of them here, concluding her tenure during the 1980–81 Season as Flora Bervoix. Very much a chameleon vocally and physically, Červená could transform herself into the sophisticated actress Clairon in *Capriccio*, the imperious Herodias in *Salome*, and the tragic Countess Geschwitz in *Lulu*, but she was just as adept playing more ordinary women, whether Marthe in *Faust*, the Hostess of the Inn in *Boris Godunov*, or Grandmother Buryjovka in *Jenůfa*. Her repertoire of more than 100 roles brought her to the Wexford Festival (where she was reportedly unforgettable as the vicious Kabanicha in *Kát'a Kabanová*). She had a close relationship with Oper Frankfurt, while also appearing at the Bayreuth, Glyndebourne, and Edinburgh festivals, as well as the major companies of Milan, Amsterdam, and Paris. Her later years included appearances as an actress (Hamburg, Prague). Červená was still performing as recently as 2022, in her mid-nineties. In a Czech song (accessible on YouTube), she sings exclusively in chest voice but with great charm and indomitable spirit.



MARTY SOHL

**Graham Clark,
tenor**

Clark's versatility was evident at San Francisco Opera, where he portrayed the dashing Albert Gregor in *The Makropulos Case* (1993), the riotously funny yet sinister Witch in *Hansel and Gretel* (2002), and the drunken

Piet the Pot in Ligeti's superhumanly difficult *Le Grand Macabre* (U.S. premiere, 2004). In performance, conquering superhuman challenges came easily to the English tenor. However exacting the role, he could illuminate it with a brightly penetrating voice and crystalline projection of the text. A former sports teacher, Clark was also a phenomenally skilled physical actor. He made his international reputation in Wagner, particularly at the Bayreuth Festival, where he sang six roles in 16 seasons. His matchlessly venomous Mime in *Siegfried* was also heard in 22 other major houses. He triumphed repeatedly as the Captain (*Wozzeck*), and he proved equally memorable as the venomous Bégearss in the world premiere of John Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles*. In London, Clark earned huge popularity at both London's Royal Opera House and English National Opera. After initially singing a good deal of lyric tenor heroes at ENO, he concluded that his voice lacked "red wine and sunshine" and began con-

centrating on character parts. In addition to six major roles at the Metropolitan Opera, Clark was featured at Milan's Teatro alla Scala, the Opéra National de Paris, and the major houses of Germany, Spain, Belgium, and Israel. When Clark's passing was announced, Royal Opera House Music Director Antonio Pappano hailed him as "a mesmerising [*sic*] stage presence and gifted with a natural exuberance that kept everyone around him positive and always laughing. A star in every way."



MARTY SOHL

**Robert Hale,
bass-baritone**

A native Texan, Hale learned his trade at New York City Opera, where he sang leading bass roles for a decade, beginning in 1967. As Don Giovanni, as well as in bel canto repertoire, Hale rapidly established himself as

an artist of superb vocal, musical, and interpretive resources. Beginning in Wuppertal, Germany, where he sang his first Dutchman in 1978, he began taking on the *Heldenbariton* parts that would bring him great acclaim internationally. Hale was closely identified with both Wotan (San Francisco Opera debut, 1989 *Ring* cycle) and the Dutchman (Metropolitan Opera debut, 1990). In addition to a lengthy association with the Deutsche Oper Berlin, he starred in the major houses of Berlin, London, Vienna, Barcelona, Moscow, and Sydney, among many others. He continued to sing Italian and French roles, including Escamillo in *Carmen*, which marked his return to San Francisco in 1991. Invariably an eloquent, fearless singing actor, he created in-depth physical characterizations. He proved deeply impressive as Duke Adorno in Nikolaus Lehnhoff's definitive 2005 Salzburg Festival of Schreker's rarely heard melodrama *Die Gezeichneten*, one of disappointingly few Hale portrayals on commercial DVD. Fortunately, he can be heard on disc as Wotan in the *Ring*, the Dutchman in *Der Fliegende Holländer*, and Jochanaan in *Salome*. Hale's musicianship and professionalism earned the respect of some of the most distinguished conductors of our time, including Christoph von Dohnányi, Wolfgang Sawallisch, James Levine, John Eliot Gardiner, and Giuseppe Sinopoli. He was a superb colleague, and the aura he communicated offstage was that of a true gentleman.



KEN HOWARD

**Berit Lindholm,
soprano**

Although Swedish soprano Lindholm’s career included successes in Verdi and Puccini, she made her biggest impact in German repertoire. Her voluminous instrument boasted not only an exciting top but also a particularly warm, almost mezzo-like color in the lower octave. Enhancing Lindholm’s vocalism were notable dramatic gifts. The Stockholm native debuted in 1963 at her hometown’s Royal Opera and was already singing internationally by 1966, when London heard her as Strauss’ Chrysothemis in *Elektra*. In 1970, she was San Francisco Opera’s *Siegfried* Brünnhilde, and two years later she and her compatriot Birgit Nilsson shared Sieglinde and Brünnhilde in the Company’s *Ring* (Lindholm’s Metropolitan Opera debut in 1975 was as Brünnhilde, opposite Nilsson’s Sieglinde). Other Wagner successes included starring roles in Chicago and the major houses of Austria, France, Germany, Switzerland, and Spain. Hugely admired at the Bayreuth Festival, Lindholm appeared there from 1967 to 1973. She remained loyal to Stockholm, where prominent among her many successes were role debuts as Isolde and *Elektra*. In addition to her Wagner heroines (which also included Senta, Venus, Elisabeth, Ortrud, and Kundry), she also triumphed repeatedly throughout Europe as Salome. She was one of few singers who performed all three principal female roles in *Elektra*. On disc Lindholm can be heard as Helmwige in the Solti *Ring* and, more prominently, as Cassandre in the first complete recording of Berlioz’s *Les Troyens*. Beloved for her captivatingly down-to-earth personality (she hoped to be remembered chiefly as “a good grandmother”), Lindholm was decorated as one of Sweden’s “Royal Court Singers” in 1976.



**John Priest,
technical director**

In opera, it is often the artists seen and heard onstage or in the pit who earn the adjective “legendary.” That stature is more rarely attained by someone whose gifts are utilized entirely behind the scenes of an opera house. Such a figure was Priest, who made history at San Francisco Opera in 1966 when then General Director Kurt

Herbert Adler hired him as the Company’s first full-time technical director. Current General Director Matthew Shilvoek has noted that “John made an indelible impact in defining the Company we know and treasure today.” Priest earned deep respect for his all-encompassing knowledge of what a major opera company needs to function with optimum efficiency. San Francisco Opera has him to thank for the smooth execution of countless major developments in the Company’s technical operation, including moving the carpentry shop out of the Opera House to make room for offices; the acquisition of the Indiana Street Scene Shop, which consolidated support spaces that the Company had around the city; and the addition of the “Patch” at the back of the Opera House, adding critically needed backstage and office space at the same time that the San Francisco Symphony was moving to Davies Symphony Hall. Priest retired as technical director in 1993 but returned as Opera House Project Coordinator from 1994 to 1998, supervising the move out of the Opera House for seismic retrofit. Throughout his career, Priest was a constant source of inspiration and wise advice for opera professionals across America. His legacy to San Francisco Opera includes his son, Mark Kotschnig, a stagehand since 1996 and a full-time member in the Props department since 2002.



MARTY SOHL

**Gabriele Schnaut,
mezzo-soprano and soprano**

In 1991, when Schnaut made her 1991 American debut at San Francisco Opera as Isolde, it was immediately evident that an important artist had entered the international Wagnerian ranks. The size and richness of Schnaut’s sound impressed as deeply as her authoritative musicianship and galvanizing presence. The German singer had arrived in San Francisco after 15 years of vital experience in major German houses. She began as a mezzo-soprano in 1976, working first in Stuttgart and then in Darmstadt. By 1985 she had moved into dramatic soprano parts, making her mark as Ortrud, Brünnhilde, and Isolde. Schnaut was a greatly admired figure in every leading German house, particularly those of Düsseldorf, Hamburg, and Munich. Her lengthy association with the Bayreuth Festival, which extended from 1977 to 2000, had much to do with sustaining her reputation as one of her generation’s most celebrated Wagnerians. Like Birgit Nilsson before her, Schnaut was also successful as *Elektra*

(Metropolitan Opera, Munich, other major houses), the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Metropolitan Opera, Vienna), and the title role of *Turandot*, the latter her only other role in San Francisco (1998) and one she also sang at Lyric Opera of Chicago and at the Salzburg Festival (DVD). In 2008, she moved back to dramatic mezzo-soprano parts, excelling as Kostelnička, Herodias, and Klytämnestra. In addition to Wagner, she can be heard on disc in much 20th-century opera. In contrast to her imperious onstage persona, Schnaut offstage was a vibrant, utterly irresistible human being, whose alluring speaking voice instantly brought everyone around her into her orbit.



IRA NOWINSKI

Renata Scotto,
soprano

Renata Scotto was “an original”—truly an artist quite unlike any other. During her lengthy career she made her own rules, constantly reinventing herself in response to her own artistic interests. The luminous-voiced

young Scotto first gained notice as one of Italy's most beguiling, lyric-coloratura sopranos, appearing at Milan's Teatro alla Scala in 1953, when only 19 (as Walter in *La Wally*, opposite Renata Tebaldi and Mario Del Monaco). Four years later she skyrocketed to stardom replacing Maria Callas in *La Sonnambula* at the Edinburgh Festival. When Puccini roles introduced her to America (Mimì in Chicago in 1960, Cio-Cio-San at the Met in 1965), she illuminated the music by approaching it with a technique securely anchored in *bel canto*. Having debuted in San Francisco with her incomparable Cio-Cio-San (1974), her return engagements displayed exciting evidence of her gradual acquisition of heavier repertoire—the *Trovatore* Leonora, Adriana Lecouvreur, and *Gioconda*. A mezzo role, Massenet's Charlotte, marked her final San Francisco Opera appearance (1985). Scotto, who earned acclaim at virtually every leading American and European house, enjoyed a 22-year association with the Metropolitan Opera, where her many PBS telecasts significantly raised the prevailing standard of operatic acting on television. The Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Vienna, and London all witnessed Scotto's miraculous development over time from a *leggero* singer to an interpreter of lyric, then spinto and dramatic-coloratura parts. She documented virtually all of her extensive repertoire, whether on LP, CD, or video. In later years, this electrifying, acutely intel-

ligent, passionately committed artist made two new careers, working internationally as both a highly successful director and a sought-after vocal coach.



RON SCHERL

Virginia Zeani,
soprano

In 1957 Romanian soprano Virginia Zeani made operatic history, creating the central role of Blanche de la Force in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* at Milan's Teatro alla Scala. Twenty-five years later she returned to the

Poulenc work as Mother Marie, making her San Francisco Opera debut in that formidable role. One of the most exquisitely beautiful, vocally gifted sopranos of her time, and blessed with exceptional musical curiosity, Zeani sang coloratura, lyric, and spinto parts during her 34 years onstage. Having studied in Bucharest and Milan, Zeani (*née* Zehan) achieved instant stardom in 1948, making her last-minute operatic debut at age 22 singing *La Traviata* in Bologna. Violetta subsequently became her signature role in 648 performances, heard at the Met, London, Vienna, Paris, and the Bolshoi, among many other major theaters worldwide. Zeani's 69 roles extended from Handel's Cleopatra to the gamut of 19th-century heroines (whether in *bel canto*, Verdi, French repertoire, and even Wagner) and numerous 20th-century parts, several of which were written especially for Zeani. She was celebrated in all the major Italian houses and was a particular favorite at Rome's Teatro dell'Opera where she starred in resurrections of Rossini's *Otello* and Verdi's *Alzira*. Sadly neglected by recording companies, Zeani possessed a temperament that didn't lend itself to fighting for professional opportunities. She enjoyed her status as a “connoisseur's singer,” as well as her happy marriage to bass Nicola Rossi-Lemeni. A passionate, inordinately generous, immeasurably warm-hearted woman, Zeani was greatly loved during more than two decades on the voice faculty of Indiana University. ❁

Roger Pines is a contributing writer to Opera News, Opera (U.K.), programs of opera companies internationally, and major recording labels. A faculty member of Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, he has also been a panelist on the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts' "Opera Quiz" every season since 2006.

1992

Sanford Sylvan portrayed Leon Klinghoffer in *The Death of Klinghoffer*, opera by **John Adams** with libretto by **Alice Goodman**.

PHOTO: MARTY SOHL



Witnesses to History

This season, three of San Francisco Opera's mainstage productions are new works co-commissioned by the Company from composers Mason Bates, Rhiannon Giddens, Michael Abels, Kaija Saariaho, and librettists Mark Campbell, Giddens, Sofi Oksanen, and Aleksis Barrière. This unprecedented proportion of new works to classics to inaugurate the Company's second century is both unprecedented in San Francisco Opera history and supports its long-standing commitment to expanding the operatic repertoire and telling new stories by the leading artists of our time.

Of San Francisco Opera's, to date, 30 commissions and co-commissions, these 12 works inspired by real people—witnesses to history such as Omar ibn Said or Steve Jobs—have transformed actual events into reverberant, communal experiences in ways that only opera makes possible.

1996

Robert Orth as Harvey Milk, **Juliana Gondek** as Dianne Feinstein, and **Gidon Saks** as Mayor George Moscone in *Harvey Milk*, opera by **Stewart Wallace** with libretto by **Michael Korie**.

PHOTO: RON SCHERL



2005

Gerald Finley as J. Robert Oppenheimer in *Doctor Atomic*, opera by **John Adams** with libretto by **Peter Sellars**.

PHOTO: TERRENCE MCCARTHY

2000

Frederic von Stade as Mrs. Patrick de Rocher and **Susan Graham** as Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking*, opera by **Jake Heggie** with libretto by **Terrence McNally**.

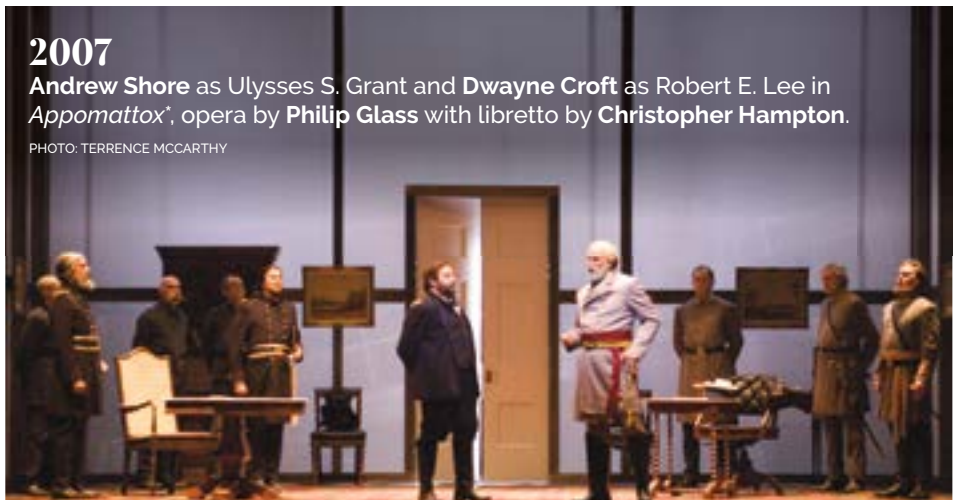
PHOTO: KEN FRIEDMAN



2007

Andrew Shore as Ulysses S. Grant and **Dwayne Croft** as Robert E. Lee in *Appomattox*, opera by **Philip Glass** with libretto by **Christopher Hampton**.

PHOTO: TERRENCE MCCARTHY



2011

Thomas Hampson as Rick Rescorla in *Heart of a Soldier*, opera by **Christopher Theofanidis** with libretto by **Donna Di Novelli**. PHOTO: CORY WEAVER



2022

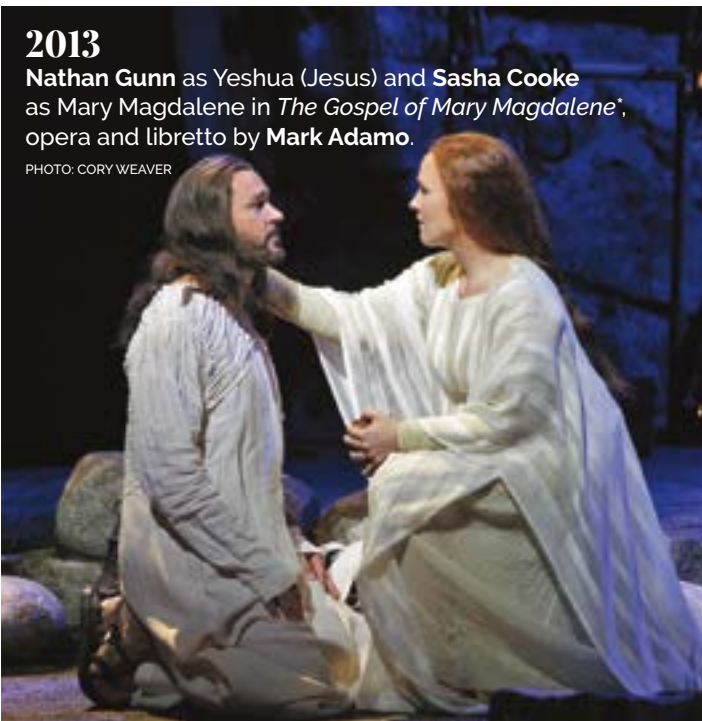
Amina Edris and **Gerald Finley** as the title roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*, opera by **John Adams**.

PHOTO: CORY WEAVER

2013

Nathan Gunn as Yeshua (Jesus) and **Sasha Cooke** as Mary Magdalene in *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, opera and libretto by **Mark Adamo**.

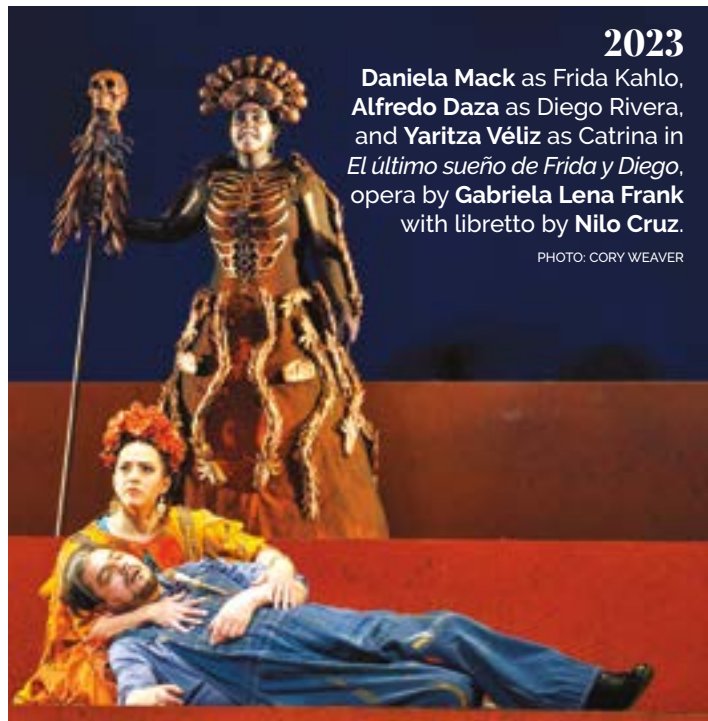
PHOTO: CORY WEAVER



2023

Daniela Mack as Frida Kahlo, **Alfredo Daza** as Diego Rivera, and **Yaritza Véliz** as Catrina in *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, opera by **Gabriela Lena Frank** with libretto by **Nilo Cruz**.

PHOTO: CORY WEAVER



2017

J'Nai Bridges as Josefa Segovia and **Julia Bullock** as Dame Shirley in *Girls of the Golden West*, opera by **John Adams** with libretto by **Peter Sellars**.

PHOTO: STEFAN COHEN



2023

John Moore as Steve Jobs in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, opera by **Mason Bates** with libretto by **Mark Campbell**.

PHOTO: CORY WEAVER

2023

Jamez McCorkle as Omar ibn Said in *Omar*, opera by **Rhiannon Giddens** and **Michael Abels** with libretto by **Rhiannon Giddens**.

PHOTO: CORY WEAVER/LA OPERA



Your Guide to San Francisco Opera at the War Memorial Opera House

WELCOME! WE'RE SO PLEASED YOU'RE HERE.

CONNECT TO SAN FRANCISCO OPERA after the performance! Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok @sfopera for your insider's look!



COAT CHECK

Check your coat at the north and south ends of the Main Lobby. For the safety and comfort of our audience, large bags are strongly discouraged and are subject to search.

DINING

CAFES: Enjoy a variety of sandwiches, snacks, and refreshments
Café Express (Lower Level, Open 2 hours before curtain)
Dress Circle Lounge (Level 3, South, Open 1 hour before curtain)

RESTAURANTS: Dine pre-show or reserve a table for intermission.

Prelude at The Opera House • Lower Lounge

Prelude at the Opera House (formerly known as The Café at the Opera) offers a changing seasonal buffet (including brunch) and elevated à la carte dishes.

North Box Restaurant and Bar • North Mezzanine Level

Overlooking the magnificent main lobby, North Box Restaurant offers California cuisine with global influences and is an ideal destination for pre-performance and intermission dining.

Restaurants are open two hours prior to performances.

Reservations are strongly recommended.

Reserve a table online at sfopera.com/dine or email

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or call (415) 861-8150 (email preferred over phone).

PRE-ORDER!

Avoid lines during intermission by pre-ordering beverages and snacks with a food and beverage server upon your arrival at any point of service.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA SHOP

Take home a memento! Located in the South Mezzanine lobby, the Opera Shop sells branded merchandise, jewelry, books, and gift items. The Shop is open 90 minutes before performances, at intermissions, and afterward. All proceeds benefit San Francisco Opera.

ALL ARE WELCOME. HELP US MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE!

- Turn off all electronic devices during the performance, including digital watches and cell phones. We ask this out of respect for the artists and for everyone in the theater enjoying a live, in-the-moment experience.
- Take photos before or after the performance, during intermission, or during the bows, and leave cameras and recording devices off during performances.
- Enjoy food and drinks, purchased onsite pre-show and during intermission, before entering the theater. You may bring drinks into the theater, but please be mindful of your fellow patrons.
- As a courtesy to those who may have fragrance allergies, please avoid wearing perfume or cologne.
- Get to know and enjoy this wonderful community of opera lovers. Say hello to one another pre-show, at intermission, or leaving the theater.

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

FIRST AID STATION

Our First Aid Station is located on the South Lower Level. In case of emergency, please ask the nearest usher to assist you.

ACCESSIBILITY

San Francisco Opera is committed to providing easy access for all of our patrons. If you need assistance for a future performance, please contact the Opera Box Office prior to your visit so that we can ensure your comfort.

FOR PATRONS USING WHEELCHAIRS, San Francisco Opera offers wheelchair-accessible seats at a range of prices. All entrances at the War Memorial Opera House are wheelchair accessible. Wheelchair-accessible stalls in restrooms can be found on all floors (except the Main Lobby and 5th floor Balcony levels). Accessible drinking fountains are located on all floors except the Balcony Level.

LARGE-PRINT CAST SHEETS AND SYNOPSES

Visit the North Lobby coat check for large-print versions.

LISTENING DEVICES

Assistive listening devices are available at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit required.

LIVE TITLES: TEXT-TO-VOICE SUPERTITLES

Headsets that provide a spoken version of the supertitles are available at the North Lobby coat check.

OPERA GLASSES

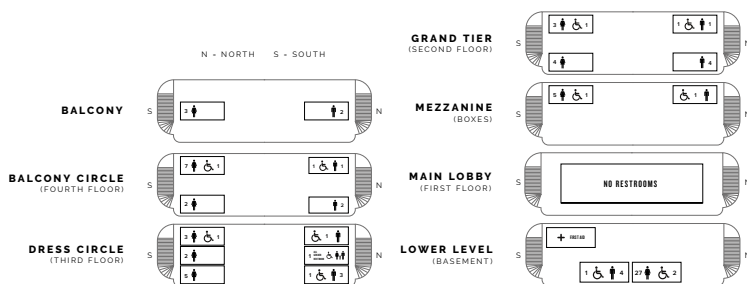
See the action up close and rent a pair of opera glasses for \$5 at the North Lobby coat check. ID deposit is requested. Credit card only.

LOST AND FOUND

Items may be turned in or 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).

RESTROOMS

Restrooms are located on all levels of the Opera House except on the Orchestra Level (Main Lobby).



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Meet Your Civic Center Ambassadors!



RIDESHARE

Direct your rideshare service to pick up and drop off using the white loading zone at 455 Franklin Street (located behind the Opera House).

TAXI SERVICE

Patrons desiring a taxi after a performance should come to the Grove Street Taxi Ramp located on the south side of the Opera House. Taxis cannot be guaranteed as service is based on availability of licensed taxis. Please note the Taxi Ramp is not staffed.

SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

Owned and operated by the City and County of San Francisco through the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco

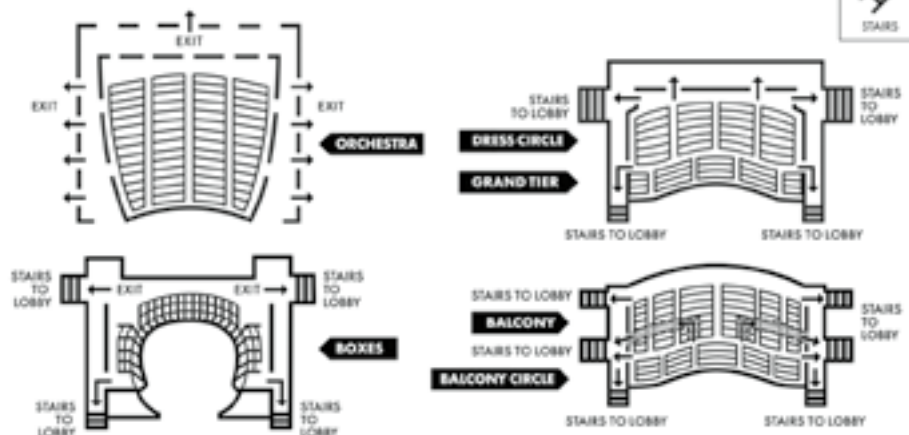
The Honorable London N. Breed, Mayor

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SAN FRANCISCO WAR MEMORIAL AND PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE EXIT DIAGRAM



PATRONS, ATTENTION PLEASE! FIRE NOTICE: Please note the nearest exit. In an emergency, follow any lighted exit sign to the street. **WALK**, do not run, to the nearest exit. Disabled patrons, proceed to nearest elevator lobby and await assistance.

The San Francisco War Memorial acknowledges that we are on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. As guests, we recognize that we benefit from living and working on their traditional homeland. We wish to pay our respects by acknowledging the ancestors, elders, and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and by affirming their sovereign rights as First Peoples.

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Assistant to the Managing Director: Artistic

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Senior Marketing Coordinator, Brand and Loyalty

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Engagement and Partnerships

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Cameron Daly, *Music Operations Associate*

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Krishna Montmorency, *Assistant Orchestra Librarian*

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and Revenue Management*

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Amir Magid, *Donor Benefits Coordinator*

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*Senior Production Staff Member

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Celine Strouts,

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Ziggy Tomcich,

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Daniel Friedman, *Assistant Lighting Designer*

Sasha Finley, *Lighting Intern*

Natalia Carlson, *Hemsley Lighting Intern*

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Frederick Wielandt,

Assistant Head of Properties

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Jacob Zdunich, *Rehearsal Coordinator: Personnel*

Liz R. Ray, *Rehearsal Coordinator: Administration*

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Steve McNally, *Scenic Artist in Charge*

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*Production Stage Manager**

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Jayne O'Hara, Thea Railey,

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E. Reed Fisher, Jennifer Harber,

Dan Wallace Miller,

Roy Rallo, Morgan Robinson,

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Collette Berg, Jonathan S. Campbell,

Megan Coutts, Jayme O'Hara,

Thea Railey, Anna Reetz,

Assistant Stage Managers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

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Ryan O'Steen, *Production Manager**

Lawren Gregory, *Assistant Technical Director*

Scott Cavallo, *Assistant Technical Director*

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Robert Horek, David McKain,

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Jeanna Parham,

Department Head of Wigs, Hair, and Makeup

Christina Martin,

Assistant Department Head of

Wigs, Hair, and Makeup

Dr. Myron Marx, *Company Medical Adviser*

Seyfarth Shaw LLP, *Counsel*

Armanino LLP, *Independent Public Accountants*

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Dr. Mark Almond,

Dr. Robert Harrison,

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Yamaha is the Official Piano of San Francisco Opera

Pianos supplied by Piedmont Piano

2023-24 Artists

PRINCIPAL ARTISTS

Julie Adams *^
 Hadleigh Adams *^
 Roberto Alagna *
 Andrea Alderman
 Angela Arnold
 Javier Arrey
 Zhengyi Bai *^
 Barry Banks
 Joseph Barron
 C. Michael Belle
 Gabrielle Beteag *^
 David Bizic *
 Angel Blue
 Aleksey Bogdanov *^
 Aleta Braxton *
 Bille Bruley *
 William Lee Bryan
 Cheryl Cain
 Sarah Cambridge *^
 Victor Cardamone *^
 Maire Therese Carmack *
 Arturo Chacón-Cruz *^
 Sarah Coit
 Sasha Cooke
 Christopher Craig *
 Johanne Daniel
 Claire de Sevigne *
 Camilo Delgado Diaz **
 Ashley Dixon *^
 Ruxandra Donose
 Melissa Dufort *
 Marina Dumont **
 Jessica-Elisabeth *
 John Fluker *
 Julie Fuchs *
 John Fulton
 Christina Gansch
 Norman Garrett *
 Margaret Genovese
 Rod Gilfry
 Kevin Gino
 Renato Girolami *
 Edward Graves *^
 Calvin Griffin *
 Jongwon Han †
 Stella Hannock
 Earl Hazell
 Julie Hega **
 Jonah Hoskins *
 Vilma Jää **
 Christopher Jackson
 Ernest C. Jackson, Jr. *

Joanna Lynn-Jacobs *
 Michael Jankosky
 Silvie Jensen
 James Johnson ~
 Sydnee Turrentine-Johnson *
 Wilford Kelly *
 Hyona Kim
 Simon Kluth **
 Bojan Knežević
 Laura Krumm *^
 Aleksandra Kurzak
 Judit Kutasi **
 Joseph Lattanzi *^
 Adam Lau *^
 Randy Lee
 Thomas Lehman *
 Christine Lyons
 Daniela Mack *^
 Malcolm MacKenzie
 Jamez McCorkle *
 Jermaine McGhee **
 Liesl McPherrin
 Courtney Miller
 John Moore *
 Thalia Moore *
 Beate Mordal **
 Angela Moser
 Brian Mulligan
 Miles Mykkanen *
 Daniel Okulitch *^
 Simon O'Neill *^
 William O'Neill
 Kenneth Overton
 Andrew Thomas Pardini
 Pene Pati *^
 Amitai Pati *^
 George Petean *
 Chester Pidduck
 Robert Pomakov
 Laurel Cameron Porter
 Nikola Printz *^
 Taylor Raven *^
 Brittany Renee *
 Arianna Rodriguez *^
 Mikayla Sager *^
 Moisés Salazar *^
 Ekaterina Semenchuk
 Lucy Shelton *
 Alek Shrader *^
 Kristinn Sigmundsson
 Anna Simińska *
 Olivia Smith *^
 Whitney Steele

Alexander Taite
 Nicholas Tamagna *
 Rehanna Thelwell *
 Jere Torkelsen
 Lauri Vasar **
 Carlo Vistoli *
 Chloe Vaught *
 Wei Wu *
 Kyle van Schoonhoven *^
 Jesslyn Thomas
 Kwangchul Youn *
 Slávka Zámečnicková **

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 John Kennedy *
 Eun Sun Kim
 Clément Mao-Takacs *
 Christopher Moulds
 Ramón Tebar *

PRODUCTION

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 Suzanne Andrade
 Sir David McVicar
 Simon Stone *

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 David Alden
 Kevin Newbury
 Roy Rallo
 Peter Relton *
 Tobias Ribitzki *
 Kaneza Schaal *
 Daniel Slater

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 Maxine Braham *
 Timothy Claydon *

KEY:

* San Francisco Opera Debut
 ** U.S. Debut
 * Former Adler Fellow
 † Current Adler Fellow
 ^ Former Merola Opera Program participant
 ~ Solo Dancer
 Cover Artist

Chorus

John Keene, Chorus Director
 Fabrizio Corona, Associate Chorus Master

REGULAR CHORUS

Nadima Avakian	Bojan Knežević *
Buffy Baggott	Elisabeth Rom Lucio
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C. Michael Belle	Angela Eden Moser *
William Lee Bryan *	Sally Mouzon
Cheryl Cain	Sarah Nadreau
Janet Campbell	Erin Neff
Alan Cochran	William O'Neill *
Sara Colburn t	Andrew Thomas Pardini *
Edith Dowd	Rachelle Perry
Anders Fröhlich	Phillip Pickens
John Fulton *	William Pickersgill
Kevin Gino *	Chester Pidduck *
Stella Hannock *	Laurel Cameron Porter
Daniel Harper	Valery Portnov
Christopher Jackson *	Carole Schaffer t
Michael Jankosky *	Jonathan Smucker
Silvie Jensen *	Whitney Steele *
Wilford Kelly *	Jesslyn Thomas *
Claire Kelm	Jere Torkelsen *
Crystal Kim *	Andrew Truett

t Chorus member on leave of absence
 * Solo Role

EXTRA CHORUS

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Angela Arnold	Ilanthe Marini
Elizabeth Baker	Zachary Martin
Aleta Braxton *	Michael Mendelsohn
Jennifer Brody	Courtney Miller
Katie Carlson Cartwright	Thalia Moore *
Sara Colburn	Julia Mulholland
Christopher Craig *	Antonio Nagore
Johanne Daniel	Raiña Parks
Clare Demer	Alexander Perkins
Spencer Dodd	Aimée Puentes
Melissa Dufort *	Samuel Rabinowitz
Jessica-Elisabeth *	Leandra Ramm
John Fluker *	Clifton Romig
Margaret Genovese	Fernando Ruiz
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Harlan Hays	Alexander Taite *
Earl Hazell *	Nicole Takesono
Glenn Healy	Taylor Thomas-Thompson
Matt Hidalgo	Patrick Tsoi-A-Sue
Joshua Hughes	Sydnee Turrentine-Johnson *
Ernest C. Jackson Jr. *	Nicolas Vasquez-Gerst
Jawan Jenkins	Chloe Vaught *
Celestí'anna Jordan	Igor Vieira
David Kekuewa	Nick Volkert
Michael Kuo	Miles Ward
Eric Levintow	Jack Wilkins
Benjamin Liupaogo	Jacque Wilson
Matthew Lovell	Daniel Yoder
Joachim Luis	

San Francisco Opera extends its gratitude and appreciation to the following labor organizations whose members, artists, and craftspeople make possible our performances.

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The Art Directors Guild & Scenic, Title and Graphic
 Artists Local 800

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 Local B-18



Orchestra

Eun Sun Kim, *Music Director*

FIRST VIOLIN

Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*
Maya Cohon, *Associate Concertmaster* +
Heidi Wilcox,
Assistant Concertmaster
Jennifer Cho
Dawn Harms
Mariya Borozina
Naoko Nakajima
Barbara Riccardi
Dian Zhang
Leonid Igudesman
Jennifer Hsieh
Asuka Annie Yano

SECOND VIOLIN

Jeremy Preston, *Principal*
Martha Simonds, *Associate Principal*
Beni Shinohara, *Assistant Principal*
Eva Karasik
Leslie Ludena
Ka-Yeon Lee
Aya Kiyonaga
Craig Reiss

VIOLA

Carla Maria Rodrigues, *Principal*
Joy Fellows, *Associate Principal* +
Emily Liu, *Acting Assistant Principal* ^
Patricia Heller
Natalia Vershilova
Elizabeth Prior ^
Yi Zhou ^

CELLO

Evan Kahn, *Principal*
Thalia Moore,
Associate Principal
Peter Myers,
Assistant Principal
Nora Pirquet
Emil Miland
Jung-Hsuan Ko
Ruth Lane

BASS

Joseph Lescher, *Principal*
Jonathan Lancelle,
Associate Principal
Shinji Eshima,
Acting Assistant Principal
Evan Hillis ^
Zach Hislop ^

FLUTE

Julie McKenzie, *Principal*
Susan Kang ^
Stephanie McNab

PICCOLO

Stephanie McNab

OBOE

Mingjia Liu, *Principal*
Gabriel Young, *Associate Principal* +
Liam Boisset ^
Books Fisher ^
Wentao Jiang ^

ENGLISH HORN

Liam Boisset ^
Wentao Jiang ^

CLARINET

José González Granero, *Principal*
Joanne Burke Eisler,
Assistant Principal †
Sean Krissman ^
Junghwan Lee ^

BASS CLARINET

Junghwan Lee ^

BASSOON

Rufus Olivier, *Principal*
Daniel MacNeill +
Michael Severance †
Shawn Jones ^

CONTRABASSOON

Michael Severance †
Shawn Jones ^

FRENCH HORN

Kevin Rivard, *Principal*
Keith Green
Brian McCarty, *Associate Principal*
Meredith Brown ^
Phillip Palmore ^
Caitlyn Smith-Franklin ^

TRUMPET

Adam Luftman, *Principal*
Scott Macomber ^
John Pearson +

TROMBONE

Michael Cox, *Acting Principal*
Jeffrey Budin ^
David Ridge

BASS TROMBONE

David Ridge, *Principal*

TUBA/CIMBASSO

Zachariah Spellman, *Principal*

TIMPANI

John Burgardt, *Principal*

PERCUSSION

Patricia Niemi, *Acting Principal*
Victor Avdienko ^

HARP

Annabelle Taubl ^

LIBRARIAN

Carrie Weick
Krisha Montmorency, *Assistant Librarian*

ADDITIONAL MUSICIANS

Bryndon Hassman, *harpsichord*
Yang Lin, *piano*

ORCHESTRA MANAGER

Tracy Davis
Kevin Myers,
Orchestra Operations Manager

† = Leave of absence

+ = Principal for one or more
Summer season operas

^ = Season Substitute

Corps Dancers

Colm Seery, *Dance Master*

Alysia Chang ~
Vincent Chavez
Brett Conway ^
Jamielyn Duggan ^
Marquis Engle
Blanche Hampton ^
Zaria Jackson
James Johnson
Bryan Ketron t
Luke Lazzaro
Felipe Leon
Rachel Speidel Little t
Marlayna Elyse Locklear
Damon Mahoney
Coral Martin

Micah Moch
Christopher Nachtrab ^^
Jekyns Pelaez t
Maxwell Simoes ~
Chiharu Shibata ^^
Marcos Vedovetto ~
Jeffrey Ware
Michael Wells

^ Tenured
t Tenured Dancer
on Leave of Absence
~ Resident Corps
* Solo Role

Supernumeraries

Omar Child Supernumeraries

Jahla Love
Remi Abidoye

Elixir of Love Child Supernumeraries

Aidan Rhys Politza
Brayden Christian

Elixir of Love Supernumeraries

Doug Spradlin

Backstage Personnel

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Jai Alltizer (23), *Costume Shop Manager*
Galen Till (19),

Senior Production Supervisor

Lyre Alston, *Production Supervisor*
Manuel Gutierrez (24),

Production Coordinator

Sally Thomas (24), *Master Tailor*
Amy Ashton-Keller (30), *Master Draper*
Barbara Ebel (15), *Senior Draper*
Santiago Suanes (14), *Men's Draper*
Nika Cassaro, *Draper*
Paula Wheeler (32), *Senior Milliner*
Amy Van Every (39), *Senior Dyer*
Karen Lewis, *Assitant Dyer*
Jersey McDermott (24),

Senior Craftsperson/Shoe Specialist
Emma Lehman, Kristen Tracy (16),
Assistant Cutters

Yui Takenouchi, Taylor Newell,
Kaitlyn Patrick, *First Hand*
Robyn Marsh, Victoria Mortimer,
Costume Assistants

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Hoa Fong (25), Gillian Haratani (12),
Haratini (12), Jaya Grace Goheen,
Ashley Granbow, Katherine Griffith,
Meg Horan, Amanda Mitchell,
Sara Morimoto, Mikael Nohai,
Sarah Ellen Smith, Charles Sullivan,
Yesenia Villenasenor, Robert Whitehurst

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Edward Fonseca (12)
Lorraine Lewis (11)
Emma Mueller
Rachell Nichols
Phil Perry (26)
Patrick Sanchez (14)
Don Smith (27)
Scott Stewart (23)
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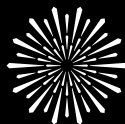
— NEW YORK TIMES

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Innocence

BY KAIJA SAARIAHO, SOFI OKSANEN,
AND ALEKSI BARRIÈRE

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Concertmaster



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Assistant
Concertmaster



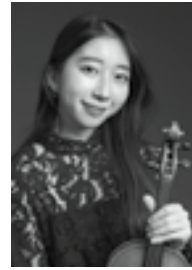
Jennifer Cho
First Violin



Dawn Harms
First Violin



Mariya Borozina
First Violin



Naoko Nakajima
First Violin



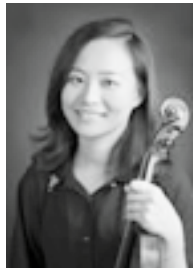
Barbara Riccardi
First Violin



Dian Zhang
First Violin



Leonid Igudesman
First Violin



Jennifer Hsieh
First Violin



Asuka Annie Yano
First Violin



Jeremy Preston
Principal
Second Violin



Martha Simonds
Associate Principal
Second Violin



Beni Shinohara
Assistant Principal
Second Violin



Eva Karasik
Second Violin



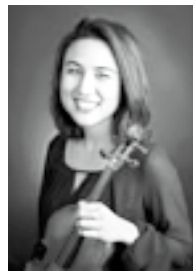
Leslie Ludena
Second Violin



Ka-Yeon Lee
Second Violin



Aya Kiyonaga
Second Violin



Maya Cohon
Second Violin



Craig Reiss
Second Violin



Heeguen Song
Second Violin[^]



Carla Maria Rodrigues
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Viola



Joy Fellows
Associate Principal
Viola



Emily Liu
Acting Assistant
Principal Viola[^]



Patricia Heller
Viola



Natalia Vershilova
Viola



Elizabeth Prior
Viola[^]



Yi Zhou
Viola[^]



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Principal Cello



Thalia Moore
Associate Principal
Cello



Peter Myers
Assistant Principal
Cello



Nora Pirquet
Cello



Emil Miland
Cello



Jung-Hsuan Ko
Cello



Ruth Lane
Cello

[^] = Season Substitute

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Joseph Lescher
Principal
Bass



Jonathan Lancelle
Associate Principal
Bass



Shinji Eshima
Acting Assistant
Principal Bass



Evan Hillis
Bass[^]



Zach Hislop
Bass[^]



Julie McKenzie
Principal
Flute



Susan Kang
Flute[^]



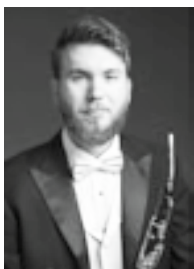
Stephanie McNab
Flute & Piccolo



Mingjia Liu
Principal
Oboe



Gabriel Young
Associate Principal
Oboe



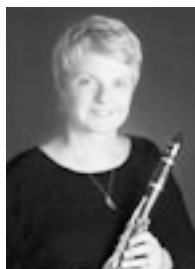
Liam Bosset
Oboe/English Horn[^]



Brooks Fisher
Oboe[^]



**José González
Granero**
Principal Clarinet



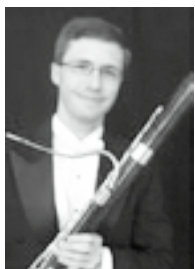
Joanne Burke Eisler
Assistant Principal
Clarinet



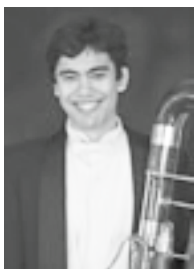
Sean Krissman
Clarinet[^]



Rufus Olivier
Principal
Bassoon



Daniel MacNeill
Bassoon



Michael Severance
Bassoon &
Contrabassoon



Shawn Jones
Bassoon/
Contrabassoon[^]



Kevin Rivard
Principal
Horn



Keith Green
Horn



Brian McCarty
Associate Principal
Horn



Phillip Palmore
Horn[^]



**Caitlyn Smith-
Franklin**
French Horn[^]



Adam Luftman
Principal
Trumpet



John Pearson
Trumpet



Scott Macomber
Trumpet[^]



Michael Cox
Acting Principal
Trombone



Jeffrey Budin
Second Trombone[^]



David Ridge
Principal
Bass Trombone



Zachariah Spellman
Tuba/Cimbasso



John Burgardt
Timpani



Patricia Niemi
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Percussion



Victor Avdienko
Percussion[^]

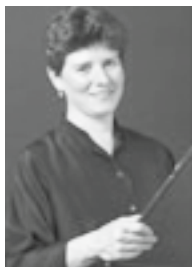


Annabelle Taubl
Acting Principal
Harp[^]

[^] = Season Substitute



Tracy Davis
Orchestra Manager

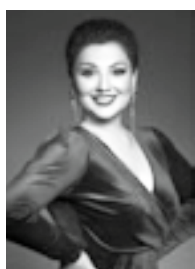


Carrie Weick
Librarian

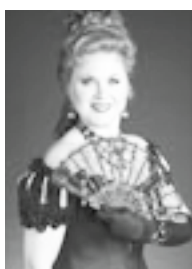
*Most photos by John Martin.
Not pictured: Wentao Jiang (Oboe),
Junghwan Lee (Clarinet),
Meredith Brown (Horn),
Kevin Myers (Orchestra Operations Manager),
Krisha Montmorency (Assistant Librarian)*

^ = Season Substitute

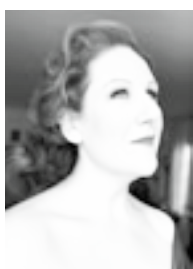
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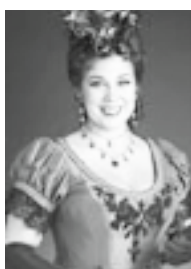
Nadima Avakian
Soprano



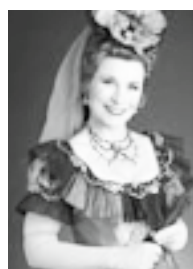
Kathleen Bayler
Soprano



Cheryl Cain
Soprano



Sara Colburn
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Claire Kelm
Soprano



Crystal Kim
Soprano



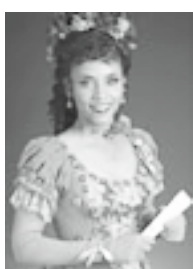
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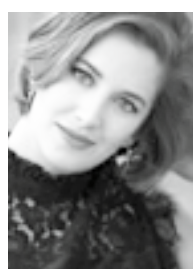
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Soprano



Rachelle Perry
Soprano



Carole Schaffer
Soprano
Leave of Absence



Jesslyn Thomas
Soprano



Buffy Baggott
Mezzo-Soprano



Janet Campbell
Mezzo-Soprano



Edith Dowd
Mezzo-Soprano



Stella Hannock
Mezzo-Soprano



Silvie Jensen
Mezzo-Soprano



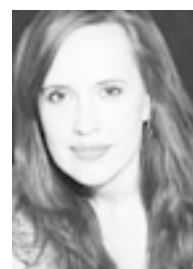
Sally Mouzon
Mezzo-Soprano



Sarah Nadreau
Mezzo-Soprano



Erin Neff
Mezzo-Soprano



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Porter**
Mezzo-Soprano

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Mezzo-Soprano



C. Michael Belle
Tenor



Alan Cochran
Tenor



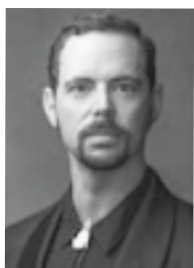
Kevin Gino
Tenor



Daniel Harper
Tenor



Christopher Jackson
Tenor



Michael Jankosky
Tenor



Phillip Pickens
Tenor



Chester Pidduck
Tenor



Jonathan Smucker
Tenor



Andrew Truett
Tenor



William Lee Bryan
Baritone



Anders Fröhlich
Baritone



Andrew Thomas Pardini
Baritone



John Fulton
Baritone



Jere Torkelsen
Baritone



Wilford Kelly
Bass



Bojan Knežević
Bass



William O'Neill
Bass



William Pickersgill
Bass



Valery Portnov
Bass

San Francisco Opera Corps Dancers



Jamielyn Duggan



Brett Conway



Blanche Hampton



Bryan Ketron
Leave of Absence



Rachel Speidel Little
Leave of Absence



Christopher Nachtrab



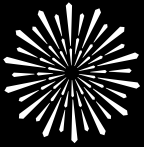
Jekyns Peláez
Leave of Absence



Chiharu Shibata

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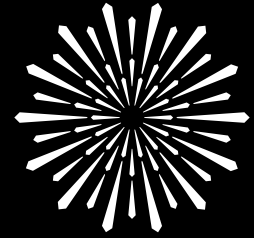
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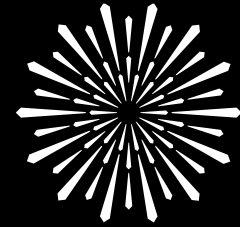
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BY GENERAL DIRECTOR MATTHEW SHILVOCK

I like to say that opera is a participatory sport. If we are doing our job, you the audience should feel like you are not just observing something on stage, but you are actually a part of it, emotionally connected to the stage. That is part of the extraordinary potential of opera. We breathe through these stories collectively, and the emotional intensity of the artists onstage melds with our own emotional experiences.

That concept of opera as participation came into particular relief a few weeks ago. Rhiannon Giddens, the co-composer and librettist of *Omar*, joined us for a day of rehearsals, jetting in both from preparations for her tour as artistic director of the Silk Road Ensemble, and from primary source research at the University of North Carolina. As Rhiannon has done in the other cities that have produced *Omar*, it is imperative to her that she prepare the cast, chorus and company for what it means to bring this opera to life, and, to dance.

And dance we did! Rhiannon led us on an hour-long square-dancing workshop, with techniques, music, and calls that tied back directly to early 19th-century North Carolina. As Rhiannon shared, by connecting to these traditions, she was able to take us back to glimpse the cultural traditions that Omar ibn Said might have experienced himself—social dance forms that, like Omar’s writings, were a way of retaining identity amidst the oppression of slavery.

At the core of Rhiannon’s music are the deep-rooted traditions of North Carolina, carrying forth the artistry of musicians like Joe Thompson (1918-2012), one of the last proponents of the Black string band tradition and himself carrying forward a lineage from pre-Civil War music. Through these lineages are contributions of Black Americans to the square-dancing tradition including the



KRISTEN LOKEN

caller—a mainstay of American dance culture for at least two hundred years. The caller helps to keep the energy of the dance high, allowing it to be created in real time.

And that is what happened in our large rehearsal room. On an uncommonly sweltering day in the city, Rhiannon paired us up and taught us the-basic dance steps, teaching us to create just enough pressure with our hands, such that each couple supports each other in beautiful equilibrium. Then the couples joined into fours, the fours became eights, and the eights became sixteens, the dance becoming more and more communal. And then, with Rhiannon calling, suddenly the whole room was one big circle—maybe sixty of us—promenading, handing off to each other around the circle, and eventually dancing in a huge snaking line that coiled up in a spiral before simultaneously unwinding on itself. Sixty people, a whole community, completely in sync with each other.

These dances represent a deep and complex history: they are shaped by the horrors of slavery, but are also expressions of hope and community. Being invited to participate in this workshop was a profoundly impactful opportunity to step into and reflect on this complex and traumatic history. The group’s singular focus bound us together and reminded us of our collective responsibility to each other. For me, it was also a beautiful example of the kind of cultural intelligence we are working to build into all of our spaces and work at San Francisco Opera.

The Opera House can and should be a place where we gather in community with each other. *Omar* is an extraordinary opportunity for us to invite new communities, particularly members of the African Diaspora and members of the Muslim faith, into the experience of an opera that connects us to both the pain and the joy of our shared history together. 🌱

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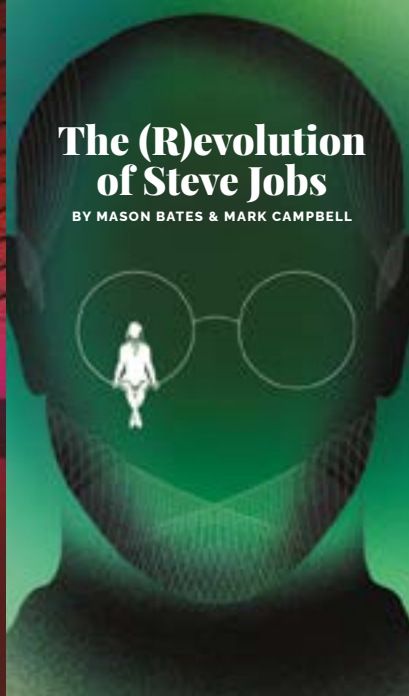


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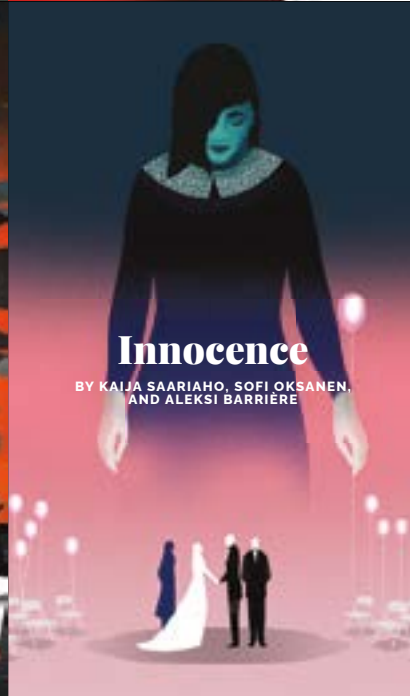
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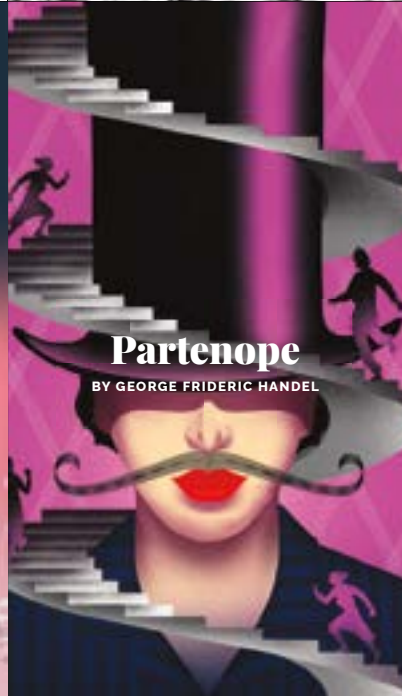
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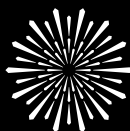
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