



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA EDUCATION

History of San Francisco Opera

San Francisco Opera was founded by Gaetano Merola (1881-1953) and incorporated in 1923. The Company's first performance took place on September 26th, 1923, in the City's Civic Auditorium (*La Bohème*, with Queena Mario and Giovanni Martinelli, conducted by Merola). Nine years later, the Company moved into its new home, inaugurating the newly built War Memorial Opera House with a performance of *Tosca* on October 15, 1932 (Claudia Muzio, Dino Borgioli, Alfredo Gandolfi, conducted by Merola).

Following Gaetano Merola's death, the Company was led through 1981 by Kurt Herbert Adler; from 1982 to 1988 by Terence A. McEwen, and by Lotfi Mansouri from 1988 through 2001, and by Pamela Rosenberg from 2001-2005. We are now under the exciting direction of David Gockley. San Francisco Opera is now the second largest opera company in North America.

Since 1923, San Francisco Opera has presented the United States debut performances of numerous artists, including Vladimir Atlantov, Inge Borkh, Boris Christoff, Marie Collier, Sir Geraint Evans, Mafalda Favero, Tito Gobbi, Sena Jurinac, Mario del Monaco, Birgit Nilsson, Leontyne and Margaret Price, Leonie Rysanek, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, Giulietta Simionato, Ebe Stignani, Renata Tebaldi and Ingvar Wixell; conductors Gerd Albrecht, Valery Gergiev, Georg Solti and Silvio Varviso; and directors Francis Ford Coppola, Harry Kupfer and Jean-Pierre Ponnelle.

War Memorial Opera House

The War Memorial Opera House has been the home of the San Francisco Opera since October 15, 1932. The War Memorial Opera House was designed by Arthur Brown, Jr., the architect who also created such San Francisco landmarks as Coit Tower and City Hall.

Opera Guild

San Francisco Opera Guild was founded in 1939 to develop greater understanding of opera and to increase the audience reached by this art form through educational and outreach programs. The Guild also supports San Francisco Opera through contributions and coordinating the services of hundreds of volunteers who give their time and expertise to assist Opera staff and to act as tour guides to War Memorial Opera House visitors. To support its programs and operations, the Guild hosts a number of fundraising events throughout the year, including the

annual Opera Ball, the Celebration of the Seasons at Christmas, Auction Gala and in partnership with Nordstrom, the Couture Gown Show.

Merola Opera Program

Named for San Francisco Opera's founder and first general director, Gaetano Merola, the Merola Opera Program began during the 1954/55 Season and established with its current name in 1957. The program annually offers approximately 23 gifted singers, four apprentice coaches, and one apprentice stage director the rare opportunity of studying, coaching and participating in master classes with established professionals for 11 weeks during the summer.

Opera in the Park

Since 1971, San Francisco Opera has presented an annual free concert in Golden Gate Park on the Sunday following opening night of the Fall Season. It traditionally features artists from the opening weekend in full concert with the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. The event is open to the public and draws some 20,000 listeners. The concert is presented in conjunction with the Friends of Recreation and Parks and the San Francisco Chronicle.

San Francisco Opera Center

In 1982, the Opera's third General Director, Terence A. McEwen, created the San Francisco Opera Center to oversee and combine the operation and administration of the numerous affiliate educational and training programs. Providing a coordinated sequence of performance and study opportunities for young artists, the San Francisco Opera Center includes the Merola Opera Program, Adler Fellowship Program, Showcase Series, Brown Bag Opera, Opera Center Singers, Schwabacher Recitals and Education Programs.

BRAVO! CLUB

San Francisco Opera's BRAVO! CLUB (B!C) was founded in 1991 by a group of young professionals who share an enjoyment of opera. Members attend performances, informal concerts, Opera House tours, receptions and parties with special guest speakers to expand their appreciation of opera and to meet other young professionals with common interests. B!C grew to more than 500 members in 1996. Each September, to mark Opening Night of San Francisco Opera's new season, B!C hosts a gala celebration which is always one of the most elegant and exciting social events for the year. Specially discounted subscriptions series, including an exclusive 3-opera TRIO series, are offered to members each season.

Supertitles

During the 1983 Fall Season, the student/family matinee performances of *La Traviata* were presented with supertitles-English translations of the libretto projected over the proscenium

simultaneously with the action on stage. The overwhelmingly favorable response prompted the Company to introduce the practice in increasing numbers of performances in subsequent seasons. Supertitles, an innovation of the Canadian Opera Company under the direction of Lotfi Mansouri in 1983 are now used for all San Francisco Opera productions. San Francisco Opera also rents its supertitles internationally to other opera companies.

Pacific Visions

In November of 1992, then General Director Lotfi Mansouri introduced Pacific Visions, an ambitious program designed to maintain the vitality of the opera repertoire through new commissions and the presentation of unusual repertoire. It was launched with the commissioning of the following operas:

The Dangerous Liaisons, composed by Conrad Susa to a libretto by Philip Littell. The work had its premiere during the 1994 Fall Season and was the subject of a nationwide TV broadcast.

Harvey Milk, a new opera by composer Stewart Wallace and librettist Michael Korie. The work was performed in 1996 as a joint commission and co-production of the San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera and New York City Opera.

A Streetcar Named Desire, composed by André Previn to a libretto by Philip Littell, after the play by Tennessee Williams. The work had its premiere during the 1998-99 Fall Season, which was telecast and released on video.

Dead Man Walking, composed by Jake Heggie to a libretto by Terrence McNally, after the book by Sister Helen Prejean. The work had its premiere during the 2000-2001 Season and was recorded on CD.

Animating Opera

In January of 2001, General Director Pamela Rosenberg announced her first artistic initiative for San Francisco Opera, Animating Opera, a multi-year plan of interwoven themes and series including: Seminal Works of Modern Times, The Faust Project, Composer Portrait: Janacek/Berlioz, Women Outside of Society: Laws Unto Themselves, Metamorphosis: From Fairy Tales to Nightmares, and Outsiders or Pioneers?: The Nature of the Human Condition. Incorporated within the production programming of Animating Opera was the American stage premiere of Messiaen's *St. François d'Assise*, Thomson's *The Mother of Us All* as well as the new work by John Adams and Peter Sellars, *Doctor Atomic*.