



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PREMIERES NEW PRODUCTION OF
PUCCINI'S *LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST* (*THE GIRL OF THE GOLDEN WEST*)
JUNE 9–JULY 2, 2010 AT THE WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE**

**DEBORAH VOIGT, SALVATORE LICITRA AND ROBERTO FRONALI STAR IN
100TH ANNIVERSARY PERFORMANCES CONDUCTED BY NICOLA LUISOTTI**

**CO-PRODUCTION PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
FONDAZIONE TEATRO MASSIMO DI PALERMO AND OPÉRA ROYAL DE WALLONIE**

SAN FRANCISCO, April 13, 2010—This summer, San Francisco Opera celebrates the 100th anniversary of Giacomo Puccini's Wild-West opera *La Fanciulla del West* (*The Girl of the Golden West*) with the premiere of a new co-production with Italy's Fondazione Teatro Massimo di Palermo and Belgium's Opéra Royal de Wallonie. These performances will feature soprano Deborah Voigt in her role debut as Minnie; the San Francisco Opera debut of tenor Salvatore Licitra in his role debut as the bandit Dick Johnson; and baritone Roberto Frontali as Sheriff Jack Rance. The San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus will be conducted by San Francisco Opera Music Director Nicola Luisotti, and Lorenzo Mariani makes his Company debut directing this new production. The creative team also includes scenic designer Maurizio Balò, costume designer Gabriel Berry and lighting designer Duane Schuler. *La Fanciulla del West* is presented in eight performances from June 9–July 2. San Francisco Opera's complete 2010 Summer Season runs June 5–July 2 at the historic War Memorial Opera House and also features Charles François Gounod's *Faust* and Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre*.

This new production of *La Fanciulla del West* marks the first collaboration between San Francisco Opera and Palermo's Teatro Massimo, which will present the opera in December 2010 with Salvatore Licitra and Roberto Frontali reprising their roles. The sets, designed by Maurizio Balò and constructed in Sicily, are currently being shipped to San Francisco via New York City. Lorenzo Mariani,

who directs this new production both in its San Francisco premiere and in later performances in Palermo, serves as artistic director of Teatro Massimo.

San Francisco Opera is leading the way as the first North American opera company to present *La Fanciulla del West* in its centennial year. Future 2010–11 productions at the Metropolitan Opera (December 2010) and Lyric Opera of Chicago (January 2011) will also star soprano Deborah Voigt as the iconic character Minnie. Maestro Nicola Luisotti, who will be on the podium for seven of San Francisco Opera’s Summer 2010 performances, will also conduct the work at the Metropolitan Opera, including a performance on December 10, 2010—the exact centennial of the day the work received its world premiere at the Met, conducted by the legendary Arturo Toscanini.

Presenting this seldom-performed opera, last seen at San Francisco Opera in 1979, is part of San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley’s ongoing initiative to present Puccini’s lesser-known operatic gems. Other recent San Francisco Opera presentations of obscure Puccini works include 2007’s *La Rondine* starring Angela Gheorgiu and 2009’s complete production of *Il Trittico* starring Patricia Racette. “It has long been a desire of mine to shine light on some of Puccini’s rarely-performed operas. I am very happy to be partnering with Teatro Massimo and Royal Opera of Wallonia to bring *La Fanciulla del West* to San Francisco Opera for the first time in three decades and to present this work with the masterful Nicola Luisotti on the podium.”

A love triangle set during the California Gold Rush, *La Fanciulla del West* returns to San Francisco for the first time in three decades in celebration of its centennial year. Based on the play *The Girl of the Golden West* by San Francisco native David Belasco, the libretto for Puccini’s opera was written by Guelfo Civinini and Carol Zangarini. The son of a miner and the author of the play that inspired another of Puccini’s most popular operas (*Madama Butterfly*), Belasco captures the spirit of Gold Rush–era California complete with a Wild-West saloon, a high-stakes poker game, a Wells Fargo agent and a beautiful, pistol-packing barkeep named Minnie. The author described his play as “a drama of love against a dark and vast background of primitive characters and untrammelled nature.”

Among his many musical compositions, Giacomo Puccini considered *La Fanciulla del West* to be the best opera he ever wrote. While watching a performance of Belasco’s play in New York City, Puccini was struck with compassion for the play’s central character, Minnie, and decided that she would be the subject of his next opera. He later explained, “I found a heroine who is very naïve and refreshing. I find truth and sincerity in this American drama.” Despite the fact that she is a gun-toting, poker-

playing barkeep, Minnie's resilience and her quintessential heart of gold represents the classic American, and specifically Californian, spirit. This character touched Puccini in a way that inspired him to "write music that I feel sure reflects the spirit of the American people and particularly the strong vigorous nature of the West."

San Francisco Opera Guild Presents Sundown at the Golden West Saloon (May 27)

In celebration of the opening of the 2010 Summer Season and the 100th anniversary of Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West (The Girl of the Golden West)*, San Francisco Opera Guild presents *Sundown at the Golden West Saloon*. The festive gala will take place on Thursday, May 27, 2010 at The Bently Reserve (301 Battery Street) in San Francisco and will honor new San Francisco Opera music director and master of the Italian repertoire Maestro Nicola Luisotti. Tickets for *Sundown at the Golden West Saloon* are available through San Francisco Opera Guild. For tickets or more information, please call (415) 565-3204 or visit <https://sfopera.ejoinme.org/SpringGala>. All proceeds support the award-winning education and community outreach programs of San Francisco Opera Guild that reach more than 50,000 young people in 200 schools throughout Northern California every year. Event honorary chairmen are John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn and event co-chairs are Chandra Friese and Linda Elliott Zider.

San Francisco Opera Guild Panel Insight Discussion

San Francisco Opera Guild will present an Insight Panel Discussion featuring members of the cast and production team from *La Fanciulla del West (The Girl of the Golden West)*. The discussion will take place on Wednesday, June 2 at 6 p.m. in the Herbst Theatre at the War Memorial Veterans Building (401 Van Ness Avenue). Insight panels are free for Opera members and \$5 for the general public; tickets can be purchased at the door 30 minutes prior to the discussion.

About the Production Team

In addition to his work as artistic director of Fondazione Teatro Massimo di Palermo, Lorenzo Mariani has directed productions in Bologna, Naples, Helsinki, Tel Aviv, Tokyo and Boston. Scenic designer Maurizio Balò, a frequent collaborator with Mariani, has previously designed opera sets and costumes for numerous productions at Milan's La Scala and the Metropolitan Opera as well as for theaters in Bologna, Zurich and Genoa. Balò garnered high praise for his set designs on the recently released DVD of *La Cenerentola* with the Metropolitan Opera starring Elīna Garanča and Lawrence Brownlee. Costume designer Gabriel Berry has previously created costumes for San Francisco Opera productions of *Harvey Milk* by Stewart Wallace and *Appomattox* by Philip Glass. A diverse designer

well known for her work in theater, Berry has also designed costumes for Glimmerglass Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Santa Fe Opera in addition to her work with American Repertory Theater, Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park in New York and Berkeley Repertory Theater. American lighting designer Duane Schuler has previously worked with San Francisco Opera on ten operas, most recently last season's production of Verdi's *Otello*. Other operatic projects have included designs for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, La Scala and Lyon Opera.

Tickets and Information

Tickets for *La Fanciulla Del West (The Girl of the Golden West)*, *Faust* and *Die Walküre* are priced from \$15 to \$360 and may be purchased online at sfopera.com or from the San Francisco Opera Box Office either in person or by phone at **(415) 864-3330**. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10:00 a.m. on the day of each performance; tickets are \$10 each, cash only. All performances will feature an informative **Opera Talk** fifty-five minutes prior to curtain; Opera Talks are presented free of charge to patrons with tickets for the corresponding performance.

The **War Memorial Opera House** is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue at Grove Street. Patrons are encouraged to use public transportation to attend San Francisco Opera performances. The War Memorial Opera House is within walking distance of the Civic Center BART station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49, and the F Market Street. For more public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmuni.com. For further information, please visit sfopera.com.

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LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST: PRODUCTION INFORMATION

* San Francisco Opera Debut ♪ Role Debut †Current Adler Fellow • OperaVision Performance

LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST

The Girl of the Golden West

by Giacomo Puccini

Co-Production with Fondazione Teatro Massimo di Palermo and Opéra Royal de Wallonie

NEW PRODUCTION PREMIERE

June 9 (7:30 p.m.), **12** (8 p.m.), **15*** (8 p.m.),
18* (8 p.m.), **24*** (7:30 p.m.), **27** (2 p.m.),
29 (7:30 p.m.); **July 2** (8 p.m.), **2010**

Libretto by Guelfo Civinini and Carol Zangarini
First performance: New York, December 10, 1910
First San Francisco Opera performance: September 15, 1930
Most recent San Francisco Opera performance: November, 1979
Approximate running time: three hours, with one intermission
Sung in Italian with English supertitles

Cast:

<i>Minnie</i>	Deborah Voigt[♪]
<i>Dick Johnson</i>	Salvatore Licitra^{*♪}
<i>Sheriff Jack Rance</i>	Roberto Frontali
<i>Nick</i>	Steven Cole
<i>Sonora</i>	Timothy Mix*
<i>Ashby</i>	Kevin Langan
<i>Harry</i>	David Lomeli[†]
<i>Joe</i>	Brian Jagde^{*†}
<i>Trin</i>	Matthew O'Neill
<i>Jake Wallace</i>	Trevor Scheunemann*
<i>Handsome</i>	Austin Kness[†]
<i>Sid</i>	Kenneth Overton
<i>Happy</i>	Igor Vieira*
<i>Larkens</i>	Brian Leerhuber
<i>Wowkle</i>	Maya Lahyani^{*†}
<i>Billy Jackrabbit</i>	Jeremy Milner

Production Team:

<i>Conductor</i>	Nicola Luisotti
<i>Director</i>	Giuseppe Finzi (July 2)
<i>Scenic Designer</i>	Lorenzo Mariani*
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Maurizio Balò*
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Gabriel Berry
<i>Chorus Director</i>	Duane Schuler
	Ian Robertson

Opera Guild Insight Panel Discussion

Wednesday, June 2, 6 p.m.

Herbst Theater, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco

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Company Sponsor **Mrs. Edmund W. Littlefield** is proud to support *Faust*, which is made possible, in part, by the **Bernard Osher Endowment Fund**. *Die Walküre* is made possible, in part, by **Roberta & David Elliott, Kristina Flanagan, Mary and Nicholas Graves, The Bernard Osher Endowment Fund and Betty and Jack Schafer**. *The Girl of the Golden West* is made possible, in part, by **Tad and Dianne Taube, Koret**

Foundation, and by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Music Director Nicola Luisotti's inaugural season is made possible by John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera. Pianos provided by **Music Exchange**.



2009–10 Season Sponsor

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For further press information or to obtain 2010 Summer Season–related photographs, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

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