



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

ATRIUM SESSIONS, SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S
NEW DIGITAL FESTIVAL OF SONG, PREMIERES SEPTEMBER 15



Efraín Solís, Rhoslyn Jones, Edward Nelson, Laura Krumm and Michael Sumuel are featured in San Francisco Opera's new *Atrium Sessions*. Photos: San Francisco Opera

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 15, 2021) – San Francisco Opera launches the [*Atrium Sessions*](#), a new digital series sharing the emotional world of music with beautifully captured offerings filmed in the Company's intimate Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater. *Atrium Sessions* showcases a number of the Company's favorite Bay Area artists including soprano Rhoslyn Jones, mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm, baritones Edward Nelson and Efraín Solís and bass-baritone Michael Sumuel—all graduates of San Francisco Opera Center's training programs—in collaboration with pianists John Churchwell, Bryndon Hassman, Matthew Piatt, Robert Mollicone and Maureen Zoltek.

Filmed in February and March 2021 under rigorous safety protocols during the global pandemic shutdown, the sessions bring to life miniature masterpieces by H. Leslie Adams, Hector Berlioz, Cécile Chaminade, Noël Coward, Chris DeBlasio, Claude Debussy, Gabriela Lena Frank, Carlos Gardel, Jodi Goble, María Grever, Hall Johnson, Florence Price, Maurice Ravel, Richard Rodgers, Clara Schumann, Robert Schumann and

Kurt Weill. The [Atrium Sessions](#) are available for viewing at no charge and will be released daily from September 15–October 11 on San Francisco Opera's social media platforms ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)) as well as at sfopera.com/atriumsessions.

"Stepping foot inside the Atrium again was a hugely emotional experience for the five singers and the five pianists, not to mention the San Francisco Opera team assembled to make it possible back in February," says *Atrium Sessions* director Elena Park.

"Everyone jumped in to negotiate myriad obstacles so that our incredible singers could perform, even if for an audience of microphones and remotely-operated cameras, even if their trusted collaborators were situated in a room far down the corridor rather than mere feet away at the piano. Laura told me that after spending months upon months singing to a wall for hours each day, with no clear end in sight, it was an unfamiliar joy to be able to make music again. Sharing songs that speak deeply to them as human beings, what these artists were able to accomplish with the use of technology was beyond beautiful to witness, and I'm glad that audiences can now see these luminous moments created in a darker time."

Part of San Francisco Opera's new initiative to share the beauty, storytelling and community of opera in original, short-form digital content, [Atrium Sessions](#), the short-form song and storytelling video portrait series [In Song](#), and the [North Stage Door](#) podcast are created in collaboration Lumahai Productions. These digital programs are made possible, in part, through generous gifts to the Creative Edge Fund, founded by Carol and Dixon Doll. All programs are free and available at sfopera.com/online.

ATRIUM SESSIONS

Immerse yourself in the emotional world of music with the [Atrium Sessions](#), San Francisco Opera's new series of intimate, short video performances of miniature masterpieces.

New performances will be released daily from September 15–October 11, 2021 on San Francisco Opera's social media platforms ([Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#)); also available at sfopera.com/atriumsessions.

A San Francisco Opera/Lumahai Productions collaboration.

Filmed February & March 2021 at the Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater.

FEATURING:

Soprano Rhoslyn Jones and pianist Matthew Piatt
Mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm and pianist John Churchwell
Baritone Edward Nelson and pianist Robert Mollicone
Baritone Efraín Solís and pianist Bryndon Hassman
Bass-baritone Michael Sumuel and pianist Maureen Zoltek

Elena Park, Director

Matthew Shilvock, Elena Park, Gregory Henkel, Executive Producers

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John Churchwell, Head of Music Staff

Jodi Gage, Media Coordinator

Doug Mitchell, Master Audio & Video Engineer

Ziggy Tomcich, Assistant Audio & Video Engineer

Justin Partier, Lighting Director

[ATRIUM SESSIONS](#), Week 1, September 15–19, 2021

Efraín Solís & Bryndon Hassman: “El Nacimiento de Cifar” / “The Birth of Cifar” (Gabriela Lena Frank/Pablo Antonio Cuadra)

Rhoslyn Jones & Matthew Piatt: “My River Runs to Thee” (Jodi Goble/Emily Dickinson)

Edward Nelson & Robert Mollicone: “Ballade de Villon à s'Amye” (Claude Debussy/François Villon)

Laura Krumm & John Churchwell: “La mort d'Ophélie” / “The Death of Ophelia” (Hector Berlioz/William Shakespeare, French translation by Ernest Legouvé)

Michael Sumuel & Maureen Zoltek: “Sence you went away” (H. Leslie Adams/James Weldon Johnson)

Week 1 NOTES:

Efraín Solís transports us to a faraway island “small as the hand of an indigenous god” with Gabriela Lena Frank’s otherworldly “El Nacimiento de Cifar” (“The Birth of Cifar”). “I love the way she introduces the style of the Miskito Indian music of Nicaragua to the vocal line, and mimics the Nicaraguan marimba in the piano,” says Efraín, a first generation Mexican-American baritone who hails from Southern California.

Selection from *Songs of Cifar and the Sweet Sea* (2004), poetry by Pablo Antonio Cuadra (published in *Cantos de Cifar*, 1971). Performed by permission of Wise Music Corp.

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"Say sea / Take Me!" exclaims soprano Rhoslyn Jones at the close of this ecstatic setting of Emily Dickinson's "My River Runs to Thee" (1861). Rhoslyn feels a particular kinship with the song's composer, Jodi Goble. Not only are they pen pals, but Rhoslyn describes her as "a collaborative pianist and composer who, like me, combines her love of performing and creativity with a commitment to teaching and mentorship."

The first of three selections from *Valentines from Amherst* (2016) featured in the *Atrium Sessions*. Performed by kind permission of the composer.

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"False beauty, for whom I pay so great a price," baritone Edward Nelson sings to open "Ballade de Villon à s'Amyme," a song rich with anguish and its own withered beauty. Edward shares: "With the writing and immediate success of his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1902, Debussy was busy with commissions and large-scale projects. Then, in 1910, after a long hiatus from writing songs, he wrote the most character-filled cycle of his career. For me, they show a composer who has become extremely nuanced in how he wants to portray a character."

Selection from *Trois ballades de François Villon* (1910). All three songs featured in the *Atrium Sessions*.

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"She floated, still singing," Shakespeare wrote of Ophelia in her sweet and gentle madness, "Singing like a water-sprite / Born amidst the waves." Berlioz set these lines from *Hamlet* in his haunting "La mort d'Ophélie" ("The Death of Ophelia") from 1842, a piece that has long entranced mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm. "The very present piano part and the fact that the vocal line only goes to *forte* twice set such a powerful mood," she says. "In those moments I see the frustration and despair of Gertrude simmering under the flowing water."

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"Seems lak to me de stars don't shine so bright, / Seems lak to me de sun done loss his light,... Sence you went away," sings bass-baritone Michael Sumuel in H. Leslie Adams's wistful setting of poetry by James Weldon Johnson. "I wanted to start with a dedication to all we've lost and, more importantly, those we've lost due to this pandemic," shares Michael. "Music has always felt like home and a safe haven in times of trouble, which is needed now more than ever."

Selection from *Nightsongs* (1976), poetry by James Weldon Johnson (1922). Performed by permission of American Composer Edition (BMI).

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable photographs of the *Atrium Sessions* are available at sfopera.com/press.

For further press information, please contact San Francisco Opera Communications:

Julia Inouye (415) 565-6430 / jinouye@sfopera.com

Jeffery McMillan (415) 565-6451 / jmcmillan@sfopera.com

Teresa Concepcion (415) 565-6470 / tconcepcion@sfopera.com