



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

BARBARA A. WOLFE ELECTED CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA



San Francisco Opera Association Board of Directors Chair-Elect Barbara Wolfe
Photo: Matthew Washburn

WOLFE TO SUCCEED JOHN GUNN IN AUGUST 2024, FOLLOWING GUNN'S DISTINGUISHED 16 YEARS OF SERVICE AS CHAIR

San Francisco, CA (June 28, 2024) — San Francisco Opera today announced **Barbara A. Wolfe** as San Francisco Opera Association's new Board Chair-Elect. Wolfe was elected as the Company's seventh Chair in its 101-year history at the June 27 Board of Director's meeting. She succeeds **John Gunn**, who planned to step down at the close of the current season following a distinguished 16-year tenure as Chair. Gunn, who joined the Board in 2002 and has served as Chair since August 2008, will become Chair Emeritus and continue to serve as a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee, remaining actively involved with the strategic and philanthropic vitality of the Opera. Wolfe will assume leadership of the Board effective August 1, 2024, working in partnership with San Francisco Opera Association President Jack Calhoun.

"This is a moment that affirms what an incredible community we have here at San Francisco Opera," stated Tad and Dianne Taube General Director **Matthew Shilvock**. "With the election of Barbara Wolfe as the seventh Chair of the Opera, we celebrate her passionate devotion to this Company and dedication to its governance. And we give profound thanks to John Gunn for his transformative leadership of the Board, guiding us with courage, vision and unparalleled generosity. John and his wife, Cynthia, have made possible the creative arc of the Company for almost twenty years, and Barbara has brought to life some of the most important new productions on our stage. The Opera community is blessed to have leaders like John and Barbara who care so fervently for the Company and all who work here. They devote themselves to ensuring that San Francisco remains one of the great cultural capitals of the world. I am so excited for Barbara's leadership as Chair, and John's continued partnership as Chair Emeritus. They allow us to realize creative dreams that define the future of opera."

Barbara Wolfe is a longtime opera lover and board member of San Francisco Opera. Her on-going support has included the Company's recent new productions of *La Traviata*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Tosca*; *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, presented as part of the Company's 2022–23 Centennial Season; last fall's *Lohengrin*; and the 2018 *Ring* cycle. She and her late husband Tom have also generously supported numerous additional productions over the years. Wolfe also serves on the boards of the San Francisco SPCA and Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and was a longtime trustee at Mills College. She has supported educational programs and scholarships at several primary and secondary schools, graduate scholarship and fellowship programs at UCSF Foundation, and the Achievement Rewards for College Scientists program in Northern California. She is also a supporter of numerous humanitarian and animal welfare organizations.

San Francisco Opera Association Chair-Elect **Barbara Wolfe** said: "It is with great pride that I take on the Chair of the San Francisco Opera Board. The Opera has been a huge part of my life for many years, both as an audience member and a board member. It's been so meaningful to me to be a part of the creation of a number of new productions in the past few years including *Traviata* and *Tosca*, in which I have been able to see first-hand the extraordinary talents of the Company at work. This is one of the great creative houses in America, and I am excited to work with Jack, Matthew, and our extraordinary Music Director Eun Sun Kim as we shape the Company for a bold future. That future is so important to all of us in the Opera community. We all believe in the importance of art and culture as a

defining part of society, and I am so grateful to John Gunn for his leadership for the last sixteen years. I look forward to carrying forward his devotion to the Opera in my time as Chair."

"San Francisco Opera has benefited immensely from John Gunn's vision and wisdom over his 16 years as Chair of the Board," said San Francisco Opera Association President **Jack Calhoun**. "John and Cynthia's financial support and dedication to the artistry on our stage is unmatched, and their philanthropy has propelled the Company forward in countless ways. We are so grateful to continue to partner with John in his new role as Chair Emeritus, and we are incredibly fortunate to have another longtime board member and very generous supporter of the Opera, Barbara Wolfe, taking on the key role of Chair. I am personally excited for the opportunity to work more closely with Barbara, as she brings a deep knowledge of the arts and non-profit governance to the role, as well as considerable expertise from her successful corporate career."

Since joining the Board in 2002 and in his 16 years as Chair, John Gunn has inspired and instigated San Francisco Opera with his bold vision and unparalleled generosity. In September 2008, John and his wife, Cynthia, made a historic commitment—believed at the time to be the largest gift 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 Shilvock. Leading with a philanthropic example that has kept opera vibrant on the War Memorial Opera House stage, the Gunns have enabled productions that affirm why San Francisco is one of the world's great opera cities—from *The Ring*, *Les Troyens*, *The Bonesetter's Daughter* and *Antony and Cleopatra* to this summer's American premiere of *Innocence*. They have ensured this company is on the cutting edge, from motorizing backstage systems to allow for a new generation of production capability to being instrumental in installing the Media Suite, which today allows livestreams of the Company's presentations to reach audiences across the country and around world.

San Francisco Opera Association Chair **John Gunn** shares: "It has been a wonderful 16 years as Chairman of the Board of the San Francisco Opera and a privilege to serve. When I was on the Board, I was on the search committee that hired David Gockley. David was a strong leader, and he brought from Houston a young Englishman, Matthew Shilvock. Luckily, Matthew succeeded him and continued the excellent leadership. San Francisco Opera has

emerged as a strong member of the top world operas. It's great to be Board Chairman when two General Directors and their staff bring such memorable performances to the San Francisco stage. Opera is an expansive experience. With the artistry of our orchestra and chorus, dramatic singing and memorable productions, the drama of the human condition from triumph to despair can be experienced by 3,000 people in the War Memorial Opera House. I look forward to the next exciting chapter of San Francisco Opera under the leadership of Barbara Wolfe, a commanding woman who will inspire the Company to new heights."

Also at the June 27 meeting, three new incoming members were elected to the Company's Board of Directors:

- Jennifer Brahm—A longtime San Francisco Opera subscriber, Brahm has been an avid supporter of the Company's Adler Fellowship Program and also serves on the boards of the Merola Opera Program, Larkin Street Youth Services and Macalester College. Brahm previously worked for the global management consulting firm Bain & Company.
- Anne Casscells—The former CIO of Stanford Management Co, Casscells is the co-founder and current co-president and CIO of Aetos Capital. Casscells brings significant non-profit board experience to San Francisco Opera, including service with organizations including KQED, Grace Cathedral, Stanford Graduate School of Business and Yale University.
- Isabel Rhee—San Francisco Opera subscriber Isabel Rhee serves on the boards of the UC Berkeley Foundation and the Bay Area Committee for the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation. A UC Berkeley alumna, Rhee is also a supporter of the College of Engineering's Center for Entrepreneurship & Technology.

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