



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS  
*DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN (THE WOMAN WITHOUT A SHADOW)*  
WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, JUNE 4–28

Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's Massive and Rarely Heard Masterpiece Returns to the Site of Its 1959 American Premiere in Artist David Hockney's Colorful Staging



Scenes from David Hockney's Production of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Photos: Robert Millard/LA Opera

Sir Donald Runnicles Conducts the Opera for the First Time in His Career Leading An International Cast Headed by Camilla Nylund, Nina Stemme, Linda Watson, Johan Reuter, David Butt Philip



Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and [sfopera.com](https://www.sfopera.com)  
June 20 Performance Will Be Livestreamed Globally

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 1, 2023) — San Francisco Opera presents Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's fairy-tale opera *Die Frau ohne Schatten (The Woman Without a Shadow)* from June 4–28 at the War Memorial Opera House.

*Die Frau ohne Schatten* is, along with Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle and Hector Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, among opera's most ambitious and exhilarating large-scale works for the stage. For decades following its 1919 world premiere, Strauss' magnum opus was considered impossible to produce by many American impresarios due to the work's massive orchestral forces, complex scene changes and vocal demands. San Francisco Opera presented the work's American premiere in 1959, launching a proud Company tradition of presenting *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (or FROSCH, as Strauss affectionally called the opera, using the initials of its title to spell the German word for "frog"). After a 34-year absence, this "bucket list" experience for opera goers returns to the War Memorial Opera House stage as one of the key works of San Francisco Opera's Centennial Season.

The story follows a fairy-tale Empress who has three days to take the shadow of a mortal woman, and thereby that woman's ability to have children, in order to prevent a curse from turning her husband, the Emperor, to stone. While the theft of the shadow could avert the threat she faces, the Empress confronts whether her own happiness is possible if it comes at another's expense.

This new-to-San Francisco Opera production, which features otherworldly transitions between the spirit world, the imperial palace and the humble household of the tradesman, Barak, is the creative vision of artist David Hockney. The *Los Angeles Times* praised Hockney's vibrant settings for the opera's various scenes: "their riot of color matches that of Strauss' orchestra perfectly." The late Ian Falconer, frequent cover artist for *The New Yorker* and creator of the *Olivia* children's book series, designed the costumes. Roy Rallo directs the production, which also features the work of San Francisco Opera Lighting Director Justin A. Partier, as revival lighting designer.

Former San Francisco Opera Music Director Sir Donald Runnicles, who led the Company's acclaimed performances of Wagner's *Ring* cycle in 2011 and 2018, returns to the podium to conduct *Die Frau ohne Schatten* for the first time in his career. A renowned interpreter of Strauss' works, Runnicles was recently praised by the *New York Times* for leading an *Elektra* at the Metropolitan Opera that was "riveting in its revelatory transparency, the layers of expressionistic color, sweetness and Wagnerian abundance stacking in counterpoint or weaving in and out of one another with grace." *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, like *Elektra*, requires one of the largest pit orchestras in the operatic repertoire, and

Maestro Runnicles leads the artists of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, including 96 instrumentalists in the pit and 9 backstage, for these performances.

Returning to the Company where she has enjoyed many past triumphs, including her first Brünnhilde in the complete *Ring* cycle, Swedish soprano Nina Stemme portrays the Dyer's Wife. Stemme's first performances of the role at the Vienna State Opera in 2019 were among opera's hottest pre-pandemic tickets which *Opera News* hailed as "A stunning role debut ... Her vocally luxurious performance was a *cri du coeur* from start to finish, full of longing, anguish, despair and ultimate elation ... the house shook with applause at the curtain call."

Finnish soprano Camilla Nylund, who made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2012 as Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin*, is the shadowless Empress at the center of the opera. In the same 2019 Vienna performances of the opera, *Opera News* observed: "Aside from Stemme, the evening's most accomplished performance belonged to Camilla Nylund, a veteran to this work, who has emerged as one of today's finest Strauss singers."

San Francisco-born Linda Watson makes her long-overdue Company debut as the Nurse. One of the foremost Wagnerian sopranos of our time with frequent appearances at Wagner's theater in Bayreuth, Watson has also earned acclaim for her portrayals of Strauss heroines like the title role of *Elektra* and the Dyer's Wife in *Die Frau ohne Schatten*.

In his first engagement with San Francisco Opera, Danish bass-baritone Johan Reuter will portray the hardworking tradesman, Barak, a role for which the *New York Times* praised his "tender, earnest performance." British tenor David Butt Philip joins the Company in the high-lying role of the Emperor. The *Financial Times* recently observed of Butt Philip: "his singing is scrupulous, at ease when the vocal writing goes high, and he has an appealing, Romantic sound."

Bass Stefan Egerstrom is the Spirit Messenger of Keikobad. Barak's brothers will be portrayed by tenor Zhengyi Bai and bass-baritones Wayne Tigges and Philip Skinner. The Nightwatchmen are baritones Javier Arrey and Kidon Choi and bass-baritone Jongwon Han. The opera's many other fantastical characters such as the Falcon and Voices of Unborn Children will be performed by recent Adler Fellow Elisa Sunshine and current Adlers Arianna Rodriguez, Mikayla Sager, Olivia Smith, Gabrielle Beteag, Nikola Printz and Victor Cardamone.

Strauss and Hofmannsthal completed *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in 1916 but the opera's premiere was delayed until 1919 so its deeply humanistic message might bring hope and renewal in the aftermath of World War I. In 1959, San Francisco Opera General Director Kurt Herbert Adler enlisted 27-year-old French director and designer Jean-Pierre Ponnelle to create a production for the U.S. premiere of the opera in San Francisco. Military service prevented Ponnelle from finishing his designs and directing the piece while illness struck three of the cast's leading artists, but the performances caused a sensation and remain a benchmark in the history of opera in America. Subsequent revivals by San Francisco Opera featuring luminaries like conductor Karl Böhm and vocal soloists Leonie Rysanek, Birgit Nilsson, Gwyneth Jones, James King and Walter Berry, helped found the Company's strong tradition with this rarely performed opera.

The five performances of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, performed in German with English supertitles, are scheduled for June 4 (2 p.m.), 10 (7 p.m.), 20 (7 p.m.), 23 (7 p.m.) and 28 (7 p.m.), 2023.

#### LIVESTREAM: June 20 matinee performance

The Tuesday, June 20 performance of Richard Strauss and Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Die Frau ohne Schatten* will be streamed live at 7 p.m. PT. The performance will be available to watch on demand for 48 hours beginning on Wednesday, June 21 at 10 a.m. PT. Livestream tickets are \$27.50. For more information, visit [sfopera.com/digital/Livestream](https://sfopera.com/digital/Livestream).

#### FREE LECTURE: The Shadow of The Empress Koret Auditorium, Main Library, San Francisco Public Library Friday, June 2 at 2 p.m.

Join New York University historian Larry Wolff for an illuminating discussion of the history, creation and music of Richard Strauss' most ambitious and enigmatic work, *Die Frau ohne Schatten*. Following this free presentation and a Q&A, Professor Wolff will be signing copies of his new book, *The Shadow of the Empress: Fairy-Tale Opera and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Stanford University Press). For more information, visit [sfpl.org/events/2023/06/02/author-shadow-empress](https://sfpl.org/events/2023/06/02/author-shadow-empress).

## PRE-OPERA TALKS & SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEWS

Opera scholar Peter Susskind will present a Pre-Opera Talk prior to each performance inside the theater. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, the 25-minute Pre-Opera Talks are open to ticket holders for the corresponding performance.

May 23–31 at locations throughout the Bay Area, San Francisco Opera Guild presents a series of Opera Previews on *Die Frau ohne Schatten* by scholar Dr. Simon Williams. Each 90-minute lecture provides in-depth insights into the opera's history, composer, story and music. For more information, visit [sfopera.com/operapreviews](https://sfopera.com/operapreviews).

## TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (*The Woman without a Shadow*) are priced from \$26 to \$464 and are available at the San Francisco Opera Box Office, by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at [sfopera.com](https://sfopera.com). A \$2 per-ticket facility fee is included in Balcony 1, 2 and 3 zone prices; all other zones include a \$3 per-ticket facility fee.

The Dolby Family's *Opera for the Bay* tickets for *Die Frau ohne Schatten* will be available on May 4 on a first-come, first-served basis beginning at 12 p.m. PT at [sfopera.com/operaforthebay](https://sfopera.com/operaforthebay). Residents with a Bay Area mailing address zip code (beginning with 940–954) who have not purchased a ticket to a San Francisco Opera event in the past three years may purchase up to two \$10 tickets for one performance.

Tickets for the June 20 livestream of *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, which include a 48-hour on-demand viewing option beginning the morning after the performance, are available now at \$27.50. For more information visit [sfopera.com/digital/livestream](https://sfopera.com/digital/livestream).

The San Francisco Opera Box Office window is located in the Opera House at 301 Van Ness Avenue. Box Office hours are Monday 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Tuesday through Friday 10 a.m.–6 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.–6 p.m. (Saturday phone only).

For up-to-date information about San Francisco Opera's safety measures, visit [sfopera.com/safetyfirst](https://sfopera.com/safetyfirst).

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's Centennial Season, visit [sfopera.com](https://sfopera.com).

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## DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN CALENDAR

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

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House (301 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco)

*DIE FRAU OHNE SCHATTEN (The Woman without a Shadow)* by Richard Strauss

June 4 (2 p.m.), 10 (7 p.m.), 20 (7 p.m.), 23 (7 p.m.), 28 (7 p.m.), 2023

Libretto by Hugo von Hofmannsthal

LA Opera production

Approximate running time: 3 hours, 47 minutes including two intermissions

Sung in German with English supertitles

First performance: Vienna, October 10, 1919  
First SFO performance: September 18, 1959 (U.S. Premiere)  
Most recent SFO performances: November/December 1989

Cast:

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| <i>The Empress</i>                       | Camilla Nylund          |
| <i>The Emperor</i>                       | David Butt Philip *     |
| <i>Barak's Wife</i>                      | Nina Stemme             |
| <i>Barak</i>                             | Johan Reuter *          |
| <i>The Nurse</i>                         | Linda Watson *          |
| <i>Spirit Messenger</i>                  | Stefan Egerstrom ♪++    |
| <i>Keeper of the Gates of the Temple</i> | Mikayla Sager ♪†+       |
| <i>Apparition of a Youth</i>             | Victor Cardamone ♪†+    |
| <i>Voice of the Falcon</i>               | Olivia Smith * ♪†+      |
| <i>Barak's One-Eyed Brother</i>          | Philip Skinner ♪++      |
| <i>Barak's One-Armed Brother</i>         | Wayne Tigges ♪          |
| <i>Barak's Hunchback Brother</i>         | Zhengyi Bai ♪++         |
| <i>Voice from Above</i>                  | Gabrielle Beteag ♪†+    |
| <i>Voices of Unborn Children</i>         | Elisa Sunshine ♪++      |
|  | Arianna Rodriguez * ♪†+ |
|  | Olivia Smith * ♪†+      |
|  | Nikola Printz * ♪†+     |
|  | Gabrielle Beteag ♪†+    |
| <i>Voices of the Nightwatchmen</i>       | Javier Arrey * ♪        |
|  | Kidon Choi ♪            |
|  | Jongwon Han ♪†          |
| <i>Servants</i>                          | Elisa Sunshine ♪++      |
|  | Arianna Rodriguez * ♪†+ |
|  | Nikola Printz * ♪†+     |
| <i>Solo Dancer</i>                       | Christopher Nachtrab ♪  |

Creative Team:

|                                       |                      |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Conductor</i>                      | Sir Donald Runnicles |
| <i>Stage Director</i>                 | Roy Rallo            |
| <i>Production and Set Design</i>      | David Hockney        |
| <i>Costume Designer</i>               | Ian Falconer         |
| <i>Original Lighting Designer</i>     | Alan Burrett *       |
| <i>Revival Lighting Designer</i>      | Justin A. Partier    |
| <i>Choreographer and Dance Master</i> | Colm Seery           |
| <i>Chorus Director</i>                | John Keene           |
| <i>Fight Director</i>                 | Dave Maier           |

San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Opera Dance Corps

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## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEW SERIES

May 23–31 at locations throughout the Bay Area, San Francisco Opera Guild presents a series of Opera Previews on *Die Frau ohne Schatten* by scholar Dr. Simon Williams. Each 90-minute lecture provides in-depth insights into the opera's history, composer, story and music.

San Francisco Chapter

Tuesday, May 23 at 5 p.m. Zoom Webinar

General Admission: \$10. Register at [sfopera.com/operapreviews](https://sfopera.com/operapreviews)

Peninsula Chapter

Tuesday, May 30 at 7:30 p.m.

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, 1140 Cowper Street, Palo Alto

General Admission: \$10

San Jose Opera Guild

Wednesday, May 31 at 10 a.m.

Addison-Penzak JCC Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road, Suite 201, Los Gatos

Free to San Jose Opera Guild and Addison-Penzak JCC members; General admission: \$10

East Bay Chapter

Wednesday, May 31 at 7:30 p.m.

Lafayette Library and Learning Center, 3491 Mount Diablo Blvd, Lafayette

General Admission: \$10

For more information about the Opera Preview Series, visit [sfopera.com/operapreviews](https://sfopera.com/operapreviews).

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The Taube Media Suite is made possible in part by Dianne and Tad Taube and John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn.

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable artist headshots and production images for *Die Frau ohne Schatten* are available at [sfopera.com/press](https://sfopera.com/press).

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