



## SAN FRANCISCO OPERA HONORED MARIA MANETTI SHREM IN ONSTAGE PRESENTATION AFTER FINAL FALL SEASON PERFORMANCE

### Manetti Shrem Awarded 2022 The Spirit of the Opera



Maria Manetti Shrem and San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock (Photo: Drew Altizer)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (December 20, 2022) — San Francisco Opera honored philanthropist Maria Manetti Shrem on December 3 with the Spirit of the Opera award for her profound and lasting support of the Company. In the brief onstage ceremony in front of a sold-out audience gathered for the fall season closing performance of Verdi's *La Traviata*, San Francisco Opera Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock praised Shrem for her dedication to the art form and tremendous impact on the Company.

Shilvock said: "Tonight we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Maria's move from Italy to America and the beginning of a journey that would lead her to a beloved friendship with this stage and its artists. Knowing firsthand what it meant to leave one's homeland, Maria realized how hard it must be for singers to work abroad. She began reaching out to singers like Renata Scotta, waiting for them at the stage door in the pouring rain, to extend the hand of friendship and help her feel welcome in this city. In these connections,

she built lifelong friendships of true depth and meaning. That kind of welcoming spirit is something we always aspire to.

“With her husband, Jan, Maria has uplifted so much in the Bay Area, in New York, in Florence, and all around the world. Here at San Francisco Opera, Maria does so much to make possible the level of artistry you have seen tonight. She enriches our work with conductors and with the Italian repertoire. And, at the heart of Maria’s passion, is the celebration of young artists, energizing of a new generation of stars. The Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Emerging Stars Competition and Emerging Star of the Year award has become a beloved tradition at San Francisco Opera as we celebrate, with Maria, the vitality of young artists.”



Shrem (fourth from left) bowing with San Francisco Oper Music Director Eun Sun Kim (center), Matthew Shilvock (far left) and cast of *La Traviata*; Eun Sun Kim and soprano Pretty Yende (Violetta in *La Traviata*) with Shrem backstage; Shrem with Jonathan Tetelman (Alfredo in *La Traviata*). Photos: Kristen Loken (left, center), Drew Altizer (right)

Maria Manetti Shrem, who moved to her adopted city of San Francisco from Florence, Italy, in 1972, began taking in opera performances as a standee in the back of the Opera House. Within a few years, she was a supporter of San Francisco Opera. With her husband, Jan, established four major funds to sustain the Company’s work. The Great Interpreters of Italian Opera Fund supports classic works from the Italian repertoire (*La Traviata* and *Madame Butterfly* during the current Centennial Season); the Conductor’s Fund which helps bring renowned conductors to the War Memorial Opera House podium; the Emerging Stars Fund that celebrates some of opera’s rising talents on the stage; and the Luminaries Concert Fund enabling the Company to bring exceptional artists to the stage for special events and performances.

Manetti Shrem has enjoyed extraordinary success in business, in particular in the fashion industry, where she played a major role in establishing Gucci as a global force. Today, her focus is philanthropy, and she has made no secret of the fact that she and her husband

aim to give the bulk of their wealth during their lifetimes. “And we want to inspire other wealthy people to give now. For me, the art of living is the art of giving,” she has said. Since the mid-1990s, Manetti Shrem has contributed to cultural institutions, medical research and health science in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York, the U.K. and in her native Italy.

In 2019, Italy’s president bestowed upon Maria Manetti Shrem the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Star of Italy for her consistent support of cultural collaboration between Italy and the United State. In 2022, San Francisco Mayor London Breed proclaimed “June 22 Manetti Shrem Day for Philanthropy.” On December 3, the night that Manetti Shrem was awarded The Spirit of the Opera award, San Francisco’s City Hall was illuminated in the Italian tricolor—green, white and red—in her honor.

The Spirit of the Opera award was created in 1995 as a tribute to individuals whose devotion to San Francisco Opera epitomizes a high level of commitment to advancing the success of the Company and supporting the art form. Past recipients include Bob and Terri Ryan, Jeannik Littlefield, Joe Brucia, Patricia Yakutis, Diana Knowles, Harriet Quarre, Diane B. Wilsey, Maggie Wetzel, Barbara Jackson, Susan Anderson-Norby, Kary Schulman, Sylvia Lindsey and Louise Gund.

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable photos of Maria Manetti Shrem receiving “The Spirit of the Opera” award are available at [sfopera.com/press](http://sfopera.com/press).

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