



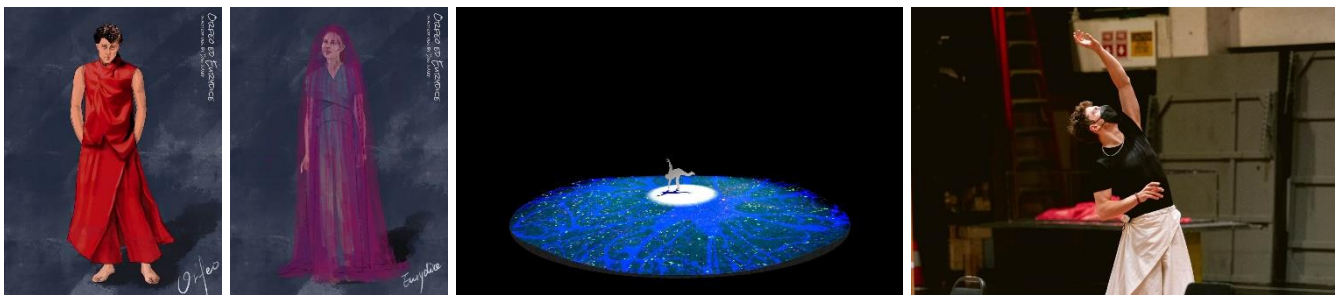
SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS NEW PRODUCTION OF
CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK'S *ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE*
(*ORFEO ED EURIDICE*), NOVEMBER 15–DECEMBER 1

Countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński Makes Company Debut as Orpheus with
Sopranos Meigui Zhang as Eurydice and Nicole Heaston as Amore,
Conducted by Peter Whelan, Choreography by Rena Butler



Jakub Józef Orliński (photo: Jiyang Chen); Meigui Zhang; Nicole Heaston; Peter Whelan (photo: Marco Borggreve);
Matthew Ozawa; Rena Butler (Photo: Lindsay Linton)

Matthew Ozawa's Bold New Staging Depicts Orpheus' Journey to the
Underworld as a Passage Through the Stages of Grief



Costume designs by Jessica Jahn, illustrated by Dan Wang; Set design by Alexander V. Nichols
Jakub Józef Orliński in rehearsal (Photo: Kristen Loken)

Tickets Available at sfopera.com and (415) 864-3330
Virtual Tickets for November 20 Livestream on Sale Now

San Francisco, CA (November 2, 2022) — San Francisco Opera presents Christoph Willibald Gluck's eighteenth-century masterwork *Orpheus and Eurydice* (*Orfeo ed Euridice*) from November 15–December 1. The new production by director Matthew Ozawa stars countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński in his highly anticipated Company debut as Orpheus, Meigui Zhang as Eurydice and Nicole Heaston as Amore. In his first American opera engagement, acclaimed early music interpreter Peter Whelan conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Choreographer Rena Butler makes her house debut creating the dances which are integral to the work's beauty and power. Company Chorus Director John Keene prepares the artists of the Opera Chorus.

For the first time, San Francisco Opera will present Gluck's opera in its original 1762 Viennese edition which was prepared for castrato superstar Gaetano Guadagni. *Orfeo ed Euridice*, a pivotal work in operatic history, is direct and expressive in its storytelling, eschewing the formalism that came to define opera in the mid-eighteenth century. Its 90-minute structure balances supple melodies like Orpheus' famous aria "Che farò senza Euridice" ("What will I do without Eurydice") with dramatic episodes that are punctuated by rousing choruses and opportunities for movement and dance.

For this new San Francisco Opera production, Ozawa reunites with set and projection designer Alexander V. Nichols and costume designer Jessica Jahn, his collaborators for San Francisco Opera's 2021 presentations of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the Marin Center drive-in and Beethoven's *Fidelio* in the War Memorial Opera House. With debuting lighting designer Yuki Nakase Link and former Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company dancer and choreographer Butler, the creative team focuses on the opera's contemporary resonance, taking us through the stages of Orpheus' grief.



Scenes from rehearsals of *Orpheus and Eurydice* with Jakub Józef Orliński and Matthew Ozawa; Rena Butler and dancers. Photos: Kristen Loken

Ozawa said: "As we ascend from the pandemic, the entire world grapples with collectively experienced traumas: the loss of countless lives and a world forever

changed. In Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* we are taken on a journey with an individual, who, consumed by grief, aims to bring back the one they've lost.

"Two elements comprise our production: Orpheus' memories of Eurydice and the terrain of his mind. Because emotions and relationships can be so dynamic, we investigate Orpheus and Eurydice's relationship through richly athletic dance. The lovers are doubled by dancers and each Orpheus and Eurydice couple represent a distinct phase in their journey. To depict the landscape of Orpheus' mind, we collaborated with physicians from the University of California San Francisco to investigate brain images of individuals who experienced trauma. As a result, every projection we use is made up of brain scans or pictures of neurons and neural pathways. This rich visual tapestry displays our neurobiology, the dance depicts the memory landscape, and the music the emotional journey."

Jakub Józef Orliński, originally scheduled to make his American opera debut with San Francisco Opera in *Partenope* in 2020, is Orpheus, the distraught musician who is permitted by the gods to retrieve his dead wife, Eurydice, from Hades if he can avoid looking back at her. The Polish countertenor, who has been the subject of feature articles in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker* and *Polish Vogue* and is a noted break-dancer and internet sensation, has been hailed as "the real countertenor deal ... an exceptional legato, no loss of power in the lower reaches, attentive diction, superb histrionic flair. He has, in short, raised the bar decisively" (*Opera*). After his sold-out recital at UC Berkeley's Hertz Hall last March, the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, "His singing is utterly pure and unruffled, but it also boasts a golden coloration that lends it a sumptuous fullness. It's vivacious, tender and utterly ravishing."

Meigui Zhang made her Company debut in June 2022 as the iconic heroine Dai Yu ("sung with brightly quivering intensity," *San Francisco Chronicle*) in Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber*. The fast-rising soprano from Chengdu, China, who is featured in San Francisco Opera's award-winning video portrait series, [In Song](#), returns to make her role debut as Orpheus' beloved, Eurydice.

Following triumphs in San Francisco Opera's recent new productions of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* as Countess Almaviva and *Così fan tutte* as Despina, soprano Nicole Heaston portrays Amore, the goddess of love, who guides Orpheus through his journey.

Artistic Director of the period instrument Irish Baroque Orchestra and the Edinburgh-based Ensemble Marsyas, Peter Whelan will make his American debut on the podium for San Francisco Opera. Following a performance where Whelan conducted Gluck's revolutionary score for *Orfeo ed Euridice*, the *Irish Times* said, "Conductor Peter Whelan, consistently attentive to the balance of voices and instruments, brought an intense, crisp energy to the stylish playing of the Irish Baroque Orchestra."

Throughout its first century, San Francisco Opera has staged Gluck's revolutionary opera in only one previous season. The 1959 production, presented in Italian as *Orfeo ed Euridice* and including interpolated arias and an alternate ending, was to have starred celebrated American mezzo-soprano Risë Stevens. When Stevens withdrew, Blanche Thebom, a San Francisco Opera favorite, stepped in on short notice and scored a triumph as Orfeo (Orpheus). In 1995, the Company gave a single concert performance of *Orphée et Eurydice*, the French version of Gluck's opera in a performing edition by composer Hector Berlioz. The San Francisco Opera Orchestra, Chorus, and the cast, starring mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore as Orphée and soprano Dawn Upshaw as Eurydice under the baton of then-Music Director Donald Runnicles, made a recording which was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Sung in Italian with English supertitles, the five performances of *Orpheus and Eurydice* are scheduled for November 15 (7:30 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 20 (2 p.m.), 26 (7:30 p.m.); December 1 (7:30 p.m.), 2022.

LIVESTREAM: November 20 Performance

The Sunday, November 20 performance will be livestreamed at 2 p.m. PT. The performance will be available to watch on-demand for 48 hours beginning on Monday, November 21 at 10 a.m. PT. Virtual tickets for the livestream and limited on-demand viewing are \$27.50 For tickets or more information about livestreams of San Francisco Opera's 2022 Fall Season, visit sfopera.com/digital.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD OPERA PREVIEW SERIES: *ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE*

From November 7–10, San Francisco Opera Guild presents a series of Opera Previews on *Orpheus and Eurydice* by soprano and musicologist Rebecca Plack. Each 90-minute preview provides in-depth insights into the opera's history, composer, story and music.

Marin Chapter

Monday, November 7 at 10:30 a.m.

Aldersly Retirement Community, 326 Mission Avenue, San Rafael

\$10 donation accepted at the door.

San Jose Opera Guild

Wednesday, November 9 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, \$10 general admission

East Bay Chapter

Wednesday, November 9 at 7:30 p.m.

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

\$10 general admission

San Francisco Chapter

Thursday, November 10 at 6 p.m., Zoom Webinar

General Admission: \$10. Register at [Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.com).

For more information about Opera Previews, visit sfopera.com/operapreviews.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Subscriptions to San Francisco Opera's 100th season are now on sale via the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com.

Tickets for *Orpheus and Eurydice* range from \$26 to \$408 and are available at the San Francisco Opera Box Office, by phone at (415) 864-3330 and online at sfopera.com. 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. (Saturdays phone only except during performance season). 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.

Virtual tickets for the November 20 livestream of *Orpheus and Eurydice* are \$27.50. For more information, visit sfopera.com/digital.

Each presentation of *Orpheus and Eurydice* at the War Memorial Opera House features a 25-minute Pre-Opera Talk by music scholar Marcia Green. Beginning 55 minutes prior to curtain, Pre-Opera Talks are open to tickets holders for the corresponding performance.

COVID-19 safety protocols will be in effect for all performances and events (including proof of full vaccination along with a matching photo ID and well-fitted face masks). For up-to-date information about San Francisco Opera's safety measures, visit sfopera.com/safetyfirst.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue. 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/Muni Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 21, 47, 49 and F Market Street. For further public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmta.com.

Gifts of all sizes help create San Francisco Opera's programs and are much appreciated. To donate visit sfopera.com/donate.

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2022–23 Season, visit sfopera.com.

CASTING AND CALENDAR

**American Debut *San Francisco Opera Debut +Merola Opera Program Graduate

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

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE (ORFEO ED EURIDICE) by Christoph Willibald Gluck
NEW SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRODUCTION

November 15 (7:30 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 20 (2 p.m.), 26 (7:30 p.m.); December 1 (7:30 p.m.), 2022

Libretto by Ranieri de' Calzabigi

Approximate running time: 90 minutes with no intermission

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

First performance: Vienna, October 5, 1762

First SFO performance: September 6, 1959 (on tour in Portland)

Most recent SFO performance: November 6, 1959 (on tour in Los Angeles)

Cast:

Orpheus Jakub Józef Orliński *

Eurydice
Amore
Dancers

Meigui Zhang ♪+
Nicole Heaston ♪
Alysia Chang, Brett Conway, Marian Faustino *,
Livanna Maislen *, Christopher Nachtrab, Maxwell

Simoes

Creative Team:

Conductor

Peter Whelan **

Director

Matthew Ozawa

Choreographer

Rena Butler *

Set and Projection Designer

Alexander V. Nichols

Costume Designer

Jessica Jahn

Lighting Designer

Yuki Nakase Link *

Chorus Director

John Keene

San Francisco Opera Orchestra and San Francisco Opera Chorus

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by Norby Anderson, Jerome L. and Thao N. Dodson, The Dolby Family, Carol and Dixon Doll, Bertie Bialek Elliott, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, Keith and Priscilla Geeslin, Gordon Getty, John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Burgess and Elizabeth Jamieson, Franklin and Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Steven M. Menzies, Bernard and Barbro Osher, Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne and Tad Taube, Phyllis C. Wattis Endowment Funds, Diane B. Wilsey, and Barbara A. Wolfe.

Orpheus and Eurydice is made possible, in part, by Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

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

San Francisco Opera livestreams are made possible, in part by George and Leslie Hume.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable production images, rehearsal photos and artist headshots for *Orpheus and Eurydice* are available at sfopera.com/press.

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