



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA RELEASES SECOND INSTALLMENT OF
STREAMING THE FIRST CENTURY FOCUSING ON FRENCH REPERTOIRE



Featured Historic Recordings Include:

Massenet's *Werther* (1978) with José Carreras, Maria Ewing and Kathleen Battle

Charpentier's *Louise* (1999) Starring Renée Fleming in the Title Role

Massenet's *Manon* (1939)

Massenet's *Thaïs* (1976)

Berlioz's *Les Troyens* (1966)

Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* (2002)

And the Oldest Known San Francisco Opera Recording: a Piano Roll of Music from Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* Recorded by Company Founder Gaetano Merola in 1925

Sessions 1 & 2 Available Now at sfopera.com/firstcentury

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 10, 2022) — *Streaming the First Century*, San Francisco Opera's free online hub for historic recordings and interviews, expanded today with the release of Session 2: "Parlez-vous français?" This new installment, the second of four releases scheduled for fall 2022, features performances of French repertory from the Company's first 100 seasons. Operas by Jules Massenet, Gustave Charpentier, Hector Berlioz and Olivier Messiaen are highlighted, along with the oldest known San Francisco

Opera recording: a piano roll of music from Camille Saint-Saëns' *Samson et Dalila* performed by Company founder Gaetano Merola in 1925.

As with Session 1: "Slavic Sensibilities," the new *Streaming the First Century* release includes two complete historic recordings, audio excerpts from four additional performances and introductions to each audio experience by contemporary voices who lend historical and musical insights. Each previously unissued performance, drawn mostly from the archival collections of San Francisco Opera, is presented to inspire deeper engagement with the repertory of the Company's current Centennial Season through moments from its distinguished past.

Streaming the First Century: "Parlez-vous français?"

Francis Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, onstage from October 15–30, provides the point of departure for a concentrated tour of French style exhibited on the War Memorial Opera House stage over the past century.

Complete Recordings



José Carreras in Massenet's *Werther* (1978); Samuel Ramey and Renée Fleming in Charpentier's *Louise* (1999).

Photos: Ron Scherl (left) and Ken Friedman (right).

WERTHER (1978) by Jules Massenet. The onstage chemistry between Spanish tenor **José Carreras** as Werther and Detroit-born soprano **Maria Ewing** as Charlotte in this 1978 broadcast led to a performance of blazing intensity. Baritone and devoted Maria Ewing fan **Kenneth Overton** introduces the performance and observes how these opera stars turned up the heat.

Cast: José Carreras (Werther), Maria Ewing (Charlotte), Kathleen Battle (Sophie), Allan Monk (Albert); Antonio de Almeida (conductor), Sonja Frisell (production).

LOUISE (1999) by Gustave Charpentier. Charpentier's rarely performed love letter to the city of Paris bursts with romantic ardor and exquisite vocalism in this souvenir from 1999. The cast, who performed their roles together only in San Francisco, is headed by **Renée Fleming** in the title role, **Jerry Hadley** as Julien, and **Samuel Ramey** and **Felicity Palmer** as Louise's protective parents. Dramaturg and writer **Roger Pines** unveils the delights of *Louise* and speaks with Fleming and Palmer about this memorable production, a passion project of former Company general director **Lotfi Mansouri**.

CAST: Renée Fleming (Louise), Jerry Hadley (Julien), Samuel Ramey (the Father), Felicity Palmer (the Mother); Patrick Summers (conductor), Lotfi Mansouri (production).

Excerpted Recordings



Tito Schipa and Bidú Sayão in *Manon* (1939); the Company premiere of *Les Troyens* (1966);
Sherrill Milnes and Beverly Sills in *Thaïs* (1976).

Photos: Lawrence Morton (left), Carolyn Mason Jones (center); Ron Scherl (right)

MANON (1939) by Jules Massenet. This historic fragment from the 1939 season opener preserves the artistry of two early San Francisco Opera favorites and vocal paragons of the past century: Italian tenor Tito Schipa and, in her Company debut, Brazilian soprano Bidú Sayão.

LES TROYENS (1966) by Hector Berlioz. A rare audience recording documented the moment Berlioz's epic roared into San Francisco Opera's repertory with two iconic interpreters at its heart: French diva Régine Crespin singing both Cassandre and Didon and Canadian tenor Jon Vickers as Aeneas.

THAÏS (1976) by Jules Massenet. Nearly a decade before his appointment as San Francisco Opera's first music director, John Pritchard led the Company premiere of Massenet's *Thaïs* featuring the operatic star power of Beverly Sills in the title role and Sherrill Milnes as Athanaël.

SAINT FRANÇOIS D'ASSISE (2002) by Olivier Messiaen. The U.S. premiere of Messiaen's only opera was a marquee event in Company history, led by then-Music Director Donald Runnicles and starring Willard White as the title role and namesake of San Francisco.

Additional features of Session 2 include:

- A rare piano roll of music from *Samson et Dalila* played by Company founder Gaetano Merola in 1925, courtesy of the Archive of Recorded Sound at Stanford University.
- An archival interview between soprano Bidú Sayão and former general director and noted raconteur Terence McEwen. An essay about Sayão's charm by writer Paul Thomason further illuminates this memorable performer.
- "Spanning the Decades" conversations between Justin Partier and legendary lighting designer Thomas Munn, captured a few weeks before Munn's passing last May; and former Chorus Director Ian Robertson and Dramaturg Emeritus Kip Cranna continue their conversation from Session 1.
- A recent interview with Dame Felicity Palmer recalling her role as the Mother in the 1999 production of Charpentier's *Louise*.
- From the San Francisco Opera Oral History Project, in partnership with the Oral History Center at UC Berkeley, an excerpt from the life history interview with Pamela Rosenberg, San Francisco Opera's fifth general director, about presenting the American premiere of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* in 2002.
- And more in the "Down the Rabbit Hole" feature!

Full details of future installments of *Streaming the First Century* will be available with the launch of each new session. Upcoming releases include:

Session 3: "Italian Roots" (Released November 7)

November brings new San Francisco Opera productions of *La Traviata* and *Orpheus and Eurydice* to the stage, along with this opportunity to survey the Company's foundations in Italian works by Leoncavallo, Puccini, Giordano and Verdi.

Complete recordings: Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (1962) / Puccini's *Turandot* (1977)

Excerpts: *Tosca* (1932); *Andrea Chénier* (1938); *Il Trovatore* (1971); *La Forza del Destino* (2005)

Session 4: "Ho Jo To Ho!" (Released December 5)

With *Die Frau ohne Schatten* on the horizon for Summer 2023, *Streaming the First Century* invites you to delve into works by German and Austrian composers with memorable San Francisco Opera performances of works by Strauss, Korngold, Mozart and Wagner.

Complete recordings: Strauss' *Salome* (1974) / Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt* (2008)

Excerpts: *Die Walküre* (1936); *Così fan tutte* (1960); *Elektra* (1966); *Fidelio* (1978)

Streaming the First Century is made possible by the Edward Paul Braby San Francisco Opera Archives and through partnerships with the American Guild of Musical Artists, the American Federation of Musicians and the individual artists involved. The Company extends its gratitude to all who support the Archives and its ongoing work to preserve and tell the Company's story. To learn more about the San Francisco Opera's Archives and performance history, visit archive.sfopera.com.

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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.

Streaming the First Century is one of our many Innovation Programs made possible, in part, by the Creative Edge Fund with major support from founding funders Carol and Dixon Doll, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, and Bob Ellis. Additional support provided by Julie Dickson.

Innovation Program sponsorships are available. If interested in learning more or making a gift, please contact Chief Philanthropy Officer Lisa Bury at lbury@sfopera.com or (415) 551-6226.

San Francisco Opera is supported, in part, by a grant from Grants for the Arts.



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