



SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA'S *IN SONG* WINS 2022 WEBBY PEOPLE'S VOICE AWARD

Intimate Storytelling and Music Video Series is Top Popular Vote Choice for
Internet Honor in Record-Breaking Online Turnout



Scenes from *In Song* episodes with Pene Pati (Photo: Luke Foley-Martin); J'Nai Bridges (Photo: Taylor Ballantyne); Arturo Chacón-Cruz (Photo: Karli Evans); Amina Edris and her uncle Mamdouh Edris (Photo: Mostafa Abdel Aty); Jamie Barton and Béla Fleck (Photo: Taylor Ballantyne)

Watch all five episodes of *In Song* here: sfopera.com/insong.

San Francisco, CA (April 26, 2022) — The Webby Awards announced today that San Francisco Opera's intimate video portrait series *In Song*, produced with Lumahai Productions, won the 2022 "Webby People's Voice Award" for best music "Video Series & Channel." In a competitive category of five nominees including NPR, Pitchfork and Soundcloud, *In Song* received the most online votes cast between April 5 and April 21 for "the Internet's highest honor" (*New York Times*). *In Song* was also nominated for the 2022

Webby Award for best music “Video Series & Channel,” for which the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences selected *In The Know x Complex: Making it*.

San Francisco Opera's *In Song* explores, through story and song, the diverse cultural traditions that inform the personal and musical journey of notable artists from the world of opera, including soprano Amina Edris, mezzo-sopranos Jamie Barton and J'Nai Bridges, tenors Arturo Chacón-Cruz and Pene Pati and guest star banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck (in the episode with Barton).

It was a record-setting year for the “Webby People’s Voice Award,” with nearly 500,000 users worldwide casting over 2 million votes for their favorite videos, podcasts, websites, apps, games and other categories.

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilvock said: “I am ecstatic that San Francisco Opera's *In Song* series was recognized by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences and voted a Webby’s People’s Voice winner! We wanted this series to connect audiences to the intimate humanity of opera, and I am so proud of what has come to life on screen. I want to recognize our fellow nominees for the groundbreaking work they are doing in the digital space. And I want to thank everyone who makes *In Song* possible, from the artists who share their stories and artistry so openly, the crews who capture and edit the work with such nuance, my colleague Greg Henkel who conceived the series, our director Elena Park, our producer Molly McBride, the donors to the Creative Edge Fund, and the whole community of San Francisco Opera whose integrity, creativity and talents are reflected in the beautiful stories told onscreen. *In Song* is a wonderful example of the power of song to uplift our collective soul.”

Elena Park, director and executive producer for the series, said: “Five extraordinary singers—Amina Edris, Jamie Barton, J'Nai Bridges, Arturo Chacón-Cruz and Pene Pati—invited cameras into their worlds with huge generosity of spirit, at a time when their ability to share their gifts, and to connect with audiences, was severely curtailed. They opened their hearts to us, connecting us to their personal stories and intense love of music across genres, deeply touching and nourishing us in the process. Lumahai Productions is proud to collaborate with San Francisco Opera on this ongoing series. We all thank each of these singular artists as well as Béla Fleck and the other amazing performers who joined them; the local crews in New York City, Miami, Nashville/“The Pocket” (GA), Auckland and Cairo; and our dedicated production team.”

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Shot on location in cities ranging from Nashville and New York City to Auckland and Cairo, each *In Song* episode explores, through story and song, the diverse cultural traditions that inform the personal and musical journey of notable artists from the world of opera.

Of the free series, the *Wall Street Journal* observed, “Such appealing portraits, offering insights into the artists we appreciate onstage, also help position opera as part of a rich musical continuum” and “offer a new level of accessibility to the art form.” The 15–19-minute episodes have been viewed widely throughout the United States, but also in Egypt, Mexico and American Samoa—a testament to the universality of song, regardless of genre.

The series continues this summer with *In Song: Meigui Zhang*, showcasing the fast-rising Chinese soprano and former Merola Opera Program participant. Meigui Zhang is scheduled to make her San Francisco Opera mainstage debut as Dai Yu in Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang’s *Dream of the Red Chamber*, June 14–July 3.

In Song was launched in March 2021 by Executive Producers Matthew Shilvock (San Francisco Opera General Director), Gregory Henkel (San Francisco Opera Managing Director: Artistic) and Elena Park (Lumahai Productions President & Founder). The Series Producer is Molly McBride.

Series Director: Elena Park; Series Producer: Molly McBride (Co-Director for *J’Nai Bridges*, *Jamie Barton*); Series Editor: Steven E. Mallorca; Editor & Director of Photography: Jonathan David Kane (*Arturo Chacón-Cruz*); Directors of Photography: Bassem EL-Kashef (*Amina Edris*); Justin Ervin (*J’Nai Bridges*); Timothy Flower (*Pene Pati*); and Roger Pistole (*Jamie Barton*).

The digital series is made possible, in part, by San Francisco Opera’s Creative Edge Fund with major support from Carol and Dixon Doll; Peter Fenton and Kate Greer; and Bob Ellis.

In Song episodes include:

- *In Song: J’Nai Bridges* – Bridges invites viewers into what she calls her “village,” the community of friends and family who support her on and off the stage. Music: Spirituals and German Lieder.

- *In Song: Pene Pati* – The Samoan tenor reflects on the centrality of his family in his musical journey from New Zealand to the world's leading opera stages. Music: Traditional Samoan and Italian songs.
- *In Song: Jamie Barton featuring Béla Fleck* - Hailing from The Pocket—a rural valley in Georgia—Barton talks about her embracing her identity and explores her musical roots with banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck. Music: baroque and folk music. *In partnership with Hardly Strictly Bluegrass.*
- *In Song: Arturo Chacón-Cruz* – The Mexican tenor directs young musicians at a mariachi academy in Miami and reflects on the importance of culture, love and determination in both music and life. Music: Spanish and Italian song and mariachi music. Spanish subtitle version available. *In partnership with the Consulate General of Mexico in Miami and the Mexican American Council, Inc.*
- *In Song: Amina Edris* - Filmed on location in her native Cairo, Edris recounts a childhood filled with Arabic music inspired by her oud-playing uncle who introduced her to the music of Oum Kalthoum and Maria Callas. Music: Egyptian popular song and French art song. Arabic subtitle version available.

All *In Song* episodes are free and available at sfopera.com/insong and on YouTube and Facebook, along with additional content including conversations between *In Song* artists and director Elena Park about the making of each episode.

The *In Song* series is made possible, in part, by the Creative Edge Fund with major support from Carol and Dixon Doll, Peter Fenton and Kate Greer, and Bob Ellis.

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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