



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA

## **MATTHEW SHILVOCK NAMED NEW GENERAL DIRECTOR OF SAN FRANCISCO OPERA**

**Shilvock to Begin Five-Year Contract August 1, 2016**

**Succeeds David Gockley Who Will Retire July 2016,  
Concluding a 44-Year Career as Opera Impresario**



Photo credit: Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera

SAN FRANCISCO (September 22, 2015) — Matthew Shilvock has been named General Director of San Francisco Opera and will assume his new position as the Company's seventh director on August 1, 2016 with a five-year contract through July 2021. Mr. Shilvock is currently Associate General Director of San Francisco Opera. The announcement was made today by Keith Geeslin, President of the San Francisco Opera Association; John Gunn, Chairman of the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors; and Steven Menzies, Chairman of San Francisco Opera Association's Search Committee and Board Treasurer, at a War Memorial Opera House press conference. Mr. Shilvock's nomination was

confirmed at a special Board of Directors meeting on Friday, September 18. He succeeds General Director David Gockley, who announced in October 2014 his intention to retire in July 2016.

The selection of Matthew Shilvock was the result of a rigorous, ten-month-long, international search led by a committee of 13 members representing a broad cross section of the Board and its leadership. “We consulted with numerous industry leaders who offered important advice before casting a wide net in our search for the next director,” said San Francisco Opera Association President **Keith Geeslin**. “Ultimately, we all agreed that Matthew was the ideal candidate. He understands this Company’s complex operations, has strong artistic and management credentials and is perfectly positioned to build upon the success of David Gockley’s tenure. I am confident that promoting a young leader with great skills and passion for opera from within our Company is the right decision. San Francisco Opera is forward-thinking, boldly innovative, creative and inclusive, and no one better than Matthew embodies those ideals.”

Mr. Shilvock, born and educated in England, joined San Francisco Opera in 2005 and has served as Associate General Director since 2010. As Associate General Director, Mr. Shilvock manages and leads five departments: Music Operations (orchestra, chorus, dancers, commissions); Electronic Media; Education; the San Francisco Opera Center (professional artist training programs); and Rehearsal. He currently also serves as Interim Director of Development.

General Director Designate **Matthew Shilvock** said, “I wish to thank the Board leadership and Search Committee for their confidence in offering me the opportunity to be at the helm of this acclaimed international company. It is indeed a humbling invitation, but one I recognize as a great privilege and honor following the legacy of the extraordinary six directors who have led this organization over its storied history.”

Mr. Shilvock continued, “San Francisco Opera has a long tradition of finding, nurturing and celebrating the very finest talents. That is as vibrant a part of the Company’s activities today as it ever was, and I am committed to ensuring that we remain on the forefront of artistic excellence and innovation, whether on the glorious stage of the War Memorial Opera House, or through the exciting new possibilities of the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera. We will bring to this Company the very finest artists and the most compelling productions, creating holistic presentations that move, transform, empower and entertain audiences. San Francisco Opera tells the world’s most powerful stories, and those stories are as relevant today as they ever have been. We are blessed to exist in a city of such energy and possibility and we are proud to be able to share exciting, powerful productions with this most iconic of communities.”

Mr. Shilvock said, “I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the extraordinary impact that David Gockley has had on my career and life. He is a mentor, a friend and truly one of the greatest American opera impresarios. I am forever grateful to him for believing in me and trusting me.

Similarly, I have known and worked with Music Director Nicola Luisotti since his Company debut in 2005 with *La Forza del Destino*. His passion and devotion to this company is inspiring and I look forward to working with him in this new capacity.”

**Keith Geeslin** added: “I want to thank the Search Committee for their hard work and congratulate them on the thoughtful and thorough process that led to Matthew’s nomination. He is a strategic leader and motivator who is passionate about connecting audiences with the power and beauty of opera. He will provide strong continuity with our audience while finding new ways to reinvigorate San Francisco Opera’s role in our community. Matthew is an engaged collaborator who has earned the respect of our union colleagues and community partners, and the absolute trust of the Board of Directors.”

Chairman of the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors **John Gunn** commented: “I’m thrilled Matthew has accepted the Board’s invitation to become our next General Director. I believe it was the right decision to select Matthew and promote from within our great Company. I’ve watched him, worked with him and am very impressed by his knowledge of not only opera and classical music but also his keen understanding of San Francisco Opera’s immense operations. I couldn’t be more proud of his great accomplishments to date and feel confident that with Matthew at the helm, San Francisco Opera will continue its pivotal role as one of the world’s leading opera companies.”

**Steven Menzies**, Chairman of San Francisco Opera Association’s Search Committee, said: “Our committee and I, along with co-chair Bob Ellis, conducted a long and thorough search to select Matthew, who was an overwhelming choice. The committee very early determined that the position required a single full-time leader who could manage both the day to day operations of the Company as well as project a leadership role in the national and international opera community. The Search Committee spent many months of conducting detailed research, consulting with leading figures in the performing arts world and performing extensive direct interviews and detailed discussions, to review a broad range of candidates from Europe and North America. Throughout the screening process, Matthew presented himself with calm effectiveness, confidence and competence. Finally, he presented a compelling plan for how he would lead the Company for the next 10 years, which affirmed the committee’s agreement that he was the right choice to lead this great creative organization forward.”

Commenting on the selection of his successor, San Francisco Opera General Director **David Gockley** stated: “Matthew Shilvock is not only the best choice to succeed me, he is the ideal choice. He possesses a mix of personal qualities that is rare: intelligence, sensitivity, patience, respect for others, gentlemanly demeanor, but firmness when need be. His knowledge of the company is encyclopedic. He has been at my right hand every step of the way through critical production, planning and budget meetings, and taken on more authority as time has gone by. The Company’s good labor relations are

in large part the result of Matthew's skillful negotiations. Our media capability is due to his expertise in that area of the business. He is a sensitive musician and a keen judge of talent. He has the respect and trust of the Board, our donors, the nine unions that work in the Opera House, administrative staff and his opera colleagues across the nation and abroad. For every gap in my—and others'—capability, he has filled the hole. I congratulate the San Francisco Opera Board of Directors for making an inspired choice."

San Francisco Opera Music Director **Nicola Luisotti** added, "Matthew Shilvock today represents one of the best opportunities for a legendary opera company like ours. His deep knowledge in every sector of the theater is stunning. He understands that San Francisco Opera is a great company and is committed to maintaining its great tradition. I am so excited about this selection of a young man that proves, one more time, that this city is an example for the entire world."

President and CEO of OPERA America **Marc A. Scorca** noted: "It's wonderful to learn of Matthew Shilvock's appointment as the next General Director of the San Francisco Opera. Matthew met David Gockley through OPERA America's Fellowship Program and gained his unparalleled skill the old-fashioned way—working next to a master. No one understands the complexity of the San Francisco Opera more than Matthew does. It will be wonderful to experience his personal vision for opera as he takes the reigns of one of the nation's leading cultural institutions."

Mr. Shilvock has led some of David Gockley's signature initiatives over the past decade including the creation of vanguard media and education programs that have dramatically expanded the Company's local and international reach. His successful negotiation of a media rights framework across the Company made possible commercial releases on home video, television and the internet. He managed the development of the free live opera simulcast program which to date has attracted over 250,000 people to AT&T Park and other Bay Area civic and cultural venues. As the Company's lead negotiator with the American Guild of Musical Artists and American Federation of Musicians, he has worked with the Company's labor partners to sustain a positive, solution-oriented approach while realizing significant annual savings. He has worked closely with Mr. Gockley, the Board of Directors and the Company's senior executive team to develop strategic frameworks to stabilize the Company's finances.

Mr. Shilvock joined San Francisco Opera in 2005 as part of David Gockley's transition team as the General Director's Associate and was soon promoted to Director of New Initiatives, then Assistant General Director and subsequently Associate General Director. He has devoted his career to executive management in the performing arts, beginning his professional career in opera in 2002 as a Fellow with OPERA America, the national service organization for opera companies in North America, with assignments at Pittsburgh Opera, Houston Grand Opera and Glimmerglass Opera. In 2003, he was invited back to Houston by then-General Director David Gockley to serve as the General Director's Liaison.

Matthew Shilvock was born in Kidderminster, England in 1976. He studied music performance and history, reading music at Christ Church, Oxford University. He also holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, with a specialization in nonprofit administration. Mr. Shilvock resides in Marin County with his wife Kate and their two children.

San Francisco Opera is currently presenting its 93rd season with the 2015–16 repertory of ten opera productions at the War Memorial Opera House including Verdi's *Luisa Miller*; Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*; Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Mozart's *The Magic Flute*; Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a double bill of Gordon Getty's *Usher House* and Debussy's *La Chute de la Maison Usher*; Bizet's *Carmen*; Verdi's *Don Carlo*; and Janáček's *Jenůfa*. In winter 2016, the Company will open the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera in the adjacent Veterans Building featuring the Atrium Theater, a 299-seat flexible theater. The Company's budget for the 2015–16 Season is \$82 million. For more information about San Francisco Opera, visit [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

###

## **SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GENERAL DIRECTORS AT A GLANCE**

San Francisco Opera's illustrious history as one of the leading producers for the international lyric theater stage began in 1923 with the founding of the Company by Neapolitan-born pianist and conductor **Gaetano Merola**, who served as general director until 1953. During the first decade, the Company performed at the Civic Auditorium and for two seasons at the Dreamland Auditorium. It was because of Merola and the Company's Board that the dream of building the War Memorial Opera House came to fruition with a grand opening on October 15, 1932 with Puccini's *Tosca*. In 1953, while conducting an outdoor concert of opera highlights at Sigmund Stern Grove, Maestro Merola suddenly died on the podium. Looking within the Company, the Board chose Company chorus master, Austrian-born **Kurt Herbert Adler**, to serve as artistic director. Adler was subsequently promoted to general director in 1957 and presided over a highly innovative and groundbreaking period until 1981. Canadian-born **Terence McEwen**, a former head of the powerful and influential London Record label, became the Company's third general director in 1982, retiring in 1988, coincidentally on the same day that Adler unexpectedly died. **Lotfi Mansouri**, an Iranian-born and European trained stage director, veteran of over 50 San Francisco Opera productions and former General Director of the Canadian Opera Company, succeeded McEwen in 1988 until 2001. American-born **Pamela Rosenberg**, former head of Germany's Stuttgart Opera, took the Company reins in 2001, opening her first season only days before the 9/11 tragedy struck, and directed the Company until 2005. American **David Gockley**, an award-winning industry leader who ran Houston Grand Opera for 33 years, became San Francisco Opera's sixth General Director in January 2006 and will formally pass the baton to **Matthew Shilvock** on August 1, 2016.

- SFO -

For further press information:

San Francisco Opera Communications –

Jon Finck (415) 565-6472 / [jfinck@sfoopera.com](mailto:jfinck@sfoopera.com)

Julia Inouye (415) 565-6430 / [jinouye@sfoopera.com](mailto:jinouye@sfoopera.com)

Matthew Erikson (415) 565-6451 / [merikson@sfoopera.com](mailto:merikson@sfoopera.com)

National Press Representation –

Shuman Associates (212) 315-1300 / [shumanpr@shumanassociates.net](mailto:shumanpr@shumanassociates.net)