



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER

WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, JUNE 14–JULY 3, 2022

Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's Popular 2016 Opera Returns in Acclaimed Production by Director Stan Lai, Academy Award-Winning Production Designer Tim Yip and Lighting Designer Gary Marder



Scenes from *Dream of the Red Chamber*, 2016 (Photos: Cory Weaver/San Francisco Opera)

Darrell Ang Makes Company Debut Conducting Cast Headed by Konu Kim as Bao Yu, Meigui Zhang as Dai Yu and Hongni Wu as Bao Chai



Darrell Ang; Konu Kim; Meigui Zhang; Hongni Wu (Photo: Ed Choo)

Tickets Available at [sfopera.com](https://www.sfopera.com) and (415) 864-3330;
June 19 Will Be Livestreamed.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 19, 2022) — San Francisco Opera presents Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber* from June 14–July 3 at the War

Memorial Opera House. The musical retelling of the 18th-century novel by Cao Xueqin, one of China's literary masterworks, played to sold-out audiences during its initial run at San Francisco Opera in 2016 and has since garnered international acclaim through presentations at the 2017 Hong Kong Arts Festival and a tour of China. Six years after its world premiere, the work returns to San Francisco Opera in the original production and with a new cast. The Sunday, June 19 matinee performance will be livestreamed and available on-demand for 48 hours, beginning the following Monday, to virtual ticket holders.

The source novel for *Dream of the Red Chamber* is arguably comparable in Chinese culture to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in the West; it is widely known and continues to exert a powerful influence on romantic storytelling. The plot of the opera centers around the predestined soulmates Bao Yu, scion of the illustrious Jia family, and the brilliant but frail Dai Yu. Their union is complicated by a scheme to marry Bao Yu to the wealthy Bao Chai of the Xue family.

Born in Shanghai shortly before China's Cultural Revolution, Bright Sheng is one of today's foremost living composers who, as the MacArthur Foundation proclaimed, "merges diverse musical customs in works that transcend conventional aesthetic boundaries." Of his score for *Dream of the Red Chamber*, the *Los Angeles Times* observed, "He uses brass, winds and percussion (Western and Chinese) in original and highly imaginative ways. Pitches bend in ways that sound almost acrobatically impossible. Chinese folk tunes get transformed into rapturously expressive new music, gorgeously colored." Playwright David Henry Hwang, acclaimed for his many award-winning plays (*Chinglish*, *M. Butterfly*) and operatic collaborations (Philip Glass' *The Voyage*, Unsuk Chin's *Alice in Wonderland*, Howard Shore's *The Fly*, Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar* and the forthcoming world premiere at Santa Fe Opera of Huang Ruo's *M. Butterfly*), worked closely with Sheng on the work's libretto, creating a three-hour opera from a vast literary epic.

World-renowned theater artist Stan Lai (*Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*) returns to direct what the *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed "a magnificent production." The sets and costumes by Academy Award-winning designer Tim Yip (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) created opulent stage pictures, including an "amazing system of backdrops that rise and fall on cue, weaving together bits of rolling Chinese landscape in ways that are both literal and abstract" (*Opera News*) and lighting designer Gary Marder "bedecks the stage

in vivid ornament while maintaining a suitably dreamlike atmosphere" (*San Francisco Chronicle*).

Taking on the roles of Bao Yu and Dai Yu are Korean tenor Konu Kim and Chinese soprano Meigui Zhang, respectively, in their Company debuts. A graduate of the young artist program at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, Kim was recently praised for his "meltingly lovely tenor voice with easy top notes" (*San Diego Union Tribune*) as Ferrando in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. As a 2018 Merola Opera Program participant, Zhang appeared in *The Rake's Progress* for which the *San Francisco Chronicle* observed, "The evening's true star ... was soprano Meigui Zhang, who brought both tonal bloom and alert precision to the role of Anne Trulove." Chinese mezzo-soprano Hongni Wu will make her San Francisco Opera debut as Bao Chai, the beautiful heiress whom Bao Yu must marry.

Korean mezzo-soprano Hyona Kim and Taiwanese soprano Karen Chia-ling Ho, who both appeared in the world premiere cast, reprise their roles as Lady Wang and Princess Jia, respectively. Kim and Ho portrayed these roles at the 2017 Hong Kong Arts Festival and Ho on the Chinese tour. Completing the vocal ensemble cast are mezzo-soprano Sabina Kim in her debut as Granny Jia and mezzo-soprano Guang Yang as Aunt Xue. Yang, a winner of both the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World and Operalia competitions, first appeared with San Francisco Opera in 2010 as Amneris in Verdi's *Aida*.

San Francisco-born actor Francis Jue will perform the non-singing role of the Monk. Jue is well known for his work in theater, including roles in the David Henry Hwang plays *Soft Power*, *Yellow Face* and *M. Butterfly*. Among his many film and television credits are appearances in *Madam Secretary* as Chinese Foreign Minister Chen and *The Good Wife*.

Singaporean maestro Darrell Ang joins the Company for the first time to conduct the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus, the latter prepared by Chorus Director John Keene. Choreography, including for Bao Yu's sensuous dream sequence in Act I, is revived by Colm Seery who recently supervised the dance movements for San Francisco Opera's presentations of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2015) and Giordano's *Andrea Chénier* (2016).

The genesis of *Dream of the Red Chamber* began when Pearl Lam Bergad, executive director of the Minneapolis-based Chinese Heritage Foundation, approached then-San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley in 2013 about producing an opera based

on the novel. From the beginning, this musical and lyric setting of the timeless Chinese love story was to have an English libretto so it would be readily accessible to non-Chinese speakers. Sheng and Hwang's opera became the first in San Francisco Opera history to feature bilingual supertitles with text in both English and traditional Chinese.

Since presenting its first world premiere in 1961, San Francisco Opera has commissioned or co-commissioned more than 30 operas. Many of these new works have since become established in the international repertory, including Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, John Adams' *Doctor Atomic*, Sheng and Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber* and André Previn's *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The Company has two new operas scheduled for presentation during its Centennial Season of 2022–23: the world premiere of John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra* (September 2022) and the Bay Area premiere of Gabriela Lena Frank's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* (June 2023). Three Company co-commissions that premiered elsewhere will be staged at the War Memorial Opera House during the 2023–24 Season: Kaija Saariaho and Sofi Oksanen's *Innocence* (world premiere at Aix-en-Provence, 2021), Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' *Omar* (world premiere scheduled for the Spoleto Festival, 2022) and *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* by Mason Bates and Mark Campbell (world premiere at Santa Fe Opera, 2017).

Sung in English with English and Chinese supertitles, the seven performances of *Dream of the Red Chamber* are scheduled for June 14 (7:30 pm), June 17 (7:30 pm), June 19 (2 pm), June 23 (7:30 pm), June 25 (7:30 pm); July 1 (7:30 pm), July 3 (2 pm), 2022.

LIVESTREAM: June 19 matinee performance

The Sunday, June 19 matinee performance of Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang's *Dream of the Red Chamber* will be streamed live at 2pm PT. The performance will be available to watch on-demand for 48 hours beginning on Monday, June 20 at 10 am PT. Streaming tickets are \$25. For more information, visit sfopera.com/online.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE: DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER

Free Live Online Discussion: Friday, May 20 at 1 pm PT

Join Academy Award-winning designer Tim Yip (*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) and Jay Xu, the Barbara Bass Bakar Director and CEO of the Asian Art Museum, for a discussion about the artistic inspiration behind Yip's sets and costumes for *Dream of the Red*

Chamber. Register for this free live Zoom discussion at sfopera.com/on-stage/dream-of-the-red-chamber.

IN SONG: MEIGUI ZHANG – Coming June 7

The next episode of San Francisco Opera's Webby Award-winning video portrait series, *In Song*, will feature fast-rising Chinese soprano Meigui Zhang reflecting on her beginnings, growing up on the grounds of a music conservatory and raised by singer-teacher parents. In the episode she performs traditional Kazakh folk music and French art song. *In Song: Meigui Zhang* will be released on June 7 in anticipation of her Company debut as Dai Yu in *Dream of the Red Chamber*. To view the free episodes of *In Song* featuring soprano Amina Edris, mezzo-sopranos Jamie Barton (with banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck) and J'Nai Bridges and tenors Arturo Chacón-Cruz and Pene Pati, visit sfopera.com/in-song.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD PREVIEW SERIES: *DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER*

On June 7 and 8, the San Francisco Opera Guild presents a series of Opera Preview lectures on *Dream of the Red Chamber* by critic and journalist Ken Smith. Each 90-minute lecture provides in-depth insight into the opera's history, composer, story and music.

San Francisco Chapter

Tuesday, June 7 at 12 pm Zoom Webinar

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

Peninsula Chapter

Tuesday, June 7 at 7:30 pm

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, 1140 Cowper Street, Palo Alto

General Admission: \$10

San Jose Opera Guild

Wednesday, June 8 at 10 am

Addison-Penzak JCC Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road, Suite 201, Los Gatos

Free to San Jose Opera Guild and Addison-Penzak JCC members; General admission: \$10

East Bay Chapter

Wednesday, June 8 at 7:30 pm

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

General Admission: \$10

For more information about the Opera Preview Series, visit sfopera.com/operapreviews.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Dream of the Red Chamber* 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 May 14 through July 2). 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.

San Francisco Opera requires all patrons aged 12 and older, who are eligible, to show proof of vaccination and booster shot along with a photo ID for admission to performances at the War Memorial Opera House. Proof of vaccination is required for children aged 5 to 11 (defined as two weeks after their final shot). Unvaccinated attendees ages 5 years and up are not permitted. If you are attending with any children under the age of 5, please call the Box Office at (415) 864-3330. All patrons must wear well-fitted masks that cover their nose, mouth and chin when inside the War Memorial Opera House unless they are actively eating or drinking. A non-vented N95 mask is strongly recommended for maximum protection. For complete information about the Company's health and safety protocols, visit sfopera.com/safetyfirst.

To ensure flexibility for patrons in this transitional season, exchanges will be accepted without incurring a fee up to two hours before performances. Refunds will be available if patrons must miss a performance due to COVID. Refund requests must be made at least two hours before the performance.

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.

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2021–22 Season, visit sfopera.com/onstage.

DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut ♪Role Debut ■ Livestream
‡Current Adler Fellow +Merola Opera Program Graduate

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

DREAM OF THE RED CHAMBER by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang

June 14 (7:30 pm), 17 (7:30 pm), ■ 19 (2 pm), 23 (7:30 pm), 25 (7:30 pm); July 1 (7:30 pm), 3 (2 pm), 2022

Libretto by David Henry Hwang and Bright Sheng, based on the novel by Cao Xueqin
Sung in English with English and traditional Chinese supertitles
Approximate running time: 2 hours, 50 minutes including one intermission

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera, a Co-Production with the Hong Kong Arts Festival
World premiere: San Francisco Opera; September 10, 2016

Cast:

<i>Dai Yu</i>	Meigui Zhang *♪+
<i>Bao Yu</i>	Konu Kim *♪
<i>Lady Wang</i>	Hyona Kim
<i>Princess Jia</i>	Karen Chia-ling Ho +
<i>Bao Chai</i>	Hongni Wu *♪
<i>Granny Jia</i>	Sabina Kim *♪
<i>Aunt Xue</i>	Guang Yang ♪
<i>Monk/Dreamer</i>	Francis Jue *♪
<i>Maid</i>	Gabrielle Beteag *♪†+
<i>Stone (voice)/Eunuch</i>	Victor Cardamone *♪†+, Edward Graves *♪†+, Timothy Murray ♪†+
<i>Flower (voice)/Lady-in-Waiting</i>	Gabrielle Beteag *♪†+, Elisa Sunshine ♪†+, Esther Tonea *♪†+

Production Team:

<i>Conductor</i>	Darrell Ang *
<i>Director</i>	Stan Lai
<i>Production Designer</i>	Tim Yip
<i>Lighting Designer</i>	Gary Marder
<i>Revival Choreographer/Dance Master</i>	Colm Seery
<i>Chorus Director</i>	John Keene
<i>Fight Director</i>	Dave Maier

San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Opera Dance Corps

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by 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,

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Dream of the Red Chamber is made possible, in part, by John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn; Edmund W. and Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund; Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

The commission of the 2016 world premiere of *The Dream of the Red Chamber* was initiated and funded by the Chinese Heritage Foundation Friends of Minnesota.

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

San Francisco Opera would like to acknowledge the team of UCSF doctors who have provided guidance in planning the Company's safe return to the stage. Thank you to Drs. George Rutherford, Mark Almond, Robert Harrison, Sânziana Roman and Clark Rosen.

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable *Dream of the Red Chamber* production photographs and artist headshots are available at sfopera.com/press

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