



THREE DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS
AWARDED THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA MEDAL

Mezzo-Soprano Catherine Cook and Bass-Baritones Philip Skinner and Dale Travis Recognized for Artistic Excellence Throughout Careers Spanning Three Decades with the Company



Dale Travis, Philip Skinner and Catherine Cook presented with the San Francisco Opera Medal; the awardees backstage with General Director Matthew Shilvock. Photos: Kristen Loken/San Francisco Opera

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (October 31, 2022) — An onstage award presentation immediately following the October 30 matinee performance of Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* honored three cherished artists whose careers with San Francisco Opera each span over three decades. Mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook, who was Mother Jeanne in the afternoon's performance, and bass-baritone Dale Travis, who portrayed Marquis de la Force, were joined onstage by bass-baritone Philip Skinner to each receive the San Francisco Opera Medal.

San Francisco Opera Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock said: "As we celebrate this Centennial Season, one of the things that strikes me most poignantly is how many people in this Company have given decades of their lives in service to this stage. I am joined here today by three such artists, all of whom have been performing principal roles on this stage for over thirty years: Catherine Cook, Philip Skinner and Dale Travis. Each of them began their journeys as members of our prestigious Merola Opera Program and Adler Fellowship training programs, and each of them exemplifies a

devotion to craft, a spirit of collegial music making and an upholding of the highest artistic standards.”

He continued, “The San Francisco Opera Medal is the highest award given by the Company, bestowed in recognition of exceptional and devoted artistic service over many years. In recognition of each of our recipients being Adler alumni, I would like to invite three current Adler Fellows to the stage to help me with the presentation of the medals.”

Current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows tenor Victor Cardamone, tenor Edward Graves and baritone Timothy Murray brought out the medals and placed them around the necks of Cook, Skinner and Travis.



In her, to date, 31 years with San Francisco Opera, mezzo-soprano Catherine Cook has performed 42 roles in 56 productions for a total of 374 performances. While a San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow, Cook made her Company debut in 1991 as Mavra in Prokofiev’s *War and Peace* and quickly began establishing her extensive repertoire on the War Memorial Opera House stage, including several signature roles which she reprised on multiple occasions. Her 39 performances as Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and 61 as Berta in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, each a Company record, stand as indelible portrayals in San Francisco Opera’s 100-year history thanks to her vocal and dramatic artistry. Cook’s numerous San Francisco Opera highlights also include Jade Boucher in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking*, the title role in Tobias Picker’s *Dolores Claiborne*, Mrs. McLean in Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah* and La Frugola in Puccini’s *Il Tabarro*. A valued performer with other leading American companies including the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and Santa Fe Opera, Cook balances her busy performing career with being an educator. As a Professor of Voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, she holds the Frederica von Stade Distinguished Chair in Voice.



Bass-baritone Philip Skinner began his distinguished career with San Francisco Opera as Quinault in Cilea’s *Adriana Lecouvreur* on opening night of the 1985 season. A San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow in 1986 and 1987, his repertoire and importance within the Company grew rapidly. In 37 years, to date, he has amassed 50 roles in 61 productions for 403 performances, a total which will increase next month when he reprises one of his greatest stage characterizations, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*. His diverse, multilingual repertoire includes roles in Italian,

French, German, Russian, Czech, Sanskrit, and English. Earlier this season, he created the role of Lepidus in the world premiere of John Adams' *Antony and Cleopatra*, adding to a list of highlights with the Company that includes Dr. Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* at the Marin Center drive-in, Dansker in *Billy Budd*, Edgar Ray Killen in Philip Glass' *Appomattox*, the Speaker in *Die Zauberflöte*, Escamillo in *Carmen* and Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*. His art has also graced the stages of the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, La Monnaie, Teatro di San Carlo, and the San Francisco Symphony and Los Angeles Philharmonic.



Bass-baritone Dale Travis made an immediate impact with San Francisco Opera. After his debut in 1988 as the Keeper for the Madhouse in *The Rake's Progress*, he took on four additional roles while still a first-year San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow. Among his assignments that first season was

sharing the dual roles of Benoit and Alcindoro in *La Bohème* with his mentor, legendary bass Italo Tajo. Throughout his, to date, 34 years since joining the Company, Travis has established his own definitive portrayals of roles once owned on the world's stages by Tajo, especially the Sacristan in *Tosca*. Travis' 43 performances as the Sacristan are the most in Company history, surpassing the mark set by Salvatore Baccaloni, another Italian operatic icon, in a proud lineage at San Francisco Opera. Travis' many highlights with the Company include Dr. Kolenatý in *The Makropulos Case*, Dr. Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore* and the Marquis de la Force in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*. Travis has appeared in 263 performances with San Francisco Opera, including 33 roles in 43 productions. Travis has also shared his artistry with audiences at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Spoleto Festival USA, and at Torino's Teatro Regio, Berlin's Komische Oper and the New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv.

The San Francisco Opera Medal was inaugurated in 1970 when then-General Director Kurt Herbert Adler awarded the first medal to Company prima donna Dorothy Kirsten. The Opera Medal is the Company's highest honor and awarded for distinguished service to San Francisco Opera over many years. Past awardees include vocal soloists such as Samuel Ramey, Marilyn Horne, James Morris and Birgit Nilsson, former music directors Donald Runnicles and Nicola Luisotti, composer John Adams, artist David Hockney and dramaturg Dr. Clifford "Kip" Cranna.

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