

Performing Arts POSTPONED *but* NOT SILENCED

The power of music goes virtual to enrich, to unite, to heal

BY OLIVIA DECKER

THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC HAS CAUSED THE CANCELLATION OF all performing arts live concerts and events in San Francisco this year. During the lockdown, San Francisco Opera, Symphony and Festival Napa Valley continue to engage with audiences and share great artistry through online streaming and virtual presentations, providing much needed arts and music entertainments during this very difficult time for our community. We share their virtual programs with you and hope you will enjoy and support their endeavor.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA canceled their Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 seasons and all related live events. They swiftly presented the new initiatives including Opera is ON, free streaming of past performances, the Opera Aficionado interactive education series, and alternative programming such as the virtual event Celebrating the Summer Season. Over the past months, as health orders have permitted, limited work has resumed at San Francisco Opera that will allow the Company to be innovative and flexible in its programming. The costume shop has begun creating costumes for future productions, while continuing to produce thousands of face masks for Bay Area essential workers. The shutdown has also allowed the final phase of the War Memorial Opera House seat upgrade project to take place this fall and winter, ensuring a more comfortable and accessible opera-going experience when performances resume in the Opera House.

The new, virtual programming delves into the power of opera for families, educators, and artists via the Discover Opera newsletter; a virtual hub for soaring music, backstage stories, artist interviews, awe-inspiring voices, and other virtual opera events online, including shorter versions of classic, family-friendly operas to watch at home with children. Also available are online resources, including lesson plans, fun exercises, and readings to keep kids' minds filled with opera, stories, and arts.

The power of music has no borders and talents come from all races. San Francisco Opera's Department of Diversity, Equity and Community (DEC) promotes a vibrant arts world in which people of all races create,

share, and enjoy resources and relationships equitably, unleashing individual potential, embracing collective responsibility, and generating global prosperity in the arts and beyond.

On October 13, San Francisco Opera announced the launch of the Company Relief Challenge, a \$5 million matching fund to help underwrite the Company's support of its members and sustain San Francisco Opera through the unprecedented disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund will match one-to-one all annual gifts, pledges, and donated ticket funds through November 23, 2020. This critical challenge is made possible by the generosity of longtime Company sponsors John and Cynthia Fry Gunn, Pitch and Cathie Johnson, and Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem.

"San Francisco Opera has always enjoyed extraordinary support from the community, but the dedication our donors have shown during this crisis is truly phenomenal," said San Francisco Opera Association President Keith Geeslin. "I am so grateful to John and Cynthia, Pitch and Cathie, and Maria and Jan for their generous leadership in supporting the people of the Company and inspiring others to follow their example."

San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilcock stated: "We are a company of makers and creators, each season employing hundreds of the world's leading singers, instrumentalists, designers, dancers, crew members, administrators and more. We are deeply grateful both to our Company members who are making such deep sacrifices right now and to the community of opera lovers that is sustaining these incredible employees and artists, allowing us to present world class opera long into the future. The support that this challenge will make possible ensures we will come back to an exciting future that includes Eun Sun Kim's inaugural 2021-22 season and our 2022-23 Centennial Season with confidence, optimism and creativity." For more information or to donate to San Francisco Opera's Company Relief Challenge, please visit sfopera.com/donate.

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– San Francisco Opera General Director Matthew Shilcock

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD was founded over 80 years ago to provide funding for performing arts and opera music educations to schools. Prior to COVID-19, the Guild served more than 64,000 students in over 200 schools throughout Northern California, most importantly, to students in underserved communities.

Opera Guild President Mary Poland told *Haute Living*, San Francisco: “This global pandemic is slashing music and culture from curriculums nationwide, yet it is during times like these when children need arts the most. Music education not only gives a much needed sense of purpose and structure, it equips students with skills they need to become great leaders: compassion, critical thinking, creativity, and confidence. Faced with city-wide closures, we swiftly took our programs online and provided a dependable source of community for children experiencing isolation and uncertainty. Since April, all our fundraising events have either been canceled or postponed until 2021. We work on increasing our presence in the community via social media and are considering a virtual fundraiser. Our education programs are continuing in their virtual format. We have just launched our fall programming for classrooms, individuals, and learning bubbles.” Highlights of the programs include:

- **The Summer Conservatory 2020 program**, serving young artists aged 8–18, ran for three weeks in July, providing training in singing acting, movement, history, private coaching sessions, and more to 22 students from all over the country via Zoom. The program culminated in a virtual production of *The Magic Flute*, featuring the students with scenic elements and costumes they designed themselves. One hundred twenty-five people attended the screening of this online event.
- **Opera Scouts and Madrigals**, the youth training programs for ages 7–18, after a successful virtual spring, started fall Zoom meetings on September 9. This semester they will be working on repertoire and collaborating with Opera America’s Opera Teen Program with students across country in producing a holiday album for distribution in November. Additionally, they will compose and perform an original song cycle complete with multi-media components, based upon the themes of renewal, hope, and new beginnings. They will also participate in the New Instrument Merit Badge Challenge as they gain proficiency in musicianship.
- **Musical Brain Break and Meet an Opera!** were created to respond to current classroom challenges. These new mini-residencies are currently Zooming into multiple virtual classrooms in the Bay Area and beyond each week, teaching students the basic elements of singing and storytelling and introducing new and classic operas to students using a creative, active approach.
- **Composition Residencies:** Book to Bravo! and Voices for Social Justice are underway in virtual platforms this fall as students create and perform original works over each 12-week session. Culminating events will be in the form of radio plays, illustrated storyboarded operas, and Zoom performances and videos.
- **Opera à la Carte**, traditionally offered in the fall, will move to spring 2021, as the Guild is creating a hybrid version of this program able to serve its 100-plus participating schools on multiple platforms.

Poland pleaded: “With the suspension of our fundraising events, which account for 85 percent of our revenue, we hope you will support our mission of giving voice to potential through education and engagement programs that bring opera music center stage into the life of the community. At a time when music and art programs are disappearing from schools, the Guild’s education programs are more critical than ever. We depend on your support to develop programs that inspire students to make positive choices and become creative thinkers, innovators, and conscientious, intelligent, and culturally aware adults.” Please visit: <https://sfopera.com/Opera-Guild/guild-giving/>.



SF Symphony Music Director Michael Tilson Thomas celebrated 25th and final Season

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San Francisco Opera House with cut-out audiences



SF Opera Guild Summer Conservatory students perform Dido and Aeneas. Screen shot by Susan Malott

“The pandemic has changed a lot of things in our world but not our high standard of customer service. As we navigate together into the 2020–21 season, we promise to be there for you just as you continue to be there for us. We remain committed to bringing the best in music to our stages, while keeping our audiences, musicians, and staff safe. Bearing all this in mind, we ask you to join us on a journey of hope as we look to the future. We continue to be focused on creating exceptional performances and experiences that engage audiences and expand their connections to live orchestral music, to each other, and the world around them.”

– San Francisco Symphony CEO Mark C. Hanson



Aldo Lopez-Gavilan from Havana Cuba performed at One Night, Many Voices concert

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY canceled all concerts through December 31, 2020, including the celebration of legendary music director Michael Tilson Thomas’ 25th season and the start of new director, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and a festival of events for the 2020 lineup. Throughout the month of June, the San Francisco Symphony had an Online Tribute—<https://www.sfsymphony.org/MTT25>—a special 25-day digital tribute in honor of Michael Tilson Thomas’ extraordinary 25-year tenure as music director. Each day, San Francisco Symphony released original and archival content, highlighting achievements, milestones, artistic projects, and relationships illustrative of MTT and the orchestra’s dynamic 25-year partnership. The month’s activities culminated with MTT25: An Online Tribute Event for Michael Tilson Thomas on June 28, 2020, hosted by famed vocalists Audra McDonald and Susan Graham and featuring contributions and tributes by musicians of the San Francisco Symphony and Chorus, an array of distinguished guest artists, and many surprises.

The Symphony’s online content and digital experiences on the CURRENTS podcast series aims to further elaborate on and personalize the conversations and themes introduced in the CURRENTS video episodes. Released the week following each video episode, the four audio episodes provide additional opportunities to tie in current events, personal stories and perspectives, and explorations outside the musical sphere. CURRENTS Explore & Create further encourages learning and exploration for all ages through a series of conversations and activities designed to guide curious patrons through the characteristics that shape the musical cultures explored in CURRENTS video episodes: Chinese, jazz, hip hop, and Mexican. Hosted and curated by conductor Daniel Bartholomew-Poyser, these videos and interactive activities provide audiences with tools and inspiration to deepen their listening skills and express their own experiences.



San Francisco Symphony's One-on-One Concert



Louis Davies Symphony Hall

Bartholomew-Poyser notes: “We don’t want you just to listen. We want you to engage and respond to what you’re hearing in our CURRENTS series.” Audiences are invited to create and share submissions on social media using the hashtag #SFSCurrents, with the submitted posts to be aggregated and shared on the San Francisco Symphony’s website throughout the project at [sfsymphony.org/CURRENTS](https://www.sfsymphony.org/CURRENTS).

The Symphony also launched the 1:1 Concerts while in-person performances by the full San Francisco Symphony are on hold. The Symphony remains committed to creating exceptional performances and experiences that engage audiences and expand their connections to live music, to each other, and the world around them through unique 1:1 Concerts. These intimate concerts are shared only by one performer from the San Francisco Symphony and one audience member at a time, with the musical selections chosen by each performer and announced in person. The performances last 20 to 30 minutes and take place on the two outdoor terraces on the Orchestra Lobby level at Davies Symphony Hall, while adhering to current health guidelines from the

City of San Francisco. The Symphony has selected guests for this initial set of one-on-one performances from across broad constituent groups, including San Francisco Symphony donors, subscribers, and volunteers; Prelude and Symphonix members; community partners; teacher partners; and other groups. Visit <http://sfsymphony.org/OnetoOne> for information.

Ticket holders of the canceled concerts were encouraged to consider donating the cost of their tickets back to San Francisco Symphony or to ask for a gift certificate for the value of their tickets. This helps support the Symphony as a nonprofit performing arts organization during this challenging time. Ticket donations go a long way in helping San Francisco Symphony come back stronger and more vibrant than ever. Patrons can double the impact of ticket donations with a 1 to 1 match made possible by a group of generous San Francisco Symphony Board members and donors including President Sakurako Fisher and William Fisher, President-Elect Priscilla B. Geeslin and Keith Geeslin, former President John Goldman and Marcia Goldman, and Development Committee Chair Trine Sorensen and Michael Jacobson.



SF Opera Guild Summer Conservatory students' virtual performance of Mozart's "Magic Flute". Screen shot by Caroline Altman



Festival Napa Valley's Remote Ensemble performed by 120 alumni musicians from eight Countries



Festival Napa Valley's one-night-only Songs of Gratitude online concert will air globally on Dec. 5, 2020

FESTIVAL NAPA VALLEY: Blending the beauty and bounty of Napa Valley with the very finest performing arts, Festival Napa Valley offers programs that enrich the vitality of the region and make the arts accessible to all. The Festival presents world class performances staged in iconic Napa Valley venues and inspiring educational programs offered at Napa County public schools year-round. It is presented by Napa Valley Festival Association, a nonprofit organization governed by a board of prominent vintners and local leaders. More than 200 artists, wineries, resorts, theaters, restaurants, chefs, and vintners participate each year. Festival Napa Valley's 15th Anniversary Season, originally slated for the summer of 2020, will take place July 16-25, 2021.

The Festival has been at the forefront of producing online content and at-home experiences throughout 2020. In April, the Festival launched a remote ensemble featuring alumni musicians from 26 states, eight countries, and five continents, performing "Va, Pensiero" from Verdi's *Nabucco*. The performance paid tribute to the pandemic's heroic essential workers. You can watch it here: <https://festivalnapavalley.org/programs/virtual-performances/remote-ensemble/>.

This summer, with generous support from Deborah and Kenneth Novack, the Festival launched the Novack Concerts for Kids. The first concert featured Britain's remarkable Kanneh-Mason family, seven brothers and

sisters aged 10 to 23 years old, all of whom play violin, piano, or cello. The Kanneh-Masons recorded the performance while in quarantine at their home in Nottingham, England. It debuted in June through the closed circuit broadcast system of UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital for an audience of patients, parents, nurses, doctors, and staff. The program has been made available for use by educational organizations, Bay Area Boys & Girls Clubs, assisted living centers, and hospitals.

Additional concerts in the Novack series to be released in 2020 include the world premiere of an interactive music-art-game from recorder sensation Tabeca Debus, and an experiential educational program featuring The Sphinx Virtuosi, a dynamic ensemble comprised of 18 top Black and Latinx classical soloists.

In July, Festival Napa Valley presented One Night, Many Voices, a concert which went viral, viewed by over 1 million households in 50 countries around the globe. A star-studded roster of artists performed, including Festival favorites Joshua Bell and his wife, soprano Larisa Martínez; tenor Michael Fabiano; soprano Nadine Sierra; pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet; and the Young People's Chorus of NYC. The concert culminated with a swinging jazz performance by pianist Aldo López-Gavilán and his band direct from Havana, Cuba. View the concert here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cknhV_YHkr4&feature=youtu.be.



Festival Napa Valley's "One Night, Many Voices" online concert



Miss America 2019, Nia Imani Franklin, performed at Festival Napa Valley

"The arts have the power to convey our most powerful emotions, and our hopes and dreams for the future. We've curated Songs of Gratitude to be rich, intriguing, entertaining, thought-provoking, surprising, and joyful. This concert is envisioned as a way to connect us all, and to give thanks to our community and to those working hard behind the scenes during this extraordinary time."

*—Richard Walker, President & CEO
of Festival Napa Valley*

In September, Festival Napa Valley joined JCB Live for a Happy Hour with vintner and Festival board member Jean-Charles Boisset and Festival CEO Rick Walker. Together they celebrated the arts with singer, composer, and Miss America 2019, Nia Imani Franklin, who will be performing at the Festival next summer. Vintner and Founding Chairman of the Board Darioush Khaledi joined the JCB Live program in October, with other Festival board members and partners to follow.

Next up: on December 5, 2020, the Festival presents Songs of Gratitude in response to a year of unimaginable hardship for the Napa community, and for our planet. Airing globally as a free, one-night-only, online event, Songs of Gratitude will showcase the beauty and strength of Napa Valley. The program features performances by pianist Audrey Vardanega; the Friction String Quartet; opera singers Kelley O'Connor, Lisa Delan, and Nicholas Phan; traditional Mexican roots folk ensemble Los Cenzontles; jookin' dancer Ron "Prime Tyme" Myles; cellists Matt Haimovitz and Starla Breshears; chanteuse and harpist Lucinda Belle; and a remote vocal ensemble featuring the talents of Napa County high school choristers. "The arts have the power to convey our most powerful emotions, and our hopes and dreams for the future," said Richard Walker, President & CEO of Festival Napa Valley. "We've curated Songs of Gratitude to be entertaining, thought-provoking, surprising, and joyful. This concert is envisioned as a way to connect us all and to give thanks to our community and to those working hard behind the scenes during this extraordinary time." For more information and to RSVP, please visit festivalnapavalley.org.



Young People's Chorus of NYC performed at One Night, Many Voices

Publisher's LETTER



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2020 FEELS LIKE AN ETERNITY, BUT WE ARE FINALLY PUBLISHING our last issue of the year and celebrating the holiday season. In this challenging year, we witnessed the coronavirus pandemic, the tragic loss of many Black lives, and California's massive wildfires, not to mention the shut-down of just about everything from schools, sports, offices, restaurants, stores, and hotels to performing arts and all public events, extending from a 4-week original plan to more than seven months! We are now accustomed to schooling children at home, working from home, Zoom meetings for all sorts of events, and building closer relationships with ourselves and our families while sheltering in place at home and wearing masks.

We are proud that our community is so resilient and strong to cope with the dramatic change of lifestyle and daily routine. As a luxury lifestyle magazine, we pivoted from sponsoring and covering the Bay Area's finest events to focusing on health, wellness, beauty, and COVID-19 research. We were surprised to gain more readers who enjoy our new content as being more relevant and helpful in dealing with the stress of confinement and restrictions.

You might wonder what happened to the performing arts concerts, opening galas, and events. Our cover story reports how San Francisco Opera, Symphony, and Festival Napa Valley each had to cancel their entire season's planned performing programs. Thankfully, they continue to provide much needed music entertainment to enrich, unite, and heal our community and provide our schools with much-needed music education programs. They employed all sorts of creative and virtual programs that brought music and hope to many during the pandemic. Music is a global language without borders that touches our emotions and showcases talents from all races. We salute the performing arts musicians who keep the music playing to help heal us. We hope you read this cover story, enjoy their programs, and support them with your generous donations.

We want to cheer you up with this holiday issue with an extra serving of food and wine articles (26 pages to be exact!), a holiday gift shopping guide to stores where you can browse and shop for gifts, and a report on luxury ski resorts that are *open*! We profiled masterful San Francisco plastic surgeon Dr. Dino Elyassnia, in case you wish to look 15 to 20 years younger for the New Year. We also profiled Charleston Pierce and his "Bay Area Models for Black Lives" production, using his fashion superpowers to support the Black community. We also pay tribute to our beloved philanthropist, Ann Getty, who left us last month after an unexpected heart attack. Our future event scene pages will miss her dearly.

We wish you a very happy holiday season! Stay well, stay strong, and stay positive,

Olivia