



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA GUILD

**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA GUILD ANNOUNCES
*OPERA BALL 2017 AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE, SEPTEMBER 8***

**Co-Chairs Courtney Labe and Maryam Muduroglu with
Guild President Jane Mudge Present Annual Gala Benefit Celebrating the
Opening of San Francisco Opera's 95th Season**

***Opera Ball 2017* Honoree Is Company Music Director Nicola Luisotti,
Conductor of Season-Opening Performance of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot***

For tickets sfopera.com/operaball2017 and (415) 565-3204



Left: *Opera Ball* co-chairs Courtney Labe and Maryam Muduroglu with Nicola Luisotti (@Valentina Simi/San Francisco Opera)

Center: Jane Mudge; Right: *Opera Ball* (@Drew Altizer Photography)

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (July 13, 2017) — San Francisco Opera Guild in collaboration with San Francisco Opera Association today announced details for ***Opera Ball 2017 at The Imperial Palace***, a gala benefit celebrating the opening of the Company's 95th Season on Friday, September 8. Set within an elegant Imperial Palace Pavilion adjacent to the War Memorial Opera House, *Opera Ball 2017*, along with the opening night gala performance of Giacomo Puccini's *Turandot*, will launch the new opera season with customary brilliance. The co-chairs for *Opera Ball 2017* are **Courtney Labe** and **Maryam Muduroglu**. Honorary chairs for the event are **John A. and Cynthia Fry Gunn** and **Diane B. Wilsey**. The honoree for

this year's event is San Francisco Opera Music Director **Nicola Luisotti** who will step down from his post at the conclusion of the 2017–18 Season.

Beginning at 5 p.m. with a festive cocktail reception within the foyer of the Beaux Arts-designed War Memorial Opera House, guests will promenade at 6 p.m. to the Pavilion for an elegant dinner by **McCalls Catering & Events**. With the opening night opera *Turandot* as his inspiration, designer **J. Riccardo Benavides** will create an atmospheric setting within the Pavilion that will transport guests to a reimagined Imperial Palace. This magical and opulent setting will evoke a distant time and place for the 750 *Opera Ball* patrons as they celebrate the opening of San Francisco Opera's 2017–18 Season. Following dinner, patrons return to the Opera House for the 8 p.m. curtain of the gala performance of *Turandot*, Puccini's majestic 1926 work. After the opera, *Opera Ball 2017* attendees will be welcomed back to The Imperial Palace Pavilion for cocktails, savories, sweets and dancing to the sounds of Pop Rocks.

Opera Ball 2017 co-chairs **Courtney Labe** and **Maryam Muduroglu** said: "We're thrilled to be co-chairing *Opera Ball 2017 at the Imperial Palace*, celebrating the opening of the 95th season and Puccini's glorious opera *Turandot*, which is set in legendary Peking and features "Nessun dorma," one of the composer's most sublime arias. This year is particularly special to us, as we will be honoring Nicola Luisotti in his final season as music director of San Francisco Opera."

Maestro Luisotti will conduct *Turandot* and then join the co-chairs and all *Opera Ball* patrons in the Pavilion for a warm tribute to his distinguished tenure on the Company's podium. For the 2017 Fall Season, Luisotti also leads the free *Opera in the Park* concert and Verdi's *La Traviata*. Since his Company debut in 2005 leading Verdi's *La Forza del Destino* and 2009 appointment as music director, Luisotti has conducted over 40 operas and concerts with San Francisco Opera.

When asked to be the honoree for *Opera Ball 2017*, the Italian-born conductor said: "I accept with deepest appreciation. I am very proud of the work we have accomplished during my time with San Francisco Opera. As I step down from the post of Music Director at the end of the 2017–18 Season, this will certainly be a very emotional year for me. To be acknowledged by the Opera Guild at so prestigious an affair as *Opera Ball* is a great and touching honor. My wife, Rita, and I both thank you from the bottom of our hearts."

One of the premiere philanthropic evenings on the West Coast, *Opera Ball* brings together local and national corporate, political, civic and charitable leaders all committed to the cause of music education and the transformative experiences San Francisco Opera presents on the stage of the War Memorial Opera House. The mission and distinguished tradition of *Opera Ball* in San Francisco have long attracted important collaborators and partnerships to the annual event. San Francisco Opera Guild is honored to welcome **Town & Country magazine**, the authority on modern society, elegant living and irreplaceable guide to exceptional people and exclusive destinations, as National Media Sponsor.

San Francisco Opera Guild President **Jane Mudge** said: “The importance of culture and community to a well-functioning society are more apparent than ever. The Opera Guild is proud to produce the *Opera Ball* celebrating the 95th season of San Francisco Opera. The funds from the Ball help to raise awareness of the art form of opera, deliver our nationally recognized education programs to the Greater Bay Area and, most importantly, impact and change the lives of today’s youth.”

The success of *Opera Ball* is in large part due to support from the community. “It is a thrill for us to introduce our partnership with the award-winning **HALL Wines in Napa Valley** at *Opera Ball*,” said co-chairs Courtney Labe and Maryam Muduroglu. “Craig and Kathryn Hall are deeply committed to expressive arts, making HALL Wines the perfect partner at *Opera Ball*, which is a celebration of opera as an art form.”

Opera Ball 2017 is made possible through the generous support of Opening Weekend Grand Sponsor **Diane B. Wilsey**; Cocktail Reception Sponsor **TriplePoint Capital**; Dinner Sponsor **Neiman Marcus Union Square**; Corporate Sponsor **Abbot Downing**; Official Airline **United Airlines**; Benefactor Party Sponsors **Jack Calhoun & Trent Norris**; Patron Party Sponsors **Maryam & Oran Muduroglu**; Sparkling Wine Sponsor **Roederer Estate**; Wine Sponsor **HALL Wines in Napa Valley**; and Media Sponsors **Town & Country** and **Nob Hill Gazette**. Additional Corporate Table Sponsors include Accenture, Bank of America, Burberry, Meyer Sound, Resolution Economics LLC, San Francisco Giants, Union Bank and Wells Fargo. Proceeds benefit the community initiatives and education programs of the Opera Guild and San Francisco Opera which reach a combined 60,000 students around Northern California each year.

Giacomo Puccini’s *Turandot* features Austrian soprano **Martina Serafin** in the title role, American tenor **Brian Jagde** as Calaf, Italian soprano **Maria Agresta** in her Company debut as Liù, current San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow soprano **Toni Marie Palmertree** as Liù (September 24 and 30) and American bass **Raymond Aceto** as Timur. Maestro Luisotti conducts the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus in the classic production by English artist **David Hockney**, directed by **Garnett Bruce**. *Turandot* will be presented in six performances between Friday, September 8 and September 30. The opera returns mid-season on November 18 in an encore presentation featuring several new cast members, including soprano **Nina Stemme** as Princess Turandot, soprano **Leah Crocetto** as Liù and Company debuts by bass **Soloman Howard** as Timur and conductor **Christopher Franklin**.

OPERA BALL 2017 AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE / TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *Opera Ball 2017 at The Imperial Palace* are priced at \$1,500; \$2,500; \$5,000 and \$10,000 and are available at sfopera.com/operaball2017 and by calling (415) 565-3204. Tickets for the performance of Puccini’s *Turandot* are sold separately.

Tickets for *Turandot*, priced from \$26–\$398, are available at sfopera.com and through the San Francisco Opera Box Office [301 Van Ness Avenue] and by phone at (415) 864-3330. Standing Room tickets go on sale at 10 a.m. on the day of each performance; tickets are \$10 each, cash only, and are restricted to two per person. Casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change.

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Courtney Labe & Maryam Muduroglu / Opera Ball 2017 Co-Chairs

Courtney Labe is involved with a variety of educational, cultural, fundraising and philanthropic affairs. Raised on the East Coast, she lives in Los Altos Hills and has three daughters and a step-son. She has a background in the arts and music and former career in technology and venture capital backed companies, including Danger, Inc., developer of one of the first smartphones, and serving in marketing and merchandising groups at Microsoft. She is an accomplished musician, including playing as a pianist with jazz ensembles and teaching classical piano. She began her career working at Butterfield's Auction House and the Norton Simon Museum and received her B.A. in Art History from Johns Hopkins University. Among other roles, Courtney is on the board of directors of San Francisco Opera Guild where she co-chaired the Holiday Dinner on Stage in 2015 and is the currently Co-Chairman of *Opera Ball 2017*. In addition to San Francisco Opera, Courtney's interests and involvement in philanthropy and fundraising includes causes such as Summer Search, which assists students from low-income communities; EPATT, a non-profit youth development and tutoring organization serving K-12 students; and the Los Altos Educational Foundation.

Maryam Muduroglu is a community philanthropist and fundraiser. Born and raised in San Francisco, she was educated both abroad and locally. Prior to becoming a mother of two boys and immersing herself in community service, she had a 12-year career in Healthcare IT, working with clients such as UC Hospitals, Stanford Medical Center and the VA Hospitals. Maryam received her MBA from Golden Gate University in San Francisco, and her B.A. in International Development & Development Economics from the University of California, Davis. Currently, she is serving on the board of trustees of The Bay School of San Francisco and the board of Children of Shelters as the Co-President of the organization, whose mission is to provide enrichment and educational opportunities for children and families living in transitional shelters in San Francisco. Maryam's entire family volunteers by helping the homeless children in the city. She is also on the board of directors of the Opera Guild and co-chairing *Opera Ball 2017*. In addition to chairing several events for non-profit organizations, she has served on the board of trustees of The Little School and the Bay Area Discovery Museum.

Jane Mudge / San Francisco Opera Guild President

Jane Mudge, San Francisco Opera Guild president, is a co-owner of J.V. Staging, LLC, a property preparation and staging company, and a seasoned community fundraiser. Educated both locally and abroad, she received her B.A. from Santa Clara University. Her professionalism and integrity are rooted in her marketing and advertising experience and work with major clients including Visa USA, Dockers, Safeway, Inc. and California State commodity boards. She has served as San Francisco Opera Guild's Vice President of Fundraising and is a member

of the Women's Board of California Pacific Medical Center. She has co-chaired numerous philanthropic events including *Opera Ball 2015*, San Francisco Opera Guild's 2012 Spring Gala, San Francisco Ballet's 2009 Opening Night Gala, French American Soirée des Arts and Celebrate Spring for Schools of the Sacred Heart. She resides in San Francisco with her two teenage daughters.

J. Riccardo Benavides / Opera Ball 2017 Event Designer

Renowned for his stylish taste, J. Riccardo Benavides melds sophistication with enchantment. His beautiful designs bring a personal touch and an air of whimsy to every event. From an opulent gala retrospective for designer Oscar de la Renta, to an 1,800 person extravaganza for Netflix — Benavides' extraordinary and dignified work has made its mark. Constantly inspired by the latest trends and fashions, his original style is full of imagination, holding guests in a constant state of awe and intrigue. J. Riccardo Benavides' clients include San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Ballet, The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Saks Fifth Avenue, British Motor Cars, The St. Regis Hotels, Churchill Museum in London, as well as intimate private client parties and events worldwide. For more information, visit ideas-events.com.

Nicola Luisotti / San Francisco Opera Music Director

Maestro Luisotti has been music director of San Francisco Opera since 2009 and has conducted over 40 operas and concerts since his 2005 Company debut in *La Forza del Destino*. Luisotti, who holds the Caroline H. Hume Endowed Chair, recently conducted the Company's *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Andrea Chénier*, *Opera in the Park* concert and *Don Carlo*. During the 2016–17 Season, he led *Pagliacci* at Teatro Regio di Torino, *La Traviata* at the Metropolitan Opera as well as conducting the Metropolitan Opera National Council Grand Finals Concert. Other recent engagements include a symphonic concert at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, *Rigoletto* at Madrid's Teatro Real and Milan's Teatro alla Scala, *Il Trittico* and *La Traviata* at London's Royal Opera, Covent Garden and *Rigoletto* at Paris' Opéra Bastille.

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To obtain further press information or download photos of *Opera Ball*, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

San Francisco Opera Communications

Jon Finck (415) 565-6472 / jfinck@sfopera.com

Julia Inouye (415) 565-6430 / jinouye@sfopera.com

Jeffery McMillan (415) 565-6451 / jmcmillan@sfopera.com

San Francisco Opera national press representation –

Shuman Associates (212) 315-1300 / shumanpr@shumanassociates.net