



For Immediate Release

**FESTIVAL OPERA ANNOUNCES DYNAMIC 2025 SEASON**  
**PAGLIACCI IN THE PARK, SALON PROGRAMS & LA TRAVIATA WITH DIABLO SYMPHONY**  
***A Bold Blend of Operatic Classics, Intimate Concerts and Community Engagement***

[www.festivalopera.org](http://www.festivalopera.org)



**Walnut Creek, Calif. (April 14, 2025)** — **Festival Opera**, under the bold leadership of General Director **Zachary Gordin**, proudly announces its 2025 Season, showcasing a diverse and compelling lineup of performances designed to resonate with audiences across the Bay Area. From beloved Italian opera under the stars and innovative chamber concerts to a grand season finale of Verdi's masterpiece *La Traviata*, Festival Opera continues its mission to present exceptional artistry, accessibility, and community-focused programming.

Festival Opera General Director **Zachary Gordin** said, "As I set out to plan the 2025 season, the company's 34<sup>th</sup> season, I followed three guiding principles: inspiration, innovation, and collaboration. Our performances this year are of works that have been constant sources of inspiration on my path; having performed in *Pagliacci* and *La Traviata* numerous times, and with our Salon Series repertoire spanning the Baroque-era opera, American song, and Bel Canto treasures. We're innovating with our production of *Pagliacci* moving from the theatre to the outdoors, replacing our annual Opera in the Park concerts with an experience for our audience that is both immersive, engaging, and always free of charge. And finally, collaborating with artists and organizations that amplify the work we present, including community partners, education allies, the wonderful Diablo Symphony with **Matilda Hofman** at the helm, and our roster of distinguished artists. This season offers something for everyone, and is a heartfelt gift to the communities we serve."

### **SPRING SOIRÉE BENEFIT MAY 3**

The season opens with the much-anticipated Annual **Spring Soirée Benefit** on **Saturday, May 3** at the Piedmont Center for the Arts. This lovely evening will bring the audience together, to stand united and to express their support for one of the Bay Area's leading opera companies. The intimate celebration will include a variety of fine wines, sweet and savory food from the renowned **Siren Sisters Kitchen**, and a silent and live auction. Adding to the elegant affair, Festival Opera guest artists **Shawnette Sulker, Courtney Miller, Taylor**

**Thompson** and pianist **Daniel Lockert**, will provide a lively performance of musical favorites. Festival Opera Spring Soirée benefit tickets are \$150 pp, and may be purchased online at [www.festivalopera.org](http://www.festivalopera.org).

## **PAGLIACCI IN THE PARK: ORINDA JUNE 26 & WALNUT CREEK JUNE 28**

Festival Opera audiences are invited to enjoy opera al fresco with *Pagliacci in the Park*, a semi-staged concert performance of Ruggero Leoncavallo's passionate and iconic late 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Pagliacci*. Bring a picnic and enjoy this opera classic under the evening sky.

**Thursday, June 26 at 6 p.m.** — Orinda Community Park, 28 Orinda Way, Orinda; this concert is sponsored by the Rotary Club of Orinda.

**Sunday, June 28 at 4 p.m.** — Civic Park, 1375 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek; this concert is sponsored by the Walnut Creek Civic Pride Foundation.

Ruggero Leoncavallo's classic one-act opera *Pagliacci*, (the *Clowns*) is one of the most famous Italian opera melodramas about a traveling *commedia dell'arte* troupe performing a drama within a drama filled with nervous laughter, clandestine love, secrets, jealousy and murder, presented in an immersive concert in the park staging. *Pagliacci* offers some of the most opera music ever-composed beginning with the famous prologue. This presentation features a highly talented cast of singers including **Vincent Chambers** (Canio); **Lila Khazoum** (Nedda); **Igor Vieira** (Tonio); **Luis Alejandro Orozco** (Silvio); **Taylor Thompson** (Beppe); and **Chun Mei Wilson** (pianist). Festival Opera's **Zachary Gordin** will be the host.

Sung in Italian, both performances are free and open to the public, encouraging families and newcomers to experience the power of live opera.

## **SALON SERIES AT PIEDMONT CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

The season continues with the Salon Series at the Piedmont Center for the Arts, offering intimate, artist-curated performances that highlight rare repertoire and virtuosic collaboration among many of the Bay Area's leading artists.



Nikola Printz

Carrie Hennessey

Shawnette Sulker

Sara Couden

**Baroque Queens** — Sunday, July 27 at 4 p.m.

Mezzo-soprano **Nikola Printz** joins musicians **Joshua Mikus-Mahoney** (cello), **Jon Mendle** (theorbo and Baroque guitar), and **Zachary Gordin** (harpsichord) for a performance of musical gems by Monteverdi, Handel, Purcell, more.

**American Song Cycles** — Sunday, August 24 at 4 p.m.

Soprano **Carrie Hennessey** and pianist **Daniel Lockert** present Julia Seeholzer's evocative song cycle *Portraits of Disquiet*, alongside Jake Heggie's poignant *At the Statue of Venus*.

**Bel Canto Forever** — Sunday, September 28 at 4 p.m.

A celebration of soaring vocalism with soprano **Shawnette Sulker** and contralto **Sara Couden**, accompanied by **Zachary Gordin** at the piano. The program to include 19<sup>th</sup> century Bel Canto music of Rossini, Bellini, Delibes, Meyerbeer, and more.

Individual tickets for each Salon concert are affordably priced at \$40 pp and available online at [www.festivalopera.org](http://www.festivalopera.org). The Piedmont Center for Arts is located at 801 Magnolia Ave, Piedmont.

## **LA TRAVIATA: Festival Opera Collaboration with Diablo Symphony Orchestra**

The 2025 season will conclude in grand style with a semi-staged production of Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*, co-presented with the Diablo Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Music Director **Matilda Hofman**. This renowned masterpiece of love, sacrifice, and redemption will be performed Friday, October 24, 2025 at 7.30 p.m. and Sunday, October 26 at 2 p.m. at the Hofmann Theater, Leshar Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive, Walnut Creek.



Nathan Granner/Jamie Chamberlin

Zachary Gordin

Matilda Hofman

Festival Opera casting includes real life married couple, **Jamie Chamberlin** (Violetta) and **Nathan Granner** (Alfredo); along with **Zachary Gordin** (Germont); **Courtney Miller** (Flora Bervoix); **Sonia Gariaeff** (Annina); **Taylor Thompson** (Gastone de Letorières); **Joseph Calzada** (Baron Douphol); **Liam Daley** (Marchese d'Obigny); and **Chung-Wai Soong** (Dottore Grenvil).

Sung in Italian with projected English supertitles, the entire production will feature the Festival Opera Chorus and the Diablo Symphony Orchestra. For *La Traviata* tickets and more information, visit [www.festivalopera.org](http://www.festivalopera.org) or call the Leshar Center Box Office at: (925) 943-7469.

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Please connect for feature stories, artwork and press credentials.

**NB:** Zachary Gordin studied harpsichord with the late and highly acclaimed Laurette Goldberg, who founded *MusicSources*, the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, Chaired the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Baroque Music program and more. Concurrent with his work as Festival Opera General Director, Zachary Gordin maintains an active singing career of both opera and concert repertoire, piano accompanist and builder of harpsichords.

