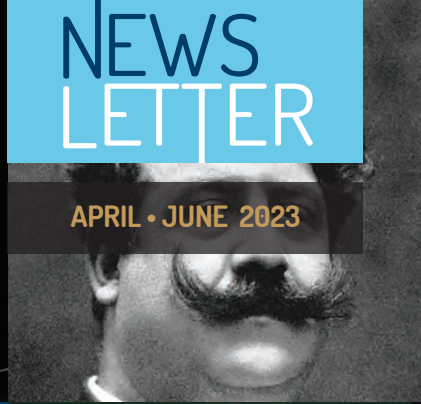




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ITALO AMERICANO

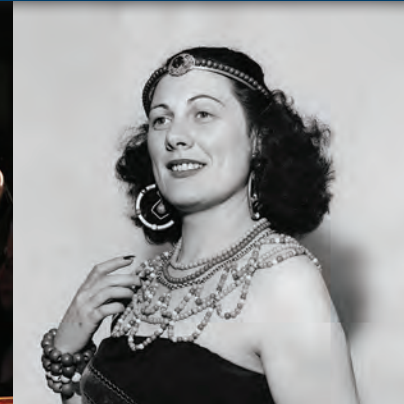
**NEWS
LETTER**

APRIL • JUNE 2023



BRAVO

**Celebrating
San Francisco Opera
Its Italian Roots and Legacy**



Preserving Our Italian Heritage & Culture

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Italians brought their culture with them when they immigrated to the United States. As early as the Gold Rush, opera, the quintessential Italian art form, was heard on the streets of San Francisco. Italian theaters opened, and over the following decades, innumerable Italian opera houses, theaters and music halls sprang up around the North Beach area.

Famous Italian performers like Luisa Tetrazzini and Enrico Caruso performed to enthralled San Francisco audiences. In the 20th century, as Italians began to assimilate into American society, Italian Americans contributed significantly to American life and culture through music, film, literature and the arts, sometimes subtly but sometimes obviously in ways Italian.

In April, the Museo will present a new exhibition exploring and celebrating the Italian roots of the SF Opera, and the exhibit is an official part of the Centennial Anniversary of the SF Opera.

The SF Opera story is one of many that will be featured in the Culture installation of the future permanent history exhibit at 940 Battery Street, and this section will be named in memory of Joan Catelli, a vehement supporter of the Museo during her lifetime from whose estate a generous contribution was made to the capital campaign.

The first Italian theater opened September 12, 1850, at the corner of Jackson and Kearny Streets, in San Francisco. That month, the Pellegrini Opera Company came to perform *La Sonnambula*, the first complete opera ever heard in the State. The following year brought Elisa Biscaccianti from New York to sing with the opera company.

Arturo Toscanini made the Metropolitan Opera in New York an internationally known musical organization. He later became the main conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1926–1936) and introduced many Americans to classical music through his NBC Symphony Orchestra radio broadcasts.

Other Italian American musicians and performers went on the vaudeville circuit and, later, achieved fame in movies and television. In the postwar years, Italian Americans who became well known singers included Mario Lanza, Perry Como, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett, Frankie Laine, Bobby Darin, Julius La Rosa, and Connie Francis. Some even hosted their own TV shows, including Perry Como, Liberace, Dean Martin, and Sonny Bono (of Sonny and Cher fame).

On Broadway, musical stars included Carol Lawrence, Anna Maria Alberghetti, Sergio Franchi, Patti LuPone, Ezio Pinza and Liza Minnelli.

Henry Mancini and Bill Conti received numerous Academy Awards for their songs and film scores, while others, most notably Frank Zappa, defied categorization!



↑ Rendering of the Culture Section of the Planned Permanent History Exhibit at 940 Battery Street

BRAVO

Celebrating San Francisco Opera

Its Italian Roots and Legacy

Exclusively sponsored by



The Museo Italo Americano proudly presents an original documentary exhibition **BRAVO – Celebrating San Francisco Opera, Its Italian Roots and Legacy**. The prestigious San Francisco Opera company was founded by Italian Americans a century ago. While the Company is celebrating its 2022-2023 Centennial Season, the Museo Italo Americano is honored to recognize the vital role that San Francisco’s Italian community played in creating the institution and fostering the art of opera in our city.

BRAVO will take our visitors on a journey through the decades starting with the Gold Rush and continuing on to the period prior to the formation of the Opera Company. It will then trace its growth until it became our nation’s second largest Opera Company. Exhibit goers will learn the story of the Italian American financiers of the San Francisco Opera and of Neapolitan conductor Gaetano Merola – the company’s founder and first Director - and his legacy. This will all be by means of various media platforms: didactic panels, photographs, memorabilia, music and video content, as well as a QR code system which will enhance the ability to quickly and easily pull up extended information about the exhibition.

We are very grateful to Kip Cranna, Dramaturg Emeritus, and Barbara Rominski, Director of Archives of San Francisco Opera, and Kirsten Tanaka, Director of Collections of Museum of Performance + Design for their precious collaboration.

Come and see **BRAVO** at the Museo. And don’t forget to bring your smartphone and earphones for a more immersive experience!



↑ Claudia Muzio as Violetta in Giuseppe Verdi’s *La Traviata*, 1932.
Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

Exhibition dates: April 21 – October 22, 2023

In partnership with
San Francisco Opera
Museum of Performance + Design

Special thanks to
Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound -Stanford University
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BRAVO – Celebrating San Francisco Opera, Its Italian Roots and Legacy is dedicated to the memory of Kristen Avansino of the E. L. Wiegand Foundation, whose constant enthusiasm, partnership and support throughout the years, made this exhibition – and so many others – possible.



↑ Anna Caterina Antonacci (left) as Cesira in *La Ciociara* with Sarah Shafer as her daughter, Rosetta, 2014.
Photo by Cory Weaver. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

The Museo says GRAZIE to all of our members who have been so generous!

The list on this page includes donations received before **December 30, 2022**, and are exclusive of donations made to the Capital Campaign. Our sincere apologies if any names were inadvertently omitted.

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On the cover

From left to right, top to bottom:

- Giorgio Tozzi playing the title role in Boris Godunov, 1961. Photo by Maria-Jeanette. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Veena Akama-Makia, Adia Evans, Sahel Salam, and Erin Wagner in Merola Opera Program's 2022 production of *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute.) Photo by Kristen Loken. Courtesy of Merola Opera Program

- Portrait of Licia Albanese in *Madama Butterfly*, 1941. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

- Portrait of Ezio Pinza in *Don Giovanni*, 1948. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

- Portrait of San Francisco Opera Conductor Eun Sun Kim, 2023. Photo by Cody Pickens. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Enrico Caruso, seen here in his popular role as Don José in Bizet's *Carmen*. *Lebrecht Music & Arts/Alamy Stock Photo*

- Carmen Giannattasio at the San Francisco Opera. Photo by Cory Weaver. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Portrait of Ruggero Leoncavallo, undated. Courtesy of Biblioteca della musica di Bologna

- Fiorenza Cossotto as Amneris in *Aida*, 1977. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Silvestrelli as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, 2016. Photo by Cory Weaver. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Gaetano Merola, circa 1933. Photo by Lawrence B. Morton. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Nicola Luisotti conducting, 2012. Photo by Corey Weaver. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive

- Portrait of Rebata Tebaldi, as Aida, 1950. Courtesy of San Francisco History Center, San Francisco Public Library

- Luciano Pavarotti performing at Opera in the Park at the Music Concourse Bandshell, Golden Gate Park, 1970s. Courtesy of San Francisco Opera Archive