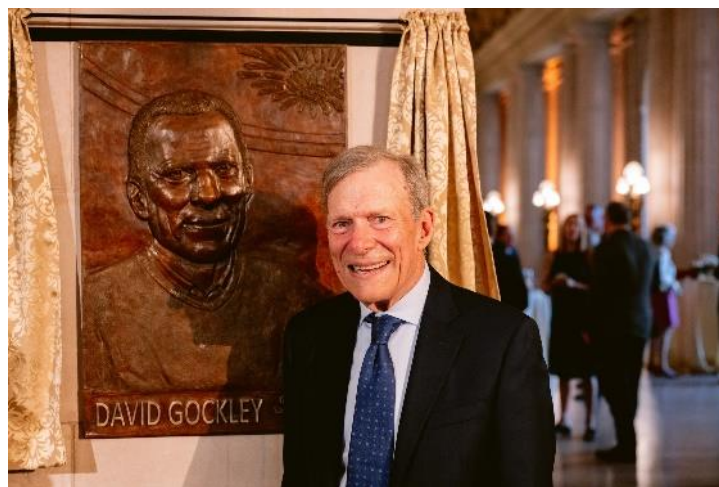




DAVID GOCKLEY BAS-RELIEF UNVEILED

Sculptural portrait of San Francisco Opera's sixth General Director joins gallery of past Company leaders in the War Memorial Opera House lobby



David Gockley with the bas-relief by sculptor Jennifer Frudakis-Petry
Photo: Kristen Loken/San Francisco Opera

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (August 22, 2024) — San Francisco Opera General Director Emeritus David Gockley was honored on August 20 with a bas-relief unveiled in the lobby of the War Memorial Opera House. A crowd of 100 invited guests attended the ceremony celebrating the trailblazing opera impresario and determined champion for American opera.

The program, emceed by San Francisco Opera's Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock, included remarks from Shilvock, Board Chair Emeritus John Gunn, Houston Grand Opera board member Terrylin Neale and messages from three conductors who served as music directors under Gockley: John DeMain and Patrick Summers in Houston and Nicola Luisotti in San Francisco. Tenor Michael Fabiano and soprano Heidi Stober celebrated David through arias, with Robert Mollicone at the piano.

The bronze bas-relief by American sculptor **Jennifer Frudakis-Petry** is permanently installed on a column in the main lobby of the Opera House, joining a gallery of bas-reliefs of past San Francisco Opera general directors including Company founder Gaetano Merola.

Matthew Shilvock said: "Every single day that David led Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera, he pushed boundaries, setting the tone and the direction for the whole industry. He inspired everyone to go beyond their own comfort level because we all believed so passionately in his vision. Care, passion, resolve, focus, humor, determination, strength are just a few of the traits that have made David an impresario of towering impact in our art form and the most remarkable leader of this company."

The Company's current general director, who worked under Gockley in Houston and San Francisco, also spoke of the tremendous impact Gockley has had on his life. "I would not be standing here today were it not for you, David," Shilvock said. "You have inspired, guided, enabled, trusted and empowered me at every step of my journey, and that continues to this day. To be able to carry forth your vision of this company, and to do so with the extraordinary guidance you have given me, is the greatest privilege of my life. You are a part of every success that happens in this theater, and you always will be."



Matthew Shilvock and David Gockley at the bas-relief unveiling. Photos: Kristen Loken/San Francisco Opera

Gockley addressed the assemblage with words of thanks and gratitude. Reflecting on his historic career, he remarked: "I am most proud of the work we did in establishing an American opera repertory. When I was growing up, opera was exotic but I felt that it was an art form that could be American as well as any other particular national origin. The fact that we've made an impact on that gives me the greatest pleasure."



The unveiling ceremony included musical performances by Michael Fabiano (left with pianist Robert Mollicone) and Heidi Stober (right). Photos: Kristen Loken/San Francisco Opera

Musical performances were given by two San Francisco Opera artists who credit Gockley with giving them each opportunities that proved pivotal in their careers. Tenor **Michael Fabiano**, who made his San Francisco Opera debut in 2011, sang the aria, "Quando le sere al placido" from Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, the opera he starred in at the opening of Gockley's tenth and final season as general director. Soprano **Heidi Stober** performed Juliette's Waltz ("Je veux vivre") from Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, the aria with which she won her first competition judged by Gockley at Houston Grand Opera and launched her career on the world stage.

David Gockley has been an industry pioneer and risk-taking innovator at the forefront of the American opera world for nearly half a century. He remains unsurpassed in promoting new American works. As general director of Houston Grand Opera (1972–2005) and San Francisco Opera (2006–2016), he commissioned no fewer than 45 operas, many of which have endured on the world's stages. While leading San Francisco Opera, he presented a new co-production of Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* by director Francesca Zambello which premiered in San Francisco as a complete cycle in 2011 and was revived here in 2018. He oversaw the installation of the Taube Media Suite, the first permanent HD, broadcast-standard video production facility installed in any American opera house. He spearheaded the 2016 creation of the Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera in the Veterans Building (located next to the War Memorial Opera House), which includes an education studio, archives department, galleries, administrative offices, a costume shop and the 299-seat Dianne and Tad Taube Atrium Theater. A firm believer in opera as a populist art form, Gockley brought free opera to San Francisco audiences through live simulcasts to outdoor locations including Oracle Park, home of the San Francisco Giants.

Upon his retirement in 2016 Gockley was awarded the San Francisco Opera Medal, the Company's highest honor, and he was named the Company's General Director Emeritus.

The installation of the bas-relief places him among the past leaders of the institution whose sculptured likenesses adorn the Opera House lobby.

- David Gockley (General Director 2006–2016) by Jennifer Frudakis-Petry, 2024
- Pamela Rosenberg (General Director 2001–2006) by Bertrand Freiesleben, 2022
- Lotfi Mansouri (General Director 1988–2001) by Bruce Wolfe, 2009
- Terence McEwen (General Director 1982–1988) by Sarita Waite, 1997
- Kurt Herbert Adler (Artistic Director 1953–1957, General Director 1957–1981) by Bruce Wolfe, 1968
- Gaetano Merola (Founder and General Director 1923–1953) by Spergo Anargyros, 1953

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Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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