



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENTS WORLD PREMIERE OF
HUANG RUO AND DAVID HENRY HWANG'S *THE MONKEY KING*
November 14–30, 2025



The Monkey King composer Huang Ruo and librettist David Henry Hwang; Costume design by Anita Yavich;
an early rehearsal for *The Monkey King* (Photo: Cory Weaver);

Diane Paulus Directs with Puppetry and Sets Designed by Basil Twist, Carolyn Kuan
Conducts San Francisco Opera Orchestra, Chorus and Brilliant Cast



Diane Paulus (director), Basil Twist (puppetry director; set & puppetry designer), Carolyn Kuan (conductor);
Kang Wang (Monkey King), Konu Kim (Jade Emperor), Mei Gui Zhang (Guanyin)

Array of Community Events Celebrate *The Monkey King*
November 18 Performance Will Be Livestreamed

Tickets available at (415) 864-3330 and sfopera.com

San Francisco, CA (October 17, 2025) — San Francisco Opera presents the world premiere of *The Monkey King* by composer Huang Ruo and librettist David Henry Hwang November 14–30 at the War Memorial Opera House. One of the most highly anticipated new works of the

opera season, this new action-hero opera centers around the mythical Monkey King (Sun Wukong), a perennial favorite in Chinese culture for more than four hundred years, whose popularity has exploded through film, television, animation and, most recently, the 2024 blockbuster video game *Black Myth: Wukong*, which sold 18 million copies in its first two months.

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera in partnership with the Chinese Heritage Foundation of Minnesota, *The Monkey King* is based on the opening episodes of *Journey to the West*, the Ming Dynasty novel attributed to Wu Cheng'en and considered one of China's four greatest literary classics. This new adaptation for the opera stage, performed in English and Mandarin and uniting the disciplines of opera, dance and puppetry, follows the ambitious young monkey who is born from a stone and challenges the gods of the seas and heavens in a bid for immortality.



The Monkey King composer Huang Ruo and librettist David Henry Hwang

Composer **Huang Ruo** said: "If dreams do come true, creating *The Monkey King* with my long-time collaborator David Henry Hwang for San Francisco Opera is one of those dreams. The world is full of superheroes—Superwoman, Spider-Man, Batman—and like those we know from American comic books and movies, the Monkey King is every bit an inspirational figure known for his wit, humor, righteousness and power. He is Asia's supreme superhero, loved and adored not only by Chinese people throughout the centuries but increasingly by people throughout the world. The Monkey King's adventures awaken in him an understanding of true power which leads to his self-enlightenment. In our new opera, which blends cultural traditions with a spectacular multidisciplinary production, I hope to bring this Eastern superhero to life and shine a positive light that will always appear in any turbulent time."

Huang Ruo has won extensive praise for his incisive, lyrical works in a variety of musical genres, from his puppet opera *Book of Mountains and Seas* and oratorio *Angel Island* to his operatic collaborations with Tony Award-winning playwright and librettist **David Henry**

Hwang: *An American Soldier*, *The Rift* and *M. Butterfly*. Hwang's body of work includes the stage plays *M. Butterfly*, *Yellow Face* and *Chinglish*, the musical *Soft Power* with composer Jeanine Tesori and libretti for operas by Osvaldo Golijov (*Ainadamar*), Unsuk Chin (*Alice in Wonderland*), Bright Sheng (*Dream of the Red Chamber*, a San Francisco Opera commission) and five works by Philip Glass. In their newest collaboration, Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang have blended Chinese and Western traditions to create a thrilling new incarnation of an irrepressible hero and global icon.



Ann Yee (choreographer), Anita Yavich (costume designer), Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa (lighting designer),
Hana S. Kim (projection designer), Jamie Guan (Peking Opera Specialist)

Making her San Francisco Opera debut is conductor **Carolyn Kuan**, music director of the Hartford Symphony, who led the New York premiere of Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier* and the world premiere of *M. Butterfly*. The Monkey King's high-octane adventures—from the depths of the sea to his epic battle with the gods in heaven—are balanced by moments of repose with the goddess Guanyin and a chorus of bodhisattvas reflecting on the Monkey King's progress through the Buddhist Diamond Sutra. The story's whimsical and fantastical world will be conjured for the stage by American Repertory Theater's award-winning Terrie and Bradley Bloom Artistic Director **Diane Paulus**, renowned puppeteer and Bay Area native **Basil Twist** (who collaborated with Huang Ruo on *Book of Mountains and Seas*), choreographer **Ann Yee**, costume designer **Anita Yavich**, lighting designer **Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa**, projection designer **Hana S. Kim**, and Peking Opera Specialist **Jamie Guan**.

Australian-Chinese tenor **Kang Wang** makes his Company debut as the cunning and charismatic Monkey King. South Korean tenor **Konu Kim**, who joined San Francisco Opera as Bao Yu in *Dream of the Red Chamber* in 2022, returns as the Jade Emperor. As Guanyin, the Chinese goddess of compassion, soprano **Mei Gui Zhang** returns after prior successes as Dai Yu in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*.



Peixin Chen (Supreme Sage Laojun), Joo Won Kang (Dragon King Ao Guang/Lord Erlang), Hongni Wu (Crab General/Venus Star), Jusung Gabriel Park (Master Subhuti/Buddha), Huiwang Zhang (Monkey King dancer), Marcos Vedovetto (Lord Erlang dancer)

Bass **Peixin Chen**, who made a commanding Company debut this September as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, is Supreme Sage Laojun. Former Adler Fellow baritone **Joo Won Kang** performs the dual roles of Dragon King Ao Guang and Lord Erlang. After her Company debut as Bao Chai in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, mezzo-soprano **Hongni Wu** returns as the Crab General and Venus Star. South Korean baritone **Jusung Gabriel Park** makes his Company debut in the role of Master Subhuti, who is revealed to be the Buddha. Dancers **Huiwang Zhang** and **Marcos Vedovetto** embody the roles of Monkey King and Lord Erlang respectively.

To hear the aria “All dharmas are equal”, performed by soprano Mei Gui Zhang (Guanyin) and pianist John Churchwell, visit sfopera.com/operas/the-monkey-king/media. Zhang can also be seen as part of San Francisco Opera's *In Song* video series. The free, 19-minute film can be viewed at sfopera.com/insong, [YouTube](#) and [YouTube \(Chinese subtitles\)](#).

San Francisco Opera General Director **Matthew Shilvock** said: “I’m so proud that San Francisco Opera is bringing this operatic Monkey King to life, continuing our long tradition of building cultural bridges across the Pacific Ocean. This is a very exciting undertaking, with all departments of the Company and our creative team coming together to build something stunning, beautiful and magical. The music is both energetic and lyrical. It is a privilege to be telling one of the great stories of Chinese literature on the American opera stage, celebrating the piece with audiences who have grown up with Sun Wukong, and introducing him to many new audiences for the first time. We hope that this will become a beloved and lasting opera for the world and are thrilled about how much excitement there already is for this new opera.”

The Monkey King, a story of immense resonance to so many, has brought together an exciting array of influential leaders spanning business, nonprofit, tech and cultural sectors. An **Honorary Committee** chaired by **Jensen and Lori Huang** and **The Monkey King Committee** led by San Francisco Opera Board of Directors members and Committee Co-Chairs **Jerome**

Dodson, Soo Venkatesan, and Doreen Woo Ho serve as ambassadors for *The Monkey King*, raising awareness and philanthropic support for this major new operatic expression of this hero whose story symbolizes transformation, perseverance and the pursuit of wisdom. Events hosted by the Committee include an Opening Night Dinner Celebration on November 14.

Performed in English and Mandarin with English and Chinese supertitles, the eight performances of *The Monkey King* are scheduled for November 14 (7:30 p.m.), 16 (2 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 20 (7:30 p.m.), 22 (7:30 p.m.), 25 (7:30 p.m.), 28 (7:30 p.m.), and 30 (2 p.m.), 2025.

LIVESTREAM: THE MONKEY KING

The Tuesday, November 18 performance of *The Monkey King* will be livestreamed at 7:30 p.m. Pacific Time (PT). Livestream tickets (\$25) include a 48-hour on-demand viewing window, beginning at 10 a.m. PT on November 23 and ending at 10 a.m. PT on November 25. For tickets and more information, visit sfopera.com/digital/livestream.

THE MONKEY KING COMMUNITY & PARTNER EVENTS

San Francisco Opera and community partners celebrate the world premiere of *The Monkey King* with panel discussions, puppetry workshops, film screenings, art exhibitions and an outdoor public marketplace. See the calendar below for events and visit sfopera.com/monkey-king-events.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

Beginning with its first seasons during the 1920s, San Francisco Opera has long been a champion of new operas. Since 1961, more than 30 new commissions and co-commissions have been presented by the Company. A focus on Chinese and Chinese American literary traditions began in 2008 with the world premiere of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* by composer Stewart Wallace and librettist Amy Tan. *Dream of the Red Chamber*, a commissioned opera by Bright Sheng and David Henry Hwang, followed in 2016 and was subsequently presented at the Hong Kong Arts Festival and, in September 2017, on tour in the People's Republic of China at Beijing's Poly Theater, Changsha's Meixihu International Culture and Arts Center Grand Theater and Wuhan's Qintai Grand Theatre. *Dream of the Red Chamber* was revived at the War Memorial Opera House in Summer 2022. Under the leadership of Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock and Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim,

San Francisco Opera's current 103rd season also includes a new production of Wagner's [*Parsifal*](#), a 25th-anniversary presentation of Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's [*Dead Man Walking*](#) (a San Francisco Opera commission in 2000), Verdi's [*Rigoletto*](#), Rossini's [*The Barber of Seville*](#), Strauss' [*Elektra*](#), and a variety of concerts and special events. Learn more at sfopera.com.

TICKETS AND INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Monkey King* are priced from \$29 to \$447. A \$2 per-ticket facility fee is included in Balcony 1, 2 and 3 zone prices; all other zones include a \$3 per-ticket facility fee. A limited number of Standing Room tickets (\$10 cash only at the Box Office; limit two per person) go on sale the day of each performance. For tickets and more information, contact the San Francisco Opera Box Office at (415) 864-3330 or visit in-person at 301 Van Ness Avenue or online at sfopera.com.

Tickets for the November 18 livestream of *The Monkey King* are \$25 (includes on-demand viewing window) and are available at sfopera.com/digital/livestream.

Scholar **Sidney Chen** presents a pre-show talk for ticketholders beginning 55 minutes prior to each performance. Pre-opera talks provide an engaging 25-minute overview of the opera. An audio recording of the talk will be available at sfopera.com following the first performance.

The War Memorial Opera House is located at 301 Van Ness Avenue. Patrons are encouraged to use public transportation to attend San Francisco Opera performances. The War Memorial Opera House is within walking distance of the Civic Center BART/Muni Station and near numerous bus lines, including 5, 6, 49 and F Market Street. For further public transportation information, visit bart.gov and sfmta.com.

Gifts of all sizes help create San Francisco Opera's programs and are much appreciated. To donate visit sfopera.com/donate.

All casting, programs, schedules and ticket prices are subject to change. For further information about San Francisco Opera's 2025–26 Season, visit sfopera.com.

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THE MONKEY KING CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut ◇Adler Fellowship/Merola Opera Program Graduate +Merola Opera Program Graduate

Performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House (301 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA, 94102)

WORLD PREMIERE

The Monkey King by Huang Ruo* and David Henry Hwang

November 14 (7:30 p.m.), 16 (2 p.m.), 18 (7:30 p.m.), 20 (7:30 p.m.), 22 (7:30 p.m.), 25 (7:30 p.m.), 28 (7:30 p.m.), 30 (2 p.m.), 2025

Livestream: November 18 at 7:30 p.m. Pacific Time (PT). Tickets include a 48-hour on-demand viewing window from 10 a.m. PT on November 23 until 10 a.m. PT on November 25.

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera in partnership with the Chinese Heritage Foundation of Minnesota

New San Francisco Opera production

Approximate running time: 2 hours, 20 minutes with one intermission

Performed in English and Mandarin with English and Chinese supertitles

Cast:

<i>Monkey King</i>	Kang Wang*
<i>Jade Emperor</i>	Konu Kim
<i>Guanyin</i>	Mei Gui Zhang+
<i>Supreme Sage Laojun</i>	Peixin Chen
<i>Dragon King Ao Guang / Lord Erlang</i>	Joo Won Kang◇
<i>Crab General / Venus Star</i>	Hongni Wu
<i>Master Subhuti (Buddha)</i>	Jusung Gabriel Park*
<i>Solo Dancer Monkey King</i>	Huiwang Zhang*
<i>Solo Dancer Lord Erlang</i>	Marcos Vedovetto
<i>King of the North</i>	Christopher Jackson
<i>King of the South</i>	Chester Pidduck
<i>King of the East</i>	Jonathan Smucker
<i>King of the West</i>	William O'Neill

Creative Team:

<i>Conductor</i>	Carolyn Kuan*
<i>Director</i>	Diane Paulus*
<i>Puppetry Director</i>	Basil Twist*
<i>Choreographer</i>	Ann Yee*
<i>Set and Puppetry Designer</i>	Basil Twist*
<i>Associate Set Designer</i>	Sara C. Walsh*
<i>Costume Designer</i>	Anita Yavich

Lighting Designer
Projection Designer
Peking Opera Specialist
Chorus Director

Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa*
Hana S. Kim*
Jamie Guan*
John Keene

The Monkey King China representative
Workshop Support

Armstrong Music & Arts
Tandem Otter Productions

San Francisco Opera Orchestra, San Francisco Opera Chorus and San Francisco Opera Dance Corps

THE MONKEY KING COMMUNITY & PARTNER EVENTS

San Francisco Opera and community partners celebrate the world premiere of *The Monkey King* with panel discussions, puppetry workshops, film screenings, family-friendly events and more.

Visit sfopera.com/monkey-king-events for updates and information.

PEN America Zoom Webinar – The Rebel's Role: The Monkey King, Mischief, and Myth

Thursday, October 30, 12–1:30 p.m. PT / 3–4:30 p.m. ET

[PEN America](#) hosts a discussion with *The Monkey King* composer Huang Ruo, librettist and Tony Award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang and Pearl Lam Bergad (Chinese Heritage Foundation). Moderated by Ken Smith (*Opera/Opera News*), the panel will dig deeper into the multiple layers of translations (linguistic, cultural and format) that bring *The Monkey King* to life in this pulse-of-the-moment contemporary adaptation.

Webinar is FREE; register [HERE](#).

Link to recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ERhj-b7Vtdk>

Double-Feature Film Screening – *The Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven* (1961) and *The Monkey King: Havoc in Heaven's Palace* (2014)

Saturday, November 1, 11:30 a.m.–4 p.m. (*Uproar in Heaven* begins at approximately 11:30 a.m.; *Havoc in Heaven* begins at approximately 1:45 p.m.)

Great Star Theater, 636 Jackson Street, San Francisco

A matinee double-feature screening of film adaptations of the opening chapters of *Journey to the West*, the Ming Dynasty literary classic upon which the opera is based, at the historic [Great Star Theater](#) in San Francisco's Chinatown. Watch the fantastical adventures of the Monkey King—Sun Wukong—in the landmark 1961 animated film *The Monkey King: Uproar in Heaven* (shown in the original Mandarin, with English subtitles), followed by the 2014 action-fantasy movie *The Monkey King: Havoc in Heaven's Palace* (shown in the original Cantonese, with English subtitles). San Francisco Opera thanks the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco, Filmko Pictures (Hong Kong), and the Great Star Theater.

This FREE ticketed event is SOLD-OUT. Walk-ins may be possible if space is available.

Monkey King Make & Play: The Art of Puppetry

Sunday, November 2, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Asian Art Museum, 200 Larkin St, San Francisco

Asian Art Museum's [Free First Sundays](#) invites families to step into the playful world of the Monkey King. Curated in partnership with [Art Builds Community \(ABC\)](#), a roster of local puppet artists will lead hands-on activities, lively demonstrations and fun craft activities inspired by the world premiere production of *The Monkey King*. 25-minute and 45-minute workshop sessions will take place throughout the day alongside guided tours of the museum.

Workshops (and museum admission) are FREE, no registration required.

Once Upon an Opera: The Monkey King

Thursday, November 6, 10:30–11:15 a.m., SFPL [Western Addition Branch](#), 1550 Scott Street

Saturday, November 8, 3–3:45 p.m., SFPL [Richmond Branch](#), 351 9th Avenue

Sunday, November 9, 2:30–3:15 p.m., SFPL [Parkside Branch](#), 1200 Taraval Street

[San Francisco Public Library](#) (SFPL) presents family-friendly interactive opera-inspired workshops at SFPL locations throughout San Francisco. Led by local puppetry artists, the sessions explore the diverse styles of puppets used in storytelling throughout the world and featured in San Francisco Opera's production of *The Monkey King*.

FREE event, no registration required.

The Monkey King: A Tale to Tell—Conversation with David Henry Hwang and Huang Ruo

Thursday, November 13, 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Asian Art Museum, 200 Larkin St, San Francisco

Librettist David Henry Hwang and composer Huang Ruo join moderator Dr. Soyoung Lee, CEO of the Asian Art Museum, for a conversation about *The Monkey King*. Organized by China Institute of America in partnership with the Asian Art Museum, this program offers a unique opportunity to hear directly from these visionary artists as they share insights into their creative process, reflect on their most significant works and discuss the art of cross-cultural story telling. Together they will examine the timeless power of myth to illuminate questions of identity, transformation and freedom in the modern world.

\$25, tickets can be purchased at <https://calendar.asianart.org/event/the-monkey-king-a-tale-to-tell/>.

Family Workshop – Puppets of *The Monkey King* with Ramon Abad

Saturday, November 15, 2–4 p.m.

Minnesota Street Project, 1275 Minnesota Street, San Francisco

[San Francisco Arts Education Project](#) (SFArtsED) hosts a workshop and discussion celebrating *The Monkey King*. Puppeteer Ramon Abad leads a family-friendly demonstration of the styles of puppets used in the opera and an interactive puppet workshop for all ages.

FREE event, no registration required.

***The Monkey King: The Legend of Sun Wukong & The Making of a New Opera*
Featuring composer Huang Ruo & librettist David Henry Hwang**

Presented by San Francisco Opera, the San Francisco Arts Education Project, Minnesota Street Project and Lumahai Productions

Saturday, November 15, 4–5:50 p.m.

The Atrium, Minnesota Street Project, 1275 Minnesota Street, San Francisco

Dive deep into the enduring legend of the Monkey King (Sun Wukong) with powerhouse artistic duo Huang Ruo (composer) and David Henry Hwang (librettist) on the heels of their world premiere at San Francisco Opera. The free, two-part program will begin with an exploration of the cultural significance of the iconic novel *Journey to the West*, and a look at its many forms in popular culture, moderated by Ling Hon Lam of UC Berkeley's East Asian Languages and Cultures department and Weihong Bao of UC Berkeley Film and Media.

The introductory presentation will be followed by a conversation with the dynamic composer Huang Ruo and Tony Award-winning playwright/librettist David Henry Hwang, moderated by filmmaker and producer Elena Park, about the creation of their groundbreaking opera.

This program is presented in partnership with Minnesota Street Project and the Asian Art Museum.

FREE event, no registration required.

Opera Glasses: San Francisco Opera's *The Monkey King* – Screening at SFPL Ortega Branch

Monday, November 24, 2 p.m.

San Francisco Public Library, Ortega Branch, 3223 Ortega Street, San Francisco

San Francisco Opera's Opera Glasses program partners with SFPL's [Ortega Branch](#) Library to present a special encore screening of the Company's November 18 livestream of *The Monkey King*.

FREE event, no registration required.

The Monkey King Public Market

Friday, November 28, 5–8 p.m.

Sunday, November 30, 11:30 a.m.– 2:30 p.m.

Memorial Court, 301-401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco (adjacent to War Memorial Opera House)

In partnership with businesses and organizations from Chinatown, The Monkey King Public Market celebrates the legacy of San Francisco's Chinatown— a vital and vibrant part of the Bay Area's cultural fabric—and the world premiere of *The Monkey King*. Operagoers and the general public are invited to this public marketplace to enjoy cultural demonstrations and purchase bites and wares from local artists and restaurants in this convergence of artisans, artists and food vendors in the outdoor courtyard next to the War Memorial Opera House.

FREE outdoor event.

The Monkey King Art Exhibition

In-person viewing:

November 14–30 at *The Monkey King* performances

The Monkey King is a revered character, an immortal trickster deity seeking redemption. Co-curators Quynh-Mai Nguyen and Amanda Rawson of [Art Builds Community \(ABC\)](#) and Caitlin Pambid present a series of artworks from Bay Area artists inspired by the classic character. The exhibit will portray his many depictions for audiences to feel a connection to his many facets, expanding their initial conception of his character. Viewers can expect to see various portraits and scenes of the Monkey King accompanied by his familiar arsenal—the cloud he flies upon and his powerful staff.

Digital Art Exhibit:

Beginning November 14, the artworks will also be exhibited online at sfopera.com/monkey-king-events.

San Francisco Opera is sponsored, in part, by Julie Dickson, Jerome & Thao Dodson, Dagmar Dolby, Bertie Bialek Elliott, The Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation for the Arts, Louise Gund, John A. & Cynthia Fry Gunn, Franklin & Catherine Johnson, Edmund W. & Jeannik Méquet Littlefield Fund, Bernard & Barbro Osher, Marieke & Jeff Rothschild, Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, Dianne & Tad Taube, Diane B. Wilsey, Barbara A. Wolfe, and two anonymous donors.

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The commission of *The Monkey King* is funded by the Chinese Heritage Foundation of Minnesota.

Carolyn Kuan's appearance is made possible by the Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem Conductors Fund. Kang Wang, Mei Gui Zhang, Konu Kim, Hongni Wu, Jusung Gabriel Park, Joo Won Kang and Peixin Chen's appearances are made possible by a gift to the Emerging Stars Fund by Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem. Diane Paulus is partially supported by OPERA America's Marineau Opera Grants for Women Stage Directors and Conductors, generously funded by the Marineau Family Foundation.

The Monkey King Honorary Committee

Jensen & Lori Huang, Honorary Chairs

Carol Franc Buck Foundation, Chinese Heritage Foundation of Minnesota, Emmanuel Chao, Margaret Liu Collins, Jerome & Thao Dodson, Sakurako & William Fisher, Sue Graham Johnston & Eric Johnston, Koret Foundation, Lyna Lam & Chris Larsen, Isabel & Insik Rhee, Marieke & Jeff Rothschild, Maria Manetti Shrem, Nadine M. Tang, Joe & Clara Wu Tsai, Barbara Wolfe, Akiko Yamazaki & Jerry Yang, Eric Yuan & Sherry Zhang, Julia Zhen - Zenni Optical, and an anonymous donor

The Monkey King Committee

Jerome Dodson, Soo Venkatesan and Doreen Woo Ho, Co-Chairs

Pearl Lam Bergad, Claire Bobrow, Ken Fong, Tim Kahn, Fred Levin, Annie Liu, Maryam Muduroglu, Peggy Nute, Shirley Soong, Jay Xu, Melinda Yee Franklin, Mark Young, Jian Zhang

Yamaha is the official piano of San Francisco Opera.

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San Francisco Opera is a member of



PRESS RELEASES: This press release is available in English and Chinese at sfopera.com/press.

PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable artist headshots and production images for *The Monkey King* are available at pressphotos.sfopera.com.

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