



SAN FRANCISCO
OPERA

WORLD PREMIERE
War Memorial Opera House
November 14–30, 2025



Huang Ruo, David Henry Hwang

San Francisco Opera presents the world premiere of *The Monkey King* (猴王悟空) 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 mythic hero, a perennial favorite in Chinese opera for more than a century, 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 chapters of *Journey to the West*, a novel from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) widely considered one of China's greatest literary classics. This new adaptation for the Western opera stage, performed in English and Chinese and uniting the disciplines of opera, dance and puppetry, follows the ambitious young monkey born from a stone who challenges the gods of the seas and heavens in a bid for immortality.

Composer Huang Ruo said: "If dreams do come true, creating *The Monkey King* 猴王悟空 with my long-time collaborator David Henry Hwang for San Francisco Opera is one of those dreams. Our world is full of superheroes—Superwoman, Spiderman, 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 the supreme superhero from Asia, loved and adored not only by the 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 hopeful 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*) and Bright Sheng (*Dream of the Red Chamber*, a San Francisco Opera commission) and five works by Philip Glass. In their newest collaboration, Huang and Hwang have blended ancient Chinese and contemporary Western traditions to create a thrilling new incarnation of an irrepressible hero and global icon.

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 in Buddhist sutras. The Monkey King's whimsical and fantastical world will be conjured for the stage by American Repertory Theater's award-winning Artistic Director Diane Paulus, renowned puppeteer and Bay Area native Basil Twist (who collaborated with Huang Ruo on *Book of Mountains and Seas*), costume designer Anita Yavich, choreographer Ann Yee, lighting designer Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa and projection designer Hana S. Kim, with guidance by Peking Opera consultant Jamie Guan. Making her San Francisco Opera debut is conductor Carolyn Kuan, music director of the Hartford Symphony since 2011, who led the New York premiere of Huang Ruo's *An American Soldier* and the world premiere of *M. Butterfly*.

Australian-Chinese tenor Kang Wang makes his Company debut as the cunning and charismatic Monkey King. As Guanyin, the Chinese goddess of compassion, soprano Mei Gui Zhang returns after prior successes as Dai Yu in *Dream of the Red Chamber*, and in Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* and Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. 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. South Korean baritone Jusung Gabriel Park makes his Company debut in the dual roles of the Taoist teacher Subhuti and the Buddha. Bass Peixin Chen is Supreme Lord Laozi, and former Adler Fellow baritone Joo Won Kang is Lord Erlang and Ao Guang. Mezzo-soprano Hongni Wu returns from her Company debut as Bao Chai in *Dream of the Red Chamber* as the Crab General and Venus Star.

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 tradition of building cultural bridges across the Pacific Ocean. This is a very exciting undertaking, with all the 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 be a great and lasting opera for the world."

Beginning with its first seasons during the 1920s, San Francisco Opera has long been a home for new operas and, since 1961, more than 30 new commissions and co-commissions have been presented by the Company. A focus on the 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, featuring settings in Beijing, Hong Kong and San Francisco. *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.

AUDIO EXCERPT FROM *THE MONKEY KING*

To hear the aria "All dharmas are equal" from *The Monkey King*, performed by soprano Mei Gui Zhang and pianist John Churchwell, visit sfopera.com/operas/the-monkey-king/media.

LIVESTREAM OF *THE MONKEY KING*

The third performance of each mainstage opera during San Francisco Opera's 2025-26 Season will be livestreamed, including a 48-hour on-demand viewing window. Tickets for each livestream will be available for \$27.50 each when single tickets go on sale this summer. *The Monkey King* will be livestreamed on Tuesday, November 18 at 7:30 p.m. PT.

IN SONG: MEI GUI ZHANG

This free, 19-minute film by San Francisco Opera and Lumahai productions follows the fast-rising soprano Mei Gui Zhang (Guanyin) reconnecting with her family in Chengdu, China and performing in a variety of musical settings, including a Kazakh folk song with pipa virtuoso Zhou Yi. To watch the film, interviews and other In Song features, visit sfopera.com/insong, [YouTube](#) and [YouTube \(Chinese subtitles\)](#).



ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO OPERA

San Francisco Opera is a vital and dynamic artistic institution which, under the leadership of Tad and Dianne Taube General Director Matthew Shilvock and Caroline H. Hume Music Director Eun Sun Kim, celebrated its Centennial Season in 2022–23. Throughout the Company's history, San Francisco Opera audience have witnessed the American debuts of operatic legends, premieres of repertoire-expanding new works and emergence of many young artists from its renowned training programs. The just-announced 2025–26 Season, the Company's 103rd season, includes the world premiere of Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang's *The Monkey King*, 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*, along with a variety of concerts and special events.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DISCOUNTED TICKETS

Tickets for *The Monkey King* are available now through subscription packages for San Francisco Opera's 103rd season, which begin at \$68. [The Osher Future of Opera Subscription](#), generously underwritten by Bernard and Barbro Osher, offers discounted subscription packages to anyone who has not subscribed to San Francisco Opera in the past three years. Single (non-subscription) tickets will go on sale this summer. The Dolby Family's *Opera for the Bay*, the discounted ticket initiative made possible by the Dolby family, will continue in 2025–26. Through this popular program, Bay Area residents (home address zip code between 94000 and 95999) who have not purchased tickets in the past three seasons may purchase Dolby Tickets on designated on-sale dates roughly one month prior to the opening of each production or concert for \$10 (limit two seats per eligible patron), while supplies last. For more information, visit sfopera.com.

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THE MONKEY KING CASTING AND CALENDAR

*San Francisco Opera Debut ◊Adler Fellowship and Merola Opera Program Graduate +Merola Opera Program Graduate

All performances take place at the War Memorial Opera House (301 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco).

WORLD PREMIERE

THE MONKEY KING (猴王悟空) by Huang Ruo 黃若 and David Henry Hwang 黃哲倫

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

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

New San Francisco Opera production

Approximate running time: 2 hours, 30 minutes with one intermission

Performed in English and Chinese with English and Chinese supertitles

Cast 演員:

Monkey King 猴王悟空

Guanyin 觀音

Jade Emperor 玉皇大帝

Subhuti/Buddha 菩提祖師/如來佛祖

Supreme Lord Laozi 太上老君

Lord Erlang/Ao Guang 二郎神/東海龍王-敖廣

Crab General/Venus Star 蟹將/太白金星

Solo Dancer Monkey King 猴王悟空舞者

Solo Dancer Erlang

King of the North

King of the South

King of the East

King of the West

*Kang Wang**♪ 王亢

Mei Gui Zhang+♪ 張玫瑰

Konu Kim♪ 김건우 金健雨

*Jusung Gabriel Park**♪ 박주성 朴柱成

Peixin Chen♪ 陳佩鑫

Joo Won Kang♪◊ 강주원 姜柱元

Hongni Wu♪ 吳虹霓

Huiwang Zhang♪ 張慧望

Marcos Vedovetto♪

Christopher Jackson♪

Chester Pidduck♪

Jonathan Smucker♪

William O'Neill♪

Creative Team 主創:

Conductor 指揮

Director 導演

Puppetry Director 偶戲導演

Choreographer 編舞

Set and Puppetry Designer 佈景及偶藝設計

Associate Set Designer 副佈景設計

Costume Designer 服裝設計

Lighting Designer 燈光設計

Projection Designer 投影設計

*Carolyn Kuan** 關琦安

*Diane Paulus** 黛安·保羅斯

*Basil Twist** 巴塞爾·特維斯特

*Ann Yee** 余梅林

Basil Twist 巴塞爾·特維斯特

*Sara C. Walsh** 莎拉·沃爾什

Anita Yavich 蕭燕

*Ayumu "Poe" Saegusa** 三枝步

*Hana S. Kim** 김하나 金素妍

Associate Projection Designer

Peking Opera Consultant 京劇顧問

Chorus Director 合唱團總監

Heekyung Kim* 김희경 金喜景

Jamie Guan* 關鴻鈞

John Keene 約翰·基恩

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

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PRESS PHOTOS: High-resolution, downloadable artist headshots and production images for *The Monkey King* are available at pressphotos.sfopera.com (Password: WMOH301).

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