

SD OPERA Media Release

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San Diego Opera’s Season Continues with the West Coast Premiere of *Aging Magician*

Beth Morrison Projects to produce immersive theatre piece as part of the *détour* Series

San Diego, CA – San Diego Opera’s 2019-2020 season continues with *Aging Magician* a hybrid opera/theatre piece that combines singing, choral work, puppetry, and performance art to create an incredibly unique event for the West Coast premiere of this haunting and beautiful work. Produced by **Beth Morrison Projects**, one of the most influential and innovative taste makers on the forefront of the “indie opera” movement, *Aging Magician* opens on **Friday, March 13, 2020 at 7:30 PM** at the **Balboa Theatre**. Additional performances are Saturday March 14 at 2 PM and at 7:30 PM, 2020.

Aging Magician tells the story of Harold, an eccentric and aging clockmaker who is nearing the end of his life. He has been working on a children’s book, called *The Aging Magician*, and is at a critical point in his story. Should Harold kill off the magician? Should he allow him to live? As Harold ponders these decisions he finds himself transported to a magical place where fiction and reality collide. *Aging Magician* stars **Rinde Eckert** in his Company debut as Harold. *Aging Magician* features the **Brooklyn Youth Chorus**, also in a Company debut. The Brooklyn Youth Chorus have appeared with the New York Philharmonic, The National, Radiohead’s Thom Yorke, Wye Oak, Shara Nova, International Contemporary Ensemble, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Barbra Streisand, Arcade Fire, Sir Elton John, and Grizzly Bear, among others, in recent seasons. The director is **Julian Crouch** and the conductor is **Dianne Berkun Menaker**, both in San Diego Opera debuts. **Attacca Quartet** is the orchestra for these performances and the composer is Paola Prestini. The Set Designer is Julian Crouch and **Amy Rubin**. The Lighting Designer is **Joshua Higgason**. The instrument design is by Bang on a Can All-Stars founding member **Mark Stewart**. These are the first performances of *Aging Magician* by San Diego Opera and the West Coast Premiere of the opera.

Pre-production photos can be found online at: <https://sandiegoopera.smugmug.com/2019-2020-Preproduction-Artwork>

About the Artists

Rinde Eckert, Harold and Co-Creator

San Diego Opera debut. Rinde Eckert is a writer, composer, singer, actor, and director whose music and music theater pieces have been performed throughout the United States and abroad. Among them are: *And God Created Great Whales* (Obie Award), *Horizon* (Lucille Lortel Award, and Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding Play), and *Orpheus X* (2007 Pulitzer Prize finalist). He is a recipient of a Marc Blitzstein Memorial Award (for Lyricist/Librettists) from the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2005), an Alpert Award (for Theater work) (2009), and a Guggenheim Fellowship (in composition) (2007). In 2012 he won a Grammy Award singing with eighth blackbird and Steven Mackey on 'Lonely Motel - Music from *Slide*' (for which he also wrote the lyrics). He is one of the inaugural class of Doris Duke Performing Artist Award winners (2012). Rinde has appeared as a principle soloist with the New York Philharmonic, and the BBC Philharmonic. In the spring of 2017 he was one of five singers chosen by Renée Fleming to perform solo concerts at the Kennedy Center as part of her Voices Festival. That same spring he performed the solo role in *Aging Magician* (Rinde's libretto), a collaboration with composer Paola Prestini and designer/director Julian Crouch. In the spring of 2018 he toured with the Kronos Quartet in *My Lai*, a mono-opera written for him by Jonathan Berger. His new solo recording *The Natural World* was released in August 2018 as a Songtone production in association with National Sawdust Tracks.

Brooklyn Youth Chorus, Chorus

San Diego Opera debut. The Brooklyn Youth Chorus is a Grammy Award-winning collective of young voices led by Founder & Artistic Director Dianne Berkun Menaker. The Chorus has performed or recorded with major orchestras and artists such as New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Barbra Streisand, Arcade Fire, Sir Elton John, The National, and Grizzly Bear. Recordings of the Chorus have been featured in major motion pictures, commercials, and live events, including a work by Radiohead's Thom Yorke for rag & bone's Spring 2016 collection as well as Beyoncé and Jay-Z's OTR II World Tour. As a bold commissioner and producer of new music, the Chorus has introduced into the repertoire more than 120 original works and world premieres by contemporary composers, including collaborations with Pulitzer Prize-winner Caroline Shaw, Blues and R&B powerhouse Toshi Reagon, iconic British DJ Bishi, The National's Bryce Dessner, and ubiquitous indie-classical superstar Nico Muhly. Founded in 1992, Brooklyn Youth Chorus has served over 10,000 students over the course of its history, currently involving more than 700 students in its core after-school and public-school outreach programs. All students perform in the Chorus's annual concert series, and their advanced ensembles appear regularly at prestigious venues—from Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center to the Barbican Theatre and The Kennedy Center. Advanced singers also enjoy opportunities for touring and recording.

Attacca Quartet, Orchestra

San Diego Opera debut. The internationally acclaimed Attacca Quartet formed at the Juilliard School in 2003 and made their professional debut in 2007 as part of the Artists International Winners Series in Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. From 2011-2013 they served as the Juilliard Graduate Resident String Quartet, and for the 2014-2015 season they were selected as the Quartet in Residence by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In the 2017-2018 season, the Attacca Quartet will be touring extensively throughout the United States and abroad. Highlights of the season will include appearances at Wolf Trap, Carolina Performing Arts, Converse College, Bay Chamber Concerts, Cedarhurst Chamber Music, Chamber Music Society of Central Kentucky, Glema Mahr, Cranbrook Music Guild, Huntsville Chamber Music Guild, Mobile Chamber Music, Bologna Performing Arts, Oak Ridge Civic Music Association, Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music, Friends of Music in Troy, Symphony Augusta, Florida Keys Concert Association, Palm Beach State College, the Garmany Chamber Music Series, Lyrica Chamber Music and Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts in New York. The group will also present an ongoing series at Trinity Lutheran Church in Manhattan entitled "Based on Beethoven," featuring performances of the

complete Beethoven string quartets. The group currently serves as the Ensemble-in-Residence at the School of Music at Texas State University. The Attacca Quartet's most recent album release included string quartet works of Michael Ippolito. These works were performed as part of the group's residency at National Sawdust in Brooklyn, including three concerts of works by living composers. The group's next recording project will feature string quartet works of Caroline Shaw. The Attacca Quartet recently completed a recording project of Haydn's masterwork "The Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross," arranged by Andrew Yee and the Attacca Quartet. In 2013, the quartet released the complete works for string quartet by John Adams on Azica Records. The album was the recipient of the 2013 National Federation of Music Clubs Centennial Chamber Music Award. The quartet has been honored with both the Arthur Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association and the Lotos Prize in the Arts from the Stecher and Horowitz Foundation. The Attacca Quartet has engaged in extensive educational and community outreach projects, serving as guest artists and teaching fellows at the Lincoln Center Institute, the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Vivace String Camp in New York, the Woodlands ChamberFest in Texas, Virginia Arts Festival, Bravo! Vail Valley and Animato Summer Music Camp at Florida International University in Miami. Since 2006, they have performed in yearly benefit concerts supporting the Parkinson's Disease Foundation's efforts. The members of the Attacca Quartet currently reside in New York City.

Julian Crouch, Director and Scenic Design

San Diego Opera debut. Julian Crouch is a Brooklyn-based independent director, designer, writer, maker, teacher, illustrator and musician, whose career has spanned theatre, opera, ballet, film and television. Initially a mask and puppet maker, and with much of his life based in London, in the mid- 1990's co-founded London's Improbable Theatre Company. Improbable's productions, which included *Animo*, *70 Hill Lane*, *Lifegame*, *Spirit*, *Sticky*, *The Hanging Man*, *The Wolves in The Walls*, and *Panic*, have gained far-reaching national and international recognition. His final production for Improbable, which he conceived, directed and designed, was *The Devil and Mister Punch*. Julian co-created, co-directed and designed the multi-award winning *Shockheaded Peter*. His opera work has included set design and associate direction for *Satyagraha* for the ENO and The Met Opera, and creating *The Enchanted Island*, *Doctor Atomic* and staging the 125th Gala for the Met. Other major projects include *Jerry Springer: The Opera* and *A Funny Thing Happened on The Way to the Forum* for the National Theatre, *The Magic Flute* for the Welsh National Opera and *Cinderella* for the Dutch National and San Francisco Ballets. On Broadway Julian designed *The Addams Family Musical* and *Big Fish*. Most recently Julian co-directed, co-composed and designed *Jedermann* for the Salzburg Festival. His recent set design for *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* on Broadway earned him a Tony Nomination. Most recently he designed and co-created *Aging Magician* for BMP at the New Victory Theater, designed *The Nutcracker* for Christopher Wheeldon and The Joffrey Ballet, co-directed and designed *King Arthur* for the Berlin Staatsoper. He was also Director and Designer for the Met Opera's *50 Years of The Met at Lincoln Center Gala*. He is currently designing *Hansel and Gretel* and *Ernani* for La Scala Opera, Milan, Nico Muhly's *Marnie* for the English National Opera and the Met Opera, and *The Barber Of Seville* for the Dutch National Opera. His production *Birdheart*, co-conceived with Saskia Lane, played for the Dalai Lama in Brussels and has toured as far afield as Zimbabwe and Abu Dhabi. Julian was recently Artist in Residence at New York's Park Avenue Armory and was the first commissioned artist for the BRIC House Fireworks Residency Program in Brooklyn, NY. He has illustrated 2 books - *Jedermann*, and *Maggot Moon*.

Dianne Berkun Menaker, Conductor

San Diego Opera debut. Dianne Berkun Menaker is the founder and artistic director of Brooklyn Youth Chorus. Under her visionary leadership, the chorus has become one of the most highly regarded ensembles in the country and has stretched the artistic boundaries for the youth chorus. She has prepared

choruses for performances with acclaimed conductors, including Alan Gilbert, Marin Alsop, James Levine, Charles Dutoit, and Robert Spano. Most notably, she prepared the chorus for its 2002 debut with the New York Philharmonic in John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls*, the recording for which the chorus won a Grammy Award in 2005. Ms. Berkun Menaker has also prepared the Chorus for appearances and recordings with artists such as Barbra Streisand, Elton John, Lou Reed, Philip Glass, Grizzly Bear, John Legend, Natasha Bedingfield, The National, and Alicia Keys. Out of a desire to showcase the chorus's versatility and uniquely beautiful sounds, she has developed an active commissioning program, collaborating with some of the most important composers of our time. Ms. Berkun Menaker is a regular choral clinician and teaching artist for such organizations as the New York Philharmonic and The Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall and has also presented workshops and master classes for New York University, New York State School Music Association, the American Choral Directors Association, and the New York City Department of Education. She is the creator of the chorus's Cross-Choral Training program, a proven holistic and experiential approach to developing singers in a group setting encompassing both voice and musicianship pedagogy.

Paola Prestini, Composer and Co-Creator

San Diego Opera debut. Composer Paola Prestini is the co-founder and Artistic Director of the Brooklyn arts center National Sawdust. Since 1999, when she co-founded the multimedia production company VisionIntoArt (subsequently re-launched as National Sawdust Projects), she has collaborated with poets, filmmakers, and scientists in large-scale multimedia works. She was recently named an "Innovator" on the list of Top 30 Professionals of the Year by *Musical America*, the country's oldest classical music magazine; she is on *Brooklyn Magazine's* latest list of "influencers of Brooklyn culture...in perpetuity" alongside such household names as Chuck Schumer and Spike Lee; and is one of the Top 35 Female Composers in Classical Music (*Washington Post*). As part of her commitment to education and mentoring the next generation of musical artists, she started the Hildegard Competition, for emerging female, trans, and non-binary composers. Prestini's music and works have been commissioned by and performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, the Brooklyn Youth Chorus, the Barbican Centre, the Cannes Film Festival, Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Opera, Roomful of Teeth, the Choir of Trinity Wall Street, and the Young People's Chorus, among others. Her next steps include the following new commissions: a new piece for the New York Philharmonic's Project 19 Initiative, a piano concerto for Awadagin Pratt and A Far Cry, a string quartet commissioned by Caramoor for the Thalea String Quartet, and the score to *The Amazon*, a documentary and arts event (and follow up to filmmaker Murat Eyuboglu's *The Colorado*). Her upcoming operas include the grand opera *Edward Tulane* with librettist Mark Campbell and director Eric Simonson (Minnesota Opera), the chamber opera *Sensorium Ex* with poet Brenda Shaughnessy and director Tomer Tzvilun (Atlanta Opera and Beth Morrison Projects), and the foley chamber opera *Stellet Licht* with librettist Royce Vavrek and director Thaddeus Strassberger (Banff's Opera in the 21st Century). She has collaborated with artists such as the multidisciplinary talent Rinde Eckert; astrophysicist Mario Livio; conservationist William deBuys; VR writer and director Eliza McNitt; throat singer Tanya Tagaq; directors Julian Crouch and Robert Wilson; and musicians such as Helga Davis and Jeffrey Zeigler. She has been a Paul and Daisy Soros Fellow and a Sundance Fellow and was a graduate of The Juilliard School.

Mark Stewart, Instrument Design

San Diego Opera debut. Multi-instrumentalist, singer, song leader, composer and instrument designer Mark Stewart has been heard around the world performing old and new music. Since 1998 he has recorded, toured and been Musical Director with Paul Simon. A founding member of the Bang on a Can All-Stars, the comic duo Polygraph Lounge with keyboard & theremin wizard Rob Schwimmer, Mark has also worked with Steve Reich, Sting, Anthony Braxton, Bob Dylan, Wynton Marsalis, Meredith Monk,

Stevie Wonder, Phillip Glass, Iva Bittova, Bruce Springsteen, Terry Riley, Ornette Coleman, Edie Brickell, Don Byron, Joan Baez, Hugh Masakela, Paul McCartney, Cecil Taylor, Bill Frisell, Jimmy Cliff, Charles Wourinen, the Everly Brothers, Steve Gadd, Fred Frith, Alison Krauss, David Krakauer, Bobby McFerrin, David Byrne, James Taylor, The Roches, Aaron Neville, Bette Midler, and Marc Ribot. He is the inventor of the WhirlyCopter, a bicycle-powered Pythagorean choir of singing tubes and the Big Boing, a 24 ft. sonic banquet table Mbira that seats 30 children playing 490 found objects. Mark is the curator at MASS MoCA of the immersive Gunnar Schonbeck exhibit of musical instruments. He can be heard on Blue Note, Warner Bros., Sony, Sony Classical, Point/Polygram, Nonesuch, Label Bleu, Resonance Magnetique, Cantaloupe and CRI recordings. He lives in New York City making his living playing and writing popular music, semi-popular music and unpopular music, and designing instruments that everyone can play.

Amy Rubin, Scenic Designer

San Diego Opera debut. Notable work by Scenic Designer Amy Rubin includes *All the Fine Boys* for The New Group, *Miles for Mary* for Bushwick Starr, *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Rake's Progress*, and *The Elixir of Love* for Curtis Opera, *Quiet*, *Comfort* for JACK, *Mother Courage* for University of Rochester, *How to Live on Earth* for HERE Arts Center, *Phoebe in the Winter* for Fordham University, *Sonnets on Tap* for Cherry Lane Theatre, *Hamlet* for Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, and *Love's Labor's Lost* for Baryshnikov Arts Center, among others.

Beth Morrison Projects (BMP), Creative Producer

Since 2006 “the contemporary opera mastermind (LA Times),” Beth Morrison Projects (BMP), has been an industry disruptor and tastemaker at the forefront of musical and theatrical innovation by commissioning, developing, producing and touring the groundbreaking new works of living composers and their collaborators, which take the form of opera-theatre, music-theatre, and vocal-theatre. BMP encourages risk-taking and the result is provocative works that represent a dynamic and lasting legacy for a new American canon. The 2014 bi-coastal expansion to Los Angeles sprang from growing partnerships and relationships with institutions such as LA Opera, the LA Phil, Ford Theatres, Center Theatre Group and RVCC. During the last five years alone, BMP has produced works in 43 venues in 22 cities around the world. BMP’s commitment to cutting edge musical expression has created “its own genre” (Opera News) of originality. In 2013, Beth Morrison Projects and HERE Arts Center co-founded the PROTOTYPE Festival, which showcases contemporary opera-theatre and music-theatre projects over ten days each January in New York City. The New Yorker recently wrote that the festival is “Essential to the evolution of American Opera,” and The New York Times called the festival “Bracingly innovative... a point of reference.”

Performance Schedule

Friday	March 13, 2020	7:30 PM
Saturday	March 14, 2020	2:00 PM
Saturday	March 14, 2020	7:30 PM

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San Diego Opera on YouTube

Now viewers can watch a large portion of San Diego Opera's programming at their convenience on YouTube. Archived versions of *OperaTalk!*, *Stars in the Salon*, *Opera Spotlight*, our video podcast series and much more can be found on the San Diego Opera channel at: <http://www.youtube.com/SanDiegoOpera>

San Diego Opera on Instagram

A picture is worth a thousand words! Take a look at what happens backstage and in the office on San Diego Opera's Instagram page. <http://instagram.com/sandiegoopera>

Purchasing Tickets

Single tickets start at \$35 for all *détour* Series operas. Children prices exist, please visit www.sdopera.org or call 619.533.7000 for more information.

Senior citizen discounts of 15% are available to the Main Stage series on Tuesday and Friday subscription packages. Senior citizen discounts of 15% are available to the *détour* Series on Saturday subscription packages.

Military discounts (active and retired) of 50% are available to the Main Stage series on Tuesday and Friday subscription packages. Military discounts of 50% are available to the *détour* Series on Saturday subscription packages.

For information about tickets please visit www.sdopera.org or call 619.533.7000

San Diego Opera 2019-2020 Season

<i>Aida</i>	Giuseppe Verdi	October 19, 22, 25, and 27 (mat), 2019
<i>One Amazing Night with Ailyn Pérez and Joshua Guerrero</i>		December 11, 2019
<i>Hansel & Gretel</i>	Engelbert Humperdinck	February 8, 11, 14, and 16 (mat), 2020
<i>Aging Magician</i>	Paola Prestini	March 13 and 14 (evening and mat), 2020
<i>The Barber of Seville</i>	Gioachino Rossini	April 25, 28, May 1 and 3 (mat) 2020
<i>The Falling and the Rising</i>	Zach Redler	May 8, 9, and 10 (mat) 2020

San Diego Opera Mission Statement

The mission of San Diego Opera is to deliver exceptional vocal performances and exciting, accessible programs to diverse audiences, focusing on community engagement and the transformative power of live performance.

San Diego Opera Vision Statement

San Diego Opera will be recognized internationally as a leading example of adaptability, innovation and sustainability in the operatic arts, promoting diversified programming and unique performance venues with world-class and emerging talent.

San Diego Opera Core Values Statement

Through excellence in innovative programming and education, SDO provides a lasting cultural service to the community.

- Our tradition of excellence in fully staged opera is augmented with new models of opera and venues. Our unique and deep commitment to the community propels us to explore ways of increasing affordability and accessibility.
- Through fiscal responsibility and nimble adaptation to the changing marketplace, we protect the future of San Diego Opera.
- Our educational and community involvement coupled with relevant programming will build the audience of the future.

www.sdopera.org

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