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**San Diego Opera Presents [Rigoletto](#) at the San Diego Civic Theatre
October 23, 24 & 25, 2026**

SAN DIEGO (August 31, 2026) – After a triumphant start to its 2026-27 season with the “heartbreaking and timely” (*San Diego Union-Tribune*) production of Gregory Spears’ *Fellow Travelers*, [San Diego Opera](#) continues this fall with Giuseppe Verdi’s masterpiece [Rigoletto](#). Running October 23, 24, and 25 at the San Diego Civic Theatre, *Rigoletto* tells a timeless tale of betrayal, sacrifice, and revenge with some of the most recognizable music in the operatic repertoire. The production will be performed on Robert Dahlstrom’s “gorgeous and grand set” (*Palm Beach Daily News*), last showcased in San Diego Opera’s 2019 production, and will star leading American Rigoletto [Michael Chioldi](#), who has recently performed the role at the Irish National Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera.

Making jokes is what Rigoletto does for a living, serving as court jester to the predatory Duke of Mantua. But the joke may be on him when one of his jests enrages Count Monterone, the father of the Duke’s latest victim, unleashing a curse with dangerous consequences for Rigoletto and his beautiful daughter Gilda. Verdi’s telling of this tragic story of jealousy, sacrifice, and vengeance is packed with beloved arias like the Duke’s “La donna è mobile” and Gilda’s “Caro nome,” and the stunning quartet “Bella figlia dell’amore.”

The title role will be sung by baritone **Michael Chioldi**, whom *Opera Warhorses* described as possessing “the full-bodied dramatic baritone voice that is needed for this iconic role.” Chioldi returns to SDO for the first time since 2000 when he appeared as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*. Making their debuts with the company are soprano **Madison Leonard**, who will lend her “delicate filigree and remarkable vocal heft” (*Bachtrack*) to the role of Gilda, and Argentinian American tenor **Jose Simerilla Romero**, who will bring his “major league instrument” (*South Florida Classical Review*) to the role of the Duke of Mantua. Bass **Peixin Chen** – last seen in San Diego Opera’s drive-in *Barber of Seville* in 2021 – returns to play Sparafucile; Baritone **Joel Balzun** makes his company debut as Monterone; and San Diego’s own **Guadalupe Paz** follows her appearance in the title role of 2026’s *Carmen* to sing the role of Maddalena.

In the pit for the production will be the renowned **San Diego Symphony Orchestra**, continuing a longstanding collaborative partnership between the two organizations. San Diego Opera’s Principal Conductor **Yves Abel** will lead the production and **Christopher Mattaliano** directs.

“Rigoletto is one of my great loves,” says director **Christopher Mattaliano**, who returns to the work for the tenth time in his career. *“Rigoletto* remains endlessly fascinating because Verdi’s genius comes together so completely here. There is a white-hot intensity to the drama, an extraordinary emotional directness, and one ravishing melody after another. The opera’s exploration of the relationship between Rigoletto and his daughter, Gilda, is especially striking. Beneath the larger-than-life, Shakespearean drama is an intimate and deeply human story about a father whose overwhelming love and need to protect his child ultimately leads to tragedy. Verdi portrays that parent-child bond with extraordinary tenderness, creating some of the most beautiful and personal music he ever wrote.”

Audiences will get a preview of the upcoming production on **October 1 at 6pm** at [Opera Uncorked](#), part of a series of events that explores opera’s history, offers musical insights, and gives a behind-the-scenes glance at the production. Held at UCSD’s Park & Market location in the East Village portion of downtown San Diego, Opera Uncorked is an evening of music – complemented by wine and light bites – led by San Diego Opera’s Resident Conductor **Bruce Stasyna**.

San Diego Opera invites audiences this season to deepen their experience with each of the mainstage works through preshow talks and post-show talkbacks, offered as part of the company’s commitment to meaningful artistic engagement. A preconcert talk, hosted by Michael Gerdes, will begin 50 minutes prior to curtain for all three performances of *Rigoletto*. Immediately following each performance is an informative Post-Opera Talk-Back in the Dress Circle with San Diego Opera staff and cast members.

Three-opera subscriptions are now on sale for San Diego Opera’s 2026-27 productions of *Rigoletto*, *Susannah* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. Audiences are encouraged to take advantage of additional audience services including Opera Caravan, offering round-trip transportation from North County for Sunday matinees (\$50); 20% off ticket prices for groups of 10 or more; \$36 student group tickets, and Gen O pricing for opera lovers under 30, with tickets starting at \$55.

Following *Rigoletto* in San Diego Opera’s 2026-27 season will be Carlisle Floyd’s seminal work [Susannah](#) (**February 12-14, 2027**), performed in celebration of the American composer’s centenary; and W.A. Mozart’s madcap comedy, [The Marriage of Figaro](#) (**April 2-4, 2027**).

FOR LISTINGS:

San Diego Opera Presents: *Rigoletto*

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

Friday, October 23 at 7:30 PM

Saturday, October 24 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, October 25 at 2:00 PM

San Diego Civic Theatre – 1100 Third Ave, San Diego, CA 92101

Single ticket prices range from \$51 - \$363

***A preconcert talk led by [Michael Gerdes](#) will begin 50 minutes prior to curtain**

***A post-opera Talk-Back with San Diego Opera staff and cast members immediately follows the performances in the Dress Circle**

To purchase subscriptions or learn more about San Diego Opera's 2026–2027 season, please visit [sdopera.org](https://www.sdopera.org) or call 619.232.7636.

The venue provides accessible seating, assistive listening devices, and other accommodations for guests with disabilities.

All operas will be performed in their original languages, with English and Spanish supertitles projected above the stage.

CAST LIST

Yves Abel – Conductor

Christopher Mattaliano - Director

Michael Chioldi – Rigoletto

Madison Leonard – Gilda

Jose Simerilla Romero – The Duke

Peixin Chen – Sparafucile

Guadalupe Paz – Maddalena

Joel Balzun – Count Monterone

PRODUCTION TEAM:

Scenic design by Robert Dahlstrom

Lighting design by Jason Bieber

Costume design by Jane Greenwood

ABOUT SAN DIEGO OPERA

Founded in 1965, San Diego Opera has delivered exceptional performances and inspiring educational programs to a wide audience in San Diego for 60 seasons, with a strong focus on community partnerships and the transformative and expressive power of the human voice. With a commitment to innovative storytelling, lifelong learning and engagement, and an awareness of great music's power to bring audiences together, San Diego Opera provides a lasting cultural service to its community. To learn more, please visit www.sdopera.org or follow @sandiegoopera on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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Artist headshots, production photos and logo images can be found on San Diego Opera's Press page [HERE](#).