



2024-25 Hal & Jeanette Segerstrom
Family Foundation Classical Series

A GRAND FINALE: VERDI'S MIGHTY REQUIEM

Preview Talk at 7 p.m.
KUSC midday host Alan Chapman

Thursday, June 5, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Friday, June 6, 2025 @ 8 p.m.
Saturday, June 7, 2025 @ 8 p.m.

REDISCOVER VERDI'S REQUIEM

Sunday Matinee, June 8, 2025 @ 3 p.m.
With commentary from Music Director Carl St.Clair.

Carl St.Clair, conductor
Raquel González, soprano
Daryl Freedman, mezzo soprano
Won Whi Choi, tenor
Zaikuan Song, bass
Pacific Chorale— Robert Istad, artistic director

VERDI
Messa da requiem
Requiem and Kyrie
Sequence (Dies Irae)
Offertorio (Domine Jesu)
Sanctus
Agnus Dei
Lux aeterna
Libera me
Raquel Gonzalez, soprano
Daryl Freedman, mezzo soprano
Won Whi Choi, tenor
Zaikuan Song, bass
Pacific Chorale

The Friday evening concert is generously sponsored
by **Christopher Tower and Robert Celio, Jr.**

The Sunday Matinee concert is generously
sponsored by **Janice and Ted Smith**



This concert is being recorded for broadcast
on Aug. 17, 2025 on Classical California KUSC.

Performance at the Segerstrom Center for the Arts
Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall



PROGRAM NOTES

Giuseppe Verdi

Born: Oct. 9 or 10, 1813 in Busseto, Parma Province, Italy

Died: Jan. 27, 1901 in Milan, Italy

Messa da Requiem



Composed: 1874

Premiered: May 22, 1874 in the Church of San Marco, Milan, conducted by the composer.

Most recent Pacific Symphony performance: April 16, 2019 in Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall with Murry Sidlin conducting.

Instrumentation: Three flutes including piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, four bassoons, four horns, eight trumpets, three trombones, one tuba, timpani, percussion, and strings; with solo soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and chorus.

Approximate duration: 1 hour and 24 minutes.

As a musical composition, the Verdi Requiem is a triumph. As a project under development culminating in 1873, when Verdi was 60 years old and had an eye on retirement, it was a total mess.

Born in 1813, Verdi was active as a composer when modern-day Italy was struggling to emerge as a unified nation, and his success reached into every facet of Italian life and culture; he was an outspoken patriot and political dissenter, and his operas dominated the country's national art form and made him its most famous citizen. And yet he was often melancholy and sometimes irritable, especially toward the end of his career, when it seemed that the tide of music history might leave him behind. By the 1870s, Wagner's revolutionary music dramas had taken hold outside Italy, and Italian music critics and opera fanatics were looking to the next big Italian thing: the shocking grittiness of *Verismo* composers like Puccini, Leoncavallo and Mascagni, whose sizzling librettos Verdi envied. Though he was eighty years old when he composed *Falstaff*, in his 60s he was already saying he'd had his fill of operatic composition.

Nonetheless, Verdi was acknowledged as foremost among the world's opera composers when he suggested a collaboration among Italian composers to create a Requiem to honor Gioachino Rossini, his most important predecessor, who died in 1868. Verdi venerated Rossini and was honored to have followed him in Italian opera's line of succession. But he was also well-aware that Rossini had leveraged the success of his operatic output to enjoy a luxurious retirement. In the great restaurants of Paris he was almost as famous as a gourmand as he had been as a composer.

Working with his publisher and the eminent conductor Angelo Mariani, Verdi recruited twelve composers to contribute sections to a proposed *Messa per Rossini*. Though this kind of Mass is not intended for performance in church, it is intended as a solemn memorial and is comprised of sacred verses in Latin intended to honor and sanctify the souls of the departed. But as a memoriam intended for concert performance, it provides the composer with greater artistic latitude, and the result often has a theatrical dimension.

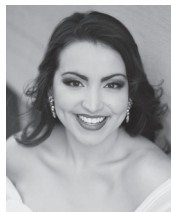
Verdi had reserved the *Libera me* section as his contribution and composed it well in time for the work's premiere, which was scheduled for the first anniversary of Rossini's death in 1869. The project collapsed just nine days before that date amid personal acrimony that ended Verdi's friendship with Mariani, the intended conductor, though Mariani is said to have made good faith efforts to salvage the project. And that would have been that — were it not for the death of Alessandro Manzoni, an Italian writer, patriot, and nationalist whom Verdi greatly admired.

Verdi was still occasionally revising his ravishing *Libera me* when Manzoni died in 1873. Was he still in a fury over the *Messa per Rossini* fiasco or simply moved by the death of Manzoni, whom he greatly admired and had met in 1868? Probably both circumstances inspired him to compose what was first known as the Manzoni Requiem but quickly became known as the Verdi Requiem. The beauty and theatricality of this remarkable work have eclipsed the memory of Alessandro Manzoni and the *Messa per Rossini*, which was only rediscovered in 1988. Much of the original *Libera me* became part of the later requiem's *Dies irae*, or "day of wrath," truly terrifying music that is the aural equivalent of Michelangelo's rendering of the gates of hell in the Sistine Chapel, but with furious descending chromatic scales and timpani strikes like cannon shots. Your intrepid annotator can attest to the dramatic impact of this section: When rehearsing it as a chorister in college for a well-known conductor—we were outside, standing on risers on a warm summer day—an alto in the chorus fainted. The conductor assumed it was the heat and rushed to get her some water, but the baritone next to me shook his head. "She wasn't hot," he said. "She was frightened."

Michael Clive is a cultural reporter living in the Litchfield Hills of Connecticut. He is program annotator for Pacific Symphony and has written numerous articles for magazines and newspapers in the U.S. and U.K. and hundreds of program notes for orchestras and opera companies. Operahound.com

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Raquel González, soprano



Praised by *Opera News* as a “true artist,” soprano Raquel González is a recipient of the Sphinx Organization’s prestigious Medal of Excellence Award. In the 2023–24 season, she makes notable debuts with Houston Grand Opera in the

title role of *Madama Butterfly*, Austin Opera as Micaëla in *Carmen*, and Berkshire Opera Festival as Marguerite in *Faust*. She also returns to The Metropolitan Opera for the company premiere of Catan’s *Florenzia en el Amazonas* and to the New York Festival of Song for a program of Latin music.

In the previous season, González debuted with Inland Northwest Opera in *La Traviata* (Violetta) and Sarasota Opera in *Madama Butterfly* (Cio-Cio-San), while also joining the Met’s roster for *La Bohème*. On the concert stage, she appeared with the St. Louis Symphony under Stéphane Denève performing *Tosca*’s “Vissi d’arte” and joined the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park for Verdi’s *Requiem*.

Additional recent appearances include *Don Giovanni* (Donna Anna) with Opera San Antonio and *La Bohème* (Mimi) with Virginia Opera. She returned to Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for *Harvey Milk* (Dianne Feinstein), performed excerpts from *Eugene Onegin* and *Iolanta* with Queen City Opera, and appeared in New York Festival of Song’s *Buenos Aires, Then and Now*. She also gave a solo recital at the University of Lynchburg.

González made a role and house debut at Chicago Opera Theater in *Kashchej the Immortal* (Princess) under conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya. She reprised Mimì in *La Bohème* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Opera Tampa, sang Liù in *Turandot* with New Orleans Opera, and portrayed Anna Sørensen in *Silent Night* with Washington National Opera. She has also appeared as Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin* with Atlanta Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and as Violetta in *La Traviata* with Opera on the James.

Earlier in her career, González made her Glimmerglass Festival debut in *The Magic Flute* and returned as a guest artist for *La Bohème*. As a young artist at Washington National Opera, she sang leading roles in *Madama Butterfly*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *Carmen*, and *La Bohème*, among others. She also appeared in *Otello* (Desdemona) with the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestra. Scan



Daryl Freedman, mezzo-soprano



Praised by *Opera News* for her “striking dark timbre” and “expansive, sumptuous” performances, mezzo-soprano Daryl Freedman returns to The Metropolitan Opera in the 2023–24 season as the Third Lady in *The Magic Flute* and covers Ulrica in

Un ballo in maschera. She also rejoins The Cleveland Orchestra for staged performances of *Die Zauberflöte* and returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago to cover Amneris in *Aida*. Highlights of the previous season include her role debut as Ulrica in *Un ballo in maschera* with Maryland Lyric Opera, Schubert’s *Mass No. 6* with The Cleveland Orchestra at Severance Hall and Carnegie Hall, and *Messiah* with the Santa Fe Symphony. She also returned to The Metropolitan Opera to cover Amneris in *Aida*.

In recent seasons, Freedman made significant role and house debuts, including Fricka in *Das Rheingold* at Virginia Opera and the title role in *Julius Caesar* at The Atlanta Opera. She appeared with The Metropolitan Opera in *The Magic Flute* and as a rehearsal cover for Princess Eboli in *Don Carlos*. At Washington National Opera, she created the role of Powerful Woman/Adelaide Johnson in the world premiere of Kamala Sankaram’s *Rise*. She also made her Salzburg Festival debut as Suor Dolcina in *Suor Angelica* under Franz Welser-Möst, debuted with the Erie Philharmonic in Mahler’s *Symphony No. 2*, and performed Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* with the Fairfax Symphony. Other credits include *Das Lied von der Erde* with the Fargo-Moorhead Symphony, a cover of Santuzza in *Cavalleria rusticana* at Dutch National Opera, and a role debut as Azucena in *Il trovatore* with Opera San José. Previous performances have been postponed due to the pandemic, including productions with Madison Opera, Portland Opera, and the Cleveland Orchestra.

Freedman’s Met debut was in *Die Walküre* (Schwertleite). She has since performed with San Francisco Opera, Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, and Opera Idaho, and appeared in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with The Cleveland Orchestra. Concert engagements include *Songfest* with the National Symphony Orchestra and *Messiah* with the Santa Fe Symphony, Boise Philharmonic, and Carnegie Hall’s Cecilia Chorus. A graduate of the Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera, Freedman appeared in a variety of roles including Princess Eboli (*Don Carlo*), Gertrude (*Hansel and Gretel*), Lili’uokalani (*Better Gods*), and Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*). Scan



Won Whi Choi, tenor



Tenor Won Whi Choi continues to captivate audiences worldwide with his lustrous tone, expressive musicianship, and charismatic stage presence. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2020 as Alfredo in *La Traviata*, earning critical acclaim,

and has since returned for productions including *Rigoletto*, *Fedora*, and as cover for *Maria Stuarda* and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*.

In the 2023–24 season, Choi sings Macduff in *Macbeth* with The Atlanta Opera and Don José in *Carmen* with Hawaii Opera Theatre. Last season included debuts with Victorian Opera in Melbourne as Ruggiero in *La rondine*, The Atlanta Opera as the Duke in *Rigoletto*, and a return to Minnesota Opera as Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. He also appeared in a Puccini Gala with Artpark in New York.

Recent performances include Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Virginia Opera, Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with Seoul Metropolitan Opera, and Giorgio in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* with New York City Opera. He spent three seasons at Theater Erfurt in Germany, singing leading roles including Don José, Roméo, Ferrando, Tamino, Hyllus, and the Duke in *Rigoletto*. He also appeared at the Morbisch Festival and made his Hong Kong debut in *Das Land des Lächelns*.

Choi's New York debut as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* earned praise from *The New York Observer* for his "big, virile sound... so secure he dared to run across the stage while holding the note." Additional credits include Arcadio in *Florenzia en el Amazonas* with New York City Opera, Don José in *Carmen* for Minnesota Opera and Croatia National Theater, and the title role in *Les contes d'Hoffmann* with Opera Tampa and Opera Orlando.

On the concert stage, he recently performed Handel's *Messiah* with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, where the *Winnipeg Free Press* praised his "booming presence" and "remarkable vocal strength." He also appeared in an opera gala at Shanghai Symphony Hall to critical acclaim.

A finalist in the 2012 Montreal International Musical Competition, Choi holds degrees from Mannes College of Music and the Korean National University of the Arts. Scan QR Code for full bio.



Zaikuan Song, bass



Chinese operatic bass Zaikuan Song is celebrated for his majestic vocal resonance and keen dramatic instinct. A graduate of Michigan State University (D.M.A.) and the China Conservatory of Music (M.M. and B.M.), Song brings

depth and emotional nuance to an expansive operatic repertoire, ranging from the comic brilliance of Donizetti, Mozart, Puccini, and Rossini to the gravitas of Verdi's most powerful works.

Song's recent credits include the King and Ramfis in *Aida*, Timur in *Turandot*, Commendatore in *Don Giovanni*, Banco in *Macbeth*, and Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*. With Michigan State University Opera Theater, he has portrayed Germano (*La scala di seta*), Simone (*Gianni Schicchi*), Frank Maurrant (*Street Scene*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Dulcamara (*L'elisir d'amore*), Mr. Emerson (*A Room with a View*), Changwu Ye (*The Savage Land*), and Ariodate (*Xerxes*).

He has performed with Opera Grand Rapids, Opera Carolina, Toledo Opera, and was a Geridine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis in 2022. Song has collaborated with noted conductors and directors including James Meena, Marcello Cormio, Anthony Barrese, Eve Summer, Ivan Stefanutti, Linda Brovsky, Garnett Bruce, Jay Lesenger, and coaches Elden Little and Michael Recchiuti.

A seasoned concert and recital performer, Song has appeared as bass soloist in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Pacific Symphony, *Messiah* with Chapel Music at Duke University, and in a Bach Cantata at Michigan State University. He was a featured guest at Opera Carolina's gala at the Belk Theater, the Halton Theater's *Celebrating Music That United Our Community*, and the *Magnificent China — U.S.-China Art Culture Festival*.

His accolades include top prize in the National NATS competition (Advanced College/Independent Studio Men) and third place at the 2020 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Midwest Region Finals.

Zaikuan Song continues to captivate audiences through a profound artistic presence and unwavering dedication to the power of opera to transcend cultures and connect communities. Scan QR Code for full bio.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

Robert Istad, Pacific Chorale artistic director



Robert Istad, a GRAMMY® Award-winning conductor who “fashions fluent and sumptuous readings” (*Voice of OC*) with his “phenomenal” artistry (*Los Angeles Times*), was appointed Pacific Chorale’s artistic director in 2017.

Under his leadership, the chorus continues to expand its reputation for excellence for delivering fresh, thought-provoking interpretations of beloved masterworks, rarely performed gems, and newly commissioned pieces. In July 2023, he led Pacific Chorale’s first international tour in seven years, conducting performances at leading venues in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

His artistic impact can be heard on two recent recordings featuring Pacific Chorale, including the 2022 GRAMMY Award-winning “Mahler’s Eighth Symphony” with the LA Phil conducted by Gustavo Dudamel on Deutsche Grammophon (2021), for which he prepared the chorus. It won Best Choral Performance and also garnered a GRAMMY nomination for Best Engineered Album, Classical. Additionally, Istad conducted Pacific Chorale’s recording *All Things Common: The Music of Tarik O’Regan*, released on Yarlung Records (2020).

He regularly conducts and collaborates with Pacific Symphony, Berkshire Choral International, and Yarlung Records. His extensive credits also include recording for Sony Classical and guest conducting Long Beach Symphony Orchestra, Bach Collegium San Diego, Musica Angelica Baroque Orchestra, Bath Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Tesseræ Baroque, and Freies Landesorchester Bayern.

Istad has prepared choruses for such renowned conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, John Williams, John Mauceri, Keith Lockhart, Nicholas McGegan, Vassily Sinaisky, Sir Andrew Davis, Bramwell Tovey, Carl St.Clair, Eugene Kohn, Giancarlo Guerrero, Marin Alsop, George Fenton, and Robert Moody.

An esteemed educator, Istad is professor of music and director of choral studies at California State University, Fullerton, where he was recognized as CSUF’s 2016 Outstanding Professor of the Year.

He conducts the University Singers and manages a large graduate conducting program, in addition to teaching courses on conducting and performance practice. Istad, who is on the executive board of directors of Chorus America and serves as dean of Chorus America’s Conducting Academy, is in demand as guest conductor, lecturer, and clinician.

ABOUT PACIFIC CHORALE

The GRAMMY Award-winning Pacific Chorale, an Orange County “treasure” with a “fresh viewpoint” that “can sing anything you put in front of it with polish, poise and tonal splendor” (*Orange County Register*), has “risen to national prominence” (*Los Angeles Times*) since its inception in 1968. Hailed for delivering “thrilling entertainment” (*Voice of OC*), the resident choir at Segerstrom Center for the Arts is noted for its artistic innovation and commitment to expanding the choral repertoire. It has given world, U.S., and West Coast premieres of more than 40 works, including numerous commissions, by such lauded composers as John Adams, Jake Heggie, James Hopkins, David Lang, Morten Lauridsen, Tarik O’Regan, Karen Thomas, Frank Ticheli, András Gábor Virág, and Eric Whitacre.

In addition to presenting its own concert series each season, Pacific Chorale, led by Artistic Director Robert Istad, enjoys a long-standing partnership with Pacific Symphony, with which the choir made its highly anticipated Carnegie Hall debut in 2018. The chorus also regularly appears with the LA Phil, with which it won the 2022 GRAMMY Award for Best Choral Performance for its contribution to the live recording of “Mahler’s Eighth Symphony,” conducted by Gustavo Dudamel, featuring LA Phil, Los Angeles Children’s Chorus, Los Angeles Master Chorale, National Children’s Chorus, and Pacific Chorale.

The choir has performed with such leading orchestras as the Boston Symphony, National Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, San Diego Symphony, and Musica Angelica, among others. In addition to receiving national accolades, Pacific Chorale has garnered tremendous international acclaim. In July 2023, the chorus completed its first international tour in seven years with appearances in Austria, Germany, and the United Kingdom in collaboration with Bath Philharmonia, Free State Orchestra of Bavaria, and Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra.

Deeply committed to making choral music accessible to everyone, the organization has a discography of 14 self-produced recordings and an extensive collection of free digital offerings. Among other artistic highlights, Pacific Chorale’s “The Wayfaring Project,” an original concert film conceived and conducted by Istad and produced during the pandemic, was streamed to audiences around the globe on pbsocial.org, kcet.org, and the PBS app. Pacific Chorale also places significant emphasis on choral music education, providing after-school vocal programs for elementary school students, a choral summer camp for high school students, and an annual community-wide singing event at Segerstrom Center for the Arts.

www.pacificchorale.org

Pacific Chorale

Robert Istad / Artistic Director and Conductor
Phillip N. and Mary A. Lyons Artistic Director Chair
Kibsaim Escórciega / Assistant Conductor
Ron Rudderow Legacy Chair

Rhett M. Del Campo / President and CEO
Alex Nelson / VP, Artistic Production and Operations
David Clemensen, DMA / Collaborative Pianist

SOPRANO

Rebecca Hasquet
Section Leader
Lauren Adaska
Alexandria Burdick
Andria Nuñez Cabrera
Chelsea Chaves
Jessica Dalley
Sophia Do
Rosiana Falzon
Karla Verónica Gil
Amy Glinskas
Adrien Gonzalez
Saousan Jarjour
Corinne Larsen Linza
Susan M. Lindley
Anne McClintic
Shannon A. Miller
Maria Cristina Navarro
Hien Nguyen
Mia Noriega Searight
Deborah Pasarow
Nicole Peppel
Laura Pluth
Libby Quam
Linda Wells Sholik
Olivia Siri
Sarah Sweerman
Ruthanne Walker Rice
Anne Williams
Victoria Wu
Yewon Yoon

ALTO

Jane Hyun-Jung Shim
Section Leader
Emily Border
Kathryn Cobb-Woll
Denean R. Dyson
Ivanna Evans
Jacline Evered
Marilyn Forsstrom
Mary Galloway
Kathryn D. Gibson
Erin Girard
Kathleen Thomsen Gremillion
Sandy Grim
Allison Hieger
Eleen Hsu-Wentlandt
Bonita Jaros
Stacey Y. Kikkawa
Hyocheong Kim
Kristen Kleinhans
Logan Mintz-Hernandez
Michele M. Mulidor
Carla Neeld
Pat Newton
Kathleen Preston
Bonnie Pridonoff
Elizabeth Provencio
Suzanne Rahm
Laurel Sanders
Kelly Self
Stephanie Shepson
Abby Tyree
Mayuri Vasan

TENOR

Nicholas Preston
Section Leader,
Roger W. Johnson Memorial Chair
Jephte Acosta
Mike Andrews
Sheridan Ball
Michael Ben-Yehuda
Christopher Brush
Chris Buttars
Abraham Cervantes
Craig Davis
Michael Elson
David Evered
Jason Francisco
Johnny Gonzales
Vincent Hans
Steven M. Hoffman
Craig S. Kistler
Jin Ming Liao
Christopher Lindley
Zachary Lindquist
Greg Long
David López Alemán
Benjamin Lopez
Ricardo Martinez
Gerald McMillan
David Melendez
Lance Padilla
Bryce Rivera
Jakob Swetland
Lissandra Tong
Jeff Wang
Christiaan Westerkamp
W. Faulkner White
Eric Xu

BASS

Ryan Thomas Antal
Section Leader,
Ron Gray Legacy Chair
Aram Barsamian
Kyle Boshardy
Robert David Breton
Mac Bright
Michael Fagerstedt
Karl Forsstrom
Singers Memorial Chair
Sean Gabel
Larry Gates
Randall Gremillion
Peter Hahn
Tom Henley
Alex Jacobson
Matthew Kellaway
Jonathan Krauss
Elliot Z. Levine
Tom Mena
John Middlebrooks
Martin Minnich
Emmanuel Miranda
Kenneth Moore
Ryan Morris
Seth Peelle
Carl Pike
Raphael Poon
Miles Rojo
Malek Sammour
Joshua P. Stansfield
David Tkach

