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Humanities West Announces its 30th Anniversary Season
Multidisciplinary Programs Celebrating History & Culture
Marines' Memorial Theatre, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA

***Verdi's Masterwork: Opera and the Birth of Modern Italy* November 1–2, 2013**

***Constantinople & the Byzantine Millennium (330-1453)* February 28–March 1, 2014**

***Baghdad in Its Golden Age (762-1300)* April 25–26, 2014**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (SAN FRANCISCO, 11 July, 2013) Humanities West, a Bay Area non-profit devoted to exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts, proudly announces its 30th Anniversary Season featuring three diverse lecture/performance programs: *Verdi's Masterwork: Opera and the Birth of Modern Italy* on November 1 & 2, 2013; *Constantinople and the Byzantine Millennium (330-1453)* on February 28 & March 1, 2014; and *Baghdad in Its Golden Age (762-1300)* on April 25 & 26, 2014, at the Marines' Memorial Theatre, located at 609 Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco. A detailed schedule with complete list of presenters and other resources are available online at: www.humanitieswest.org. Single tickets for individual programs range from \$20 - \$80; series tickets are available; contact City Box Office 415-392-4400 or info@cityboxoffice.com. Order online at www.cityboxoffice.com.

Now celebrating its 30th Anniversary Season, Humanities West once again brings together regional, national, and international scholars and artists to present lectures, performances, readings, and discussions, transporting its audience across time and around the globe for colorful perspectives on the many sources of our modern cultures. The 2013-2014 Season illuminates people and places that mark significant points in history, fine art, the performing arts, social history, politics, and philosophy of the arts. The first program will visit the narrow lanes of 19th-century Italy where Verdi poured his yearning for a unified Italy into magnificent operas; the next will crisscross the cultural bridges of East and West in Constantinople, the seat of the Eastern Roman Byzantine Empire; and the final journey ventures to the Round City of Peace, Medieval Baghdad in its Golden Age, to explore the cultural center of the Islamic Empire. With the support of collaborating organizations, each two-day event is complemented by ancillary programs providing opportunities to learn more about the featured topic and related issues. A schedule of ancillary programs is available online at www.humanitieswest.org.

Season tickets for all three two-day programs are \$275 orchestra and \$185 balcony. A Fridays-only series is \$140 orchestra and \$100 balcony, and a Saturdays-only series is \$215 orchestra and \$130 balcony. Series subscriptions offer significant savings over single-ticket prices. Single tickets for individual Friday programs are \$55 orchestra and \$45 balcony and individual Saturday programs are \$80 orchestra and \$55 balcony, single tickets for both days of each program are \$120 orchestra and \$75 balcony. Individual tickets for teachers and students are available for \$20/day for any program. Free tickets are available in limited quantities for students age 25 or younger (inquire at info@humanitieswest.org). All seating must be reserved in advance. Order direct from City Box Office 415-392-4400 or www.cityboxoffice.com.

2013-2014 30th ANNIVERSARY SEASON BRIEF PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Verdi's Masterwork: Opera and the Birth of Modern Italy Nov. 1 & 2, 2013

Early 19th-Century Italy was essentially a patchwork of principalities spread across islands and peninsulas, dominated by foreign powers. By the century's end it had united as the independent Kingdom of Italy, a modern nation with an emerging common culture and language. The great Giuseppe Verdi became the leading artist of this resurgent movement. His operatic masterworks expressed the values and issues of the reunification, giving vivid creative expression to the ideals of his time. His stirring and melodious music provided a common bond for peoples divided by political boundaries, customs, and dialects. Discover how Verdi's life—his humble beginnings, his professional triumphs and family tragedies, his moral integrity, his patriotic yearnings—symbolized an emerging nation's vital spirit. In celebration of Verdi's bicentennial and 2013 as the Year of Italian Culture in the US, this program is presented in collaboration with the Consul General of Italy, the Italian Cultural Institute, the San Francisco Opera, and the Leonardo da Vinci Society.

Speakers include Philip Gossett (*University of Chicago*), Giovanna Ceserani (*Stanford*), Mary Ann Smart (*UC Berkeley*), and Clifford (Kip) Cranna (*San Francisco Opera*); with a musical performance on Friday by soprano Hope Briggs, accompanied by Ron Valentino on piano, and a Saturday performance by soprano Cheryl Cain.

Constantinople and the Byzantine Millennium Feb. 28 & Mar. 1, 2014

The fall of the Roman Empire is often seen as a major dividing line in European history, but its offshoot, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire, lived on from 330 to 1453, providing continuity as a fascinating cultural and political power. In fact, the Byzantines thought of themselves as Romans, while imposing a predominantly Greek culture and Eastern Orthodox religion over their multiethnic territories, dominating the eastern Mediterranean, Southern Italy, the Balkans, and North Africa. This two-day program explores how the Byzantine Empire bridged east and west, ancient and modern, until overwhelmed by the rising power of the Ottoman Turks. This program is presented in collaboration with the Consul General of Greece and the Center for Modern Greek Studies at San Francisco State University.

Speakers include Maria Mavroudi (*UC Berkeley*), Susanna K. Elm (*UC Berkeley*), Dimiter Angelov (*University of Birmingham, UK and Harvard*), Bissera Pentcheva (*Stanford*), Sharon E. J. Gerstel (*UCLA*); with performances by Peter Kalafatis and the Belmont Dancing Group Enomenoi; and *Anthology of Byzantine Melodies* with Reverends Apostolos Koufallakis, Nikos Bekris, John Kololas, Dimosthenis Paraskevaidis, Nebojsa Pantic, Michael Prevas, Alex Leong, Peter Salmas, Jon Magoulias, and Aris Metrakos; and George Haris and Basil Crow perform under the direction of Costas Haralambopoulos, Annunciation Cathedral, San Francisco.

Baghdad in Its Golden Age April 25 & 26, 2014

From its founding in 762 as The City of Peace, Baghdad thrived as the political, cultural, religious, and commercial center of the Muslim empire. Abbasid caliphs ruled over diverse populations of Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and polytheists, whose ethnic identities ranged from Arab to Persian and Turkish to Berber—all of whom contributed to the brilliance of the greatest city of its time in the Middle East, if not the world. At its House of Wisdom, scholars from across the empire translated into Arabic, synthesized and advanced the fragmented literary and scientific knowledge of ancient Greece, Persia, and India. Explore this chapter in history and discover the importance Baghdad's extraordinary intellectual and cultural influence. This program is presented with support from the Center for Middle East Studies at UC Berkeley.

Speakers include Paul M. Cobb (*University of Pennsylvania*), Fred Astren (*SFSU*), Margaret Larkin (*UC Berkeley*), Patricia Blessing (*Stanford*), and Ali Yaycıoğlu (*Stanford*); with a performance by Bay Area medieval ensemble *Cançonier*, featuring Humanities West favorites Shira Kammen and Tim Rayborn.

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ABOUT HUMANITIES WEST:

A non-profit serving the Bay Area since 1983, Humanities West is devoted to exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts. The only independent non-profit offering humanities and arts programs of this scale, Humanities West presents a diverse series of lectures and performances encompassing fine arts, social history, music, politics, and philosophy of the arts. These multidisciplinary programs are designed to entertain and educate audiences and to illuminate and elevate the human spirit through exploration of the many sources of modern culture.

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