



HUMANITIES WEST

Exploring History. Celebrating the Arts.

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Public Info: Humanities West

www.humanitieswest.org

Tickets: City Box Office 415/392-4400

www.cityboxoffice.com

HUMANITIES WEST CELEBRATES ITS 100TH WEEKEND PROGRAM WITH

Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh

Friday & Saturday, May 5–6, 2017

Marines' Memorial Theatre, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: (SAN FRANCISCO, 17 March, 2017) Humanities West is proud to celebrate its 100th weekend program with ***Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh***, a unique lecture and performance series bringing to life one of history's most intriguing women. The program takes place on Friday, May 5, from 7:30pm to 9:30pm, and Saturday, May 6, from 10am to 4pm, at Marines' Memorial Theatre, located at 609 Sutter Street in downtown San Francisco.

Tickets for ***Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh*** are priced as follows: Individual tickets for the Friday program are \$60 orchestra and \$45 balcony and individual Saturday tickets are \$80 orchestra and \$55 balcony, single tickets for both days of each program are \$125 orchestra and \$90 balcony. Order direct from City Box Office 415-392-4400 or www.cityboxoffice.com. Individual balcony tickets for teachers and students are available for \$25/day. Free tickets are available in limited quantities for students age 25 or younger; inquire at info@humanitieswest.org.

Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh brings together a panel of noted scholars and acclaimed Bay Area performers to both educate and entertain audiences with talks and performances celebrating one of the most powerful and intriguing women in history. More than two millennia after her death, Cleopatra VII remains an enigma and an object of fascination. The last Ptolemaic ruler of Hellenistic Egypt and the most influential woman of her times, Cleopatra amassed enormous wealth and power. She lived dangerously and died sensationally. Ever since, she has been an iconic figure, continually re-imagined through the cultural prisms of successive ages.

On Friday evening, **Stacy Schiff** (Pulitzer Prize-winning author) opens the program with ***Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh*** providing an overview of Cleopatra as both woman and ruler, revealing a shrewd strategist and an ingenious negotiator. Having had relationships (and children) with both Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, her empire was rich in political and sexual intrigue. Schiff's talk reveals how this legendary leader, though her life spanned fewer than forty years, became the wealthiest ruler and most significant woman of the age.

The Friday evening program includes a performance of ***Cleopatra at the Opera: Excerpts from Handel's Giulio Cesare in Egitto***. Of the numerous operas inspired by Cleopatra's life and legends, the arguably most successful is Handel's *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (*Julius Caesar in Egypt*) of 1724 presenting Cleopatra as a multifaceted and fascinating character who uses her beauty, wit and wiles to seduce Caesar in order to gain power. **Clifford 'Kip' Cranna** (*SF Opera*) introduces excerpts of Handel's opera performed by **Sara Duchovnay** (soprano) and **Mariya Kaganskaya** (mezzo-soprano) accompanied by **Andrew Wang** (piano) and **Steven Harmon** (French horn).

On Saturday, **Susan Stephens** (*Stanford*) presents ***Cleopatra's Alexandria***. In this talk Stephens explores Cleopatra's capital city of Alexandria as the greatest center of learning in the Western world; an *entrepôt* for trade with India, Africa, the Levant and with Greece, Italy, Sicily and Spain; and the first city of the Mediterranean until the rise of Rome.

Lisa Pieraccini (*UC Berkeley*) follows with ***Cleopatra's Mark on Rome***. Pieraccini will discuss Cleopatra's relationships with two of Rome's most famous leading men Caesar and Mark Antony, along with her influence on the city that celebrated both her visit during the time of Julius Caesar as well as her death after the battle of Actium.

The presentations continue with a musical performance ***Mark Antony and Cleopatra: A Chamber Cantata by Antonio Scarlatti***. Among the countless composers who were attracted to the story of Cleopatra was the great master of the Italian Baroque Antonio Scarlatti (1660-1725). His brief chamber cantata *Marc Antonio e Cleopatra* gives us a glimpse of two famous rulers torn between their loving devotion and the call to battle to defeat their enemies. Introduced by **Kip Cranna**, vocalists **Sara Duchovnay** and **Mariya Kaganskaya** return to perform accompanied by **Andrew Wang** on piano.

Humanities West's 100th anniversary program culminates with ***Death Becomes Her: The Suicide of Cleopatra in Western Culture***, a talk by **Robert Gurval** (*UCLA*). Surveying the literary and visual representations of Cleopatra's dramatic death, from Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* to the mini-series HBO *Rome* in the 21st century,

this illustrated lecture will explore the potent symbolism of the suicide in classical antiquity and subsequent eras. It will try to answer the question whether her final act of dying by the serpent's bite redeems Cleopatra and Death becomes Her.

A panel discussion with the presenters will follow, addressing questions from the audience.

*Ancillary programs providing opportunities to learn more about the featured topic and related issues complement this two-day event. For a complete program schedule and additional information about the presenters please visit www.humanitieswest.org

About Humanities West

Serving the Bay Area since 1983, Humanities West Explores History and Celebrates the Arts through time and across the globe, bringing illuminating lectures and dynamic performances that focus on the people, places, and events that have shaped, and still inform, modern cultures.

Each season Humanities West presents a number of programs in which leading scholars and artists present lectures, performances, readings and discussions to audiences in San Francisco's Marines' Memorial Theatre. These one- or two-day events represent an opportunity unique not only to the Bay Area, but also to the entire United States. In cooperation with other institutions, such as the Mechanics' Institute Library and the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, additional public lectures and panels are presented to further expand upon program topics

CALENDAR LISTING: EVENTS/LECTURES/ARTS & CULTURE

WHAT: *Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh*

Humanities West celebrates its 100th weekend presentation with ***Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh***, a two-day program of lectures, discussion, and musical performances exploring the last Ptolemaic ruler of Hellenistic Egypt, an eternal iconic figure, an object of fascination, and the most influential woman of her times.

**WHEN: 7:30pm to 9:30pm, Friday, May 5, 2017
10am to 4pm, Saturday, May 6, 2017**

**WHERE: Marines' Memorial Theatre
609 Sutter Street, San Francisco**

TICKETS: \$25 - \$80
Tickets are available through City Box Office at 415-392-4400 or online at www.cityboxoffice.com
Group tickets: info@humanitieswest.org

PUBLIC INFO: 415/391-9700 or www.humanitieswest.org

Related Events for *Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh

HUMANITIES WEST BOOK DISCUSSION with Lynn Harris

Cleopatra by Stacy Schiff

When: 6:30pm, Wednesday, April 19, 2017

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$5

TIX: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

PERFORMANCE: Cleopatra's Lament and Other Lost Operas

Ars Minerva's Celine Ricci and Derek Tam perform the aria lament of Cleopatra from the long-lost Baroque Opera *La Cleopatra*, composed by Daniele da Castrovillari in 1662.

When: 7:00pm, Thursday, April 20, 2017

Where: Marines' Memorial Theater Lobby
609 Sutter Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$25

TIX: www.cityboxoffice.com or 415 392 4400

FIRESIDE CHAT with George Hammond

Cleopatra: The Last Pharaoh – Preview

When: 6:30pm, Tuesday, May 2, 2017

Where: Orinda Library,
26 Orinda Way, Orinda, CA

Cost: Free

BOOK PRESENTATION with Stacy Schiff

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Stacy Schiff presents her new book *The Witches: Salem, 1692*

When: 6:00pm, Thursday, May 4, 2017

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$20

Tickets: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700

HUMANITIES WEST BOOK DISCUSSION with Lynn Harris

"Antony and Cleopatra" by Wm Shakespeare (Folger Shakespeare Library)

Edited by Barbara A. Mowat

When: 6:30pm, Wednesday, May 17, 2017

Where: Commonwealth Club of California
555 Post Street, SF, CA

Cost: \$5

Tickets: www.commonwealthclub.org or 415-597-6700