



**Embargoed for release**

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## **San Diego Opera Announces \$1 Million Gift from The Viterbi Family**

### **Generous Gift Funds *Nabucco*, “Community Conversations on Faith and Freedom” Lecture Series and 2011 International Season**

**San Diego, CA** – San Diego Opera is proud to announce a generous gift from Erna and Andrew Viterbi. The first \$500,000 of the gift will be used to underwrite the “Community Conversations on Faith and Freedom” lecture series in conjunction with Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*, the second opera in the San Diego Opera 2010 season. Portions of the gift will also be used to underwrite the production of the opera, making Erna and Andrew the Lead Sponsors for *Nabucco*. The second half of the gift is designated to the 2011 International Season where San Diego Opera will honor the Viterbi family as the Season Sponsor.

“Our interest in opera generally, and in this production of *Nabucco* in particular, derives in part from our cultural heritage,” comments Andrew and Erna Viterbi. “Having inherited from our parents a love of opera, especially Verdi’s masterpieces, as well as respect for our history, we have found San Diego Opera productions, so masterfully directed and performed, resonate with our interests and passions.”

“Community Conversations on Faith and Freedom” is a free, citywide lecture series that explores the various aspects of Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*. Each lecture will offer insight into the music, history and Old Testament origin of *Nabucco*. Lectures will be held at Lead Partner venues around the community. The Lead Partners for these lectures are the **San Diego Natural History Museum, Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, Congregation Beth Israel** and the **San Diego Museum of Art**. A full schedule of the lecture series can be found at the bottom of this press release.

Verdi's *Nabucco* is considered the opera that cemented his reputation as one of the world's greatest composers. The story is drawn from ancient history and begins with the destruction of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Nabucco), the King of Babylon. The opera follows the Israelites as they struggle for freedom as Babylonian slaves. Noted for a demanding soprano role (Abigaille) the opera also includes one of the most well-known choruses "Va, pensiero" which is so beloved by Italians that it was once considered for their national anthem.

"Erna and Andrew Viterbi have made a spectacular and deeply appreciated gift at a most critical time for San Diego Opera. The economy has taken a big bite out of arts funding and a gift of this significance allows the Company to continue to produce opera with the best artists in the international arena today," comments San Diego Opera's Ian Campbell. "The entire board of directors, management and community are indebted to Erna and Andrew for their generosity and thoughtful philanthropy."

Italy holds a special place in the hearts of Erna and Andrew Viterbi. Andrew was four when his family fled Italy just days before World War II broke out. Andrew began his academic career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology followed by graduate school at University of Southern California (USC). From 1963 to 1973, he served as a professor at the UCLA School of Engineering and Applied Science. Andrew is a co-founder of LINKABIT Corporation and a co-founder of Qualcomm, where his Viterbi Algorithm and other inventions contributed to creating the cellular technology used today. Dr. Viterbi is the founder of The Viterbi Group, LLC, an equity investment fund that advises and invests in early and emerging companies that are pioneering innovative technologies.

Erna Finci Viterbi was born in Sarajevo, a descendant of Sephardic Jews who were expelled from Spain. In 1941, during World War II, the Finci family fled German-occupied Yugoslavia for the Italian-occupied zone from which they were deported and interned in the Parma region of Italy. In 1943, when the Nazis occupied Italy, they were saved from deportation to extermination camps by the bravery of the good people of Gramignazzo di Sissa, the village where they had been interned. Other Italians helped them escape to Switzerland, where they waited out the war. In 1950, they resettled in California, where Erna met Andrew Viterbi; the two were married in 1958, and today they have three children and five grandchildren.

Community Conversations on Faith and Freedom lectures reflect the themes and experiences of the Viterbi family's flight to freedom. All lectures are free and open to the public although reservations are required.

### ***Nabucco, Israel and Babylon: The Impact of Exile on the Birth of Judaism and Christianity.***

Presented by Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education, and Dr. Risa Levitt-Kohn, Director of Judaic Studies at San Diego State University.

Wednesday, January 27, 2010 at 7 PM

San Diego Natural History Museum – Charmaine and Maurice Kaplan Theatre.

1788 El Prado, San Diego, CA 92101

**Lessons from the Exile: Babylon Revisted**

Presented by Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education, and Rabbi Michael Berk, Congregation Beth Israel.

Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at 7 PM

Congregation Beth Israel – 9001 Towne Center Dr., San Diego, CA 92122

**By the Rivers of Babylon: Judaism, Empire and Exile**

Presented by Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education and Dr. William Propp, Director of Judaic Studies Program at University of California San Diego.

Monday, February 8, 2010 at 7:30 PM

Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center – Garfield Theatre - 4126 Executive Dr., La Jolla, CA 92037

This is the third of a three part lecture series held at the Lawrence Family JCC

**Nabucco: The Jewish Story in Art and Opera**

Presented by Dr. Nicolas Reveles, San Diego Opera's Geisel Director of Education and a curator from the San Diego Museum of Art's European Collection.

Wednesday, February 10, 2010 at 7 PM

San Diego Museum of Art – 1450 El Prado, San Diego, CA 92101

All events are free but an RSVP is required. Please visit

<http://www.sdopera.com/Operas/CommunityConversations/> for more information and to reserve your seat.

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A widely respected member of the international opera community, *San Diego Opera* brings the world's finest artists to San Diego. Founded in 1965, and led for the last 26 years by General Director and Artistic Director Ian D. Campbell, San Diego Opera produces performances of the highest artistic quality while remaining financially stable.