

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



Piedmont Choir members have participated in Estonia's "Laulupidu" four times, most recently in July 2019.

History of Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir The thrill (and success) of international performances

By Allyson Aleksey

Final part in 6-part series.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of being a member of the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir is the opportunity to tour and perform internationally. For many, it is the highpoint of their years as choir members.

International touring and competition has been a centerpiece of the choir's program since 1984. Performing internationally provides an unparalleled opportunity for choir students to gain a deeper understanding of the world at large.

Ensemble, the flagship per-

forming group of Piedmont Choirs, represents the Choir in international competitions and festivals. The group consists of treble-voiced boys and girls who demonstrate superior musical proficiency, are under the age of 16, and are admitted by audition.

Since the program's founding, choir groups have toured and performed throughout 13 states and 26 foreign countries, participating in 19 choral competitions in Europe, Asia, and North America. Collectively, the choir has brought home 25 awards, including gold medals and grand prizes.

Locations are selected primarily on the basis of their potential for providing enriching musical experiences, and secondarily for their cultural and geographical

interest.

The choir has been invited and has performed four times at the world's largest choral festival, the Laulupidu in Tallinn, Estonia. They most recently visited the country last summer, July 2019, and were featured in an award-winning documentary about their travel to the event, called "To Breathe as One."

Most festivals are by invitation, and to see the list (below) of festivals where the choir has won top prizes is to understand its reputation internationally.

Their most notable gold-medal performances include:

- **International Choral Olympics, Linz, Austria (2000)**
First Prize, Contemporary Music (in a field of 360 adult and children's choirs)
Gold Medal, Contemporary category
Gold Medal, Children's Choir category
Gold Medal, Gospel/Spiritual category
- **International Seghizzi Choral Competition, Gorizia, Italy (2003)**
Special Prize, highest score of equal-voiced choirs
- **Grand Prix, St. Petersburg Choral Festival, St. Petersburg, Russia (2008)**
Gold Medal, Spiritual/Gospel/Jazz category
Gold Medal, Folklore category
Gold Medal, Children's Choir category.
- **International Youth Music Festival, Bratislava, Slovak Republic (2013)**
Grand Prix Award for Choral Music
First Place, Children's Choir category
First Place, Contemporary category
First Place, Jazz, Spiritual and Gospel category

To learn more about the countries the choir has toured, and the many awards they've won, visit <https://www.piedmontchoirs.org/honors-and-awards-1>.



Estonia's "Laulupidu" is the largest choral festival in the world.



4 Piedmont Choir performs in a church in Barcelona during a 2016 trip to Spain.

SF Playhouse season to begin October 24

By Allyson Aleksey

San Francisco Playhouse has announced its revised 2020–21 season, presented in a series of acts. Each act will be comprised of three shows for a total of nine productions. Act I will put talent back onstage again for a series of on-demand video streams.

Act I: *Taking the Leap* will run from October 24 through December 31. It will consist of three video on-demand offerings from some of the Bay Area's greatest artists as well as playwrights from across the globe. All three productions will be available for on-demand video streaming.

The first work in *Taking the Leap* features a play by Yasmina Reza, directed by Bill English and starring Bobak Cyrus Bakhtiari, Johnny Moreno, and Jomar Tagatac. The play, entitled *Art*, explores how an upcoming election creates division between opposing camps. Although it is a comedy, it explores and addresses the complex layers of friendship.

The show will stream from October 24 to November 7.

The Jewelry Box, written and performed by Brian Copeland, will follow in *Act I*. In this story, a prequel to Copeland's hit solo show *Not a Genuine Black Man*, a young Brian heads to the mean streets of Oakland to buy his mother a Christmas gift. When he finds the perfect present – a jewelry box in the White Front store – six-year-old Brian sets out to earn the required \$11.97 by Christmas Eve.

The Jewelry Box will stream from November 28 to December 25.



The entrance to San Francisco Playhouse at 450 Post Street.

The final work scheduled for the holidays is *From Blues to Broadway*. It was created in collaboration with and performed by John Paul Gonzalez, Cate Hayman, Rodney Earl Jackson, Jr., and Katrina Lauren McGraw, with music direction by Dave Dobrusky.

In this piece, Dobrusky directs a who's who of San Francisco musical talent. Hayman, McGraw, Jackson, and Gonzalez will perform a medley of holiday songs. The piece will stream from December 12 through December 31.

Act II and *Act III* will be announced in the near future.

Subscribe to Act I plays at <https://www.sfplayhouse.org/sfph/2020-2021-season/>.

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