

August 23, 2007  
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**HUMANITIES WEST PRESENTS**  
***VOLTAIRE AND THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT***  
**October 5 - 6, 2007**  
**Herbst Theatre, San Francisco**

**“Those who can make you believe absurdities  
can make you commit atrocities.”**

**—Voltaire**

Humanities West will present *Voltaire And The French Enlightenment* as its first 2007 – 2008 program on Friday, October 5 from 8 to 10 pm and Saturday, October 6 from 10 am to 4 pm, at Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco.

Tickets for *Voltaire And The French Enlightenment* program are priced as follows: Single tickets for Friday are \$40 orchestra/grand tier and \$25 balcony; tickets for Saturday are \$60 orchestra/grand tier and \$35 balcony; single tickets for both days of the program are \$90 orchestra/grand tier and \$50 balcony. Tickets are available through City Box Office at 415/392-4400 or online at [www.cityboxoffice.com](http://www.cityboxoffice.com).

For a series subscription to all three 2007-08 programs or for more information call Humanities West at 415/391-9700 or see the website at: [www.humanitieswest.org](http://www.humanitieswest.org).

Prolific author, philosopher, social reformer, and successful businessman, Voltaire was a leading figure of the French Enlightenment as well as a friend and advisor to some of the most important monarchs of Europe. A fierce critic of the Church, religion, and aristocratic privilege, he offended many powerful interests, but also helped lay the foundations of a modern society based on the rule of law and reason. In this two-day program, Humanities West will strive to present an in-depth look into the life and times of this intriguing man and explore his contributions to 18<sup>th</sup>-century France as well as the lasting impact he and his contemporaries have had on modern times.

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On Friday night **Keith Baker**, the J.E. Wallace Sterling Professor in Humanities and the Jean-Paul Gimon Director of the France-Stanford Center of Stanford University, will discuss the ideas of several prominent contributors to the French Enlightenment. **Maria Cheremeteff**, Head of the Art History Department at City College of San Francisco and Lecturer at both the De Young and Legion of Honor Museums in San Francisco will follow with an illustrated lecture on the art of the Enlightenment.

On Saturday morning **David Bodanis**, award-winning author and Lecturer at Oxford University, will discuss his book *Passionate Minds*. This is the fascinating account of Voltaire, his mistress, Émilie du Châtelet, who was a brilliant scientist in her own right, and their joint intellectual projects. **Roger Hahn**, Emeritus Professor at UC Berkeley, will speak on Voltaire as author, philosopher, and supreme intellectual influence of the eighteenth century: his ideas, influences, and writings. On Saturday afternoon **David Morris**, acclaimed cellist and violist, will perform the works of Rameau on viola de gamba, along with **David Wilson** on violin and **Katherine Heater** on the harpischord. **Clifford ‘Kip’ Cranna**, Musical Administrator of the San Francisco Opera, will discuss the composers of the Enlightenment.

## PROGRAM

Moderator: **Roger Hahn**, Professor Emeritus of History, University of California Berkeley

### **Friday October 5, 2007**                      *The French Enlightenment*

**8 pm Keynote Address: VOLTAIRE’S WAGER.** As poet, playwright, philosopher, and pamphleteer, Voltaire defined and epitomized the new spirit of secular engagement with the world we know as the Enlightenment. **Keith M. Baker** (Stanford University) will suggest the terms of his wager on humanity, the challenges it faced, and its long-term implications.

**9 pm Lecture: JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID AND THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE REVOLUTION.** **Maria Cheremeteff** (City College of San Francisco) will illustrate how paintings by David in the Neoclassical style became a symbol of the new rational order of the French Republic. The Republic required a new set of images and allegories to propagate the enlightened notion of representational rule. These ideas found voice in paintings by Jacques-Louis David. Appropriation of Greek and Roman subject matter and the new classical style he developed were ideally suited to promote the values of liberty, equality, civic duty and sacrifice.

**Saturday October 6, 2007**

***Voltaire and Other Thinkers***

**10 am Lecture: ÉMILIE DU CHÂTELET.** Émilie du Châtelet was a fencer, gambler, brilliant mathematician and passionate lover. **David Bodanis** (Oxford University, Author of *Passionate Minds*) will discuss how she and her close friend Voltaire helped create the French Enlightenment.

**11 am Lecture: VOLTAIRE’S VIEWS ON RELIGION.** Voltaire was a major intellectual influence of the eighteenth century. **Roger Hahn** (University of California, Berkeley) will discuss how one squares Voltaire’s taunts against Judaism with his campaign for tolerance.

**12 noon – 1:30 pm Break for Lunch**

**1:30 pm Performance:**

**Katherine Heater** (harpsichord), **David Morris** (viola de gamba), and **David Wilson** (violin), play *Pièce de claveçin en concert #1 in C minor* by Jean Philippe Rameau.

**2 pm Lecture and Demonstration: OPERA AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT: TRUSTING THE HAPPY ENDING.** Voltaire had a profound influence on opera in the Enlightenment era and beyond, significantly impacting the intellectual and political ideals of composers and librettists. Foremost was Voltaire’s concept of just government embodied in the “Enlightened Despot.” Closely allied with this theory was the principle of a happy dramatic outcome in opera through the triumph of human reason. San Francisco Opera’s Musical Administrator **Clifford (Kip) Cranna** will use video examples to illustrate how Voltairean thought influenced opera composers like Rameau, Handel, Mozart, and Rossini, and will discuss the ways in which contemporary opera directors deal with Enlightenment ideals.

**3 pm Panel Discussion**

Moderator **Roger Hahn** will lead a panel discussion with questions from the audience.

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Founded in 1983, Humanities West is dedicated to “exploring history to celebrate the mind and the arts.” Designed to entertain and educate diverse audiences, these programs offer a lively combination of wide-ranging lectures and performances that encompass the fine arts, social history, music, politics, and philosophy of the arts. This program is sponsored in part by the San Francisco Grants for the Arts/Hotel Tax Fund and by the following cooperating institutions: Alliance Française de Berkeley; Alliance Française de San Francisco; American Decorative Arts Forum Of the De Young Museum; The Attaché Cultural, Consulat Général de France à San Francisco; Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning; Institute of European Studies at UC Berkeley; Leonardo da Vinci Society; Mechanics Institute Library; Office of Resources for International and Area Studies (ORIAS) at UC Berkeley, Paris Through Expatriate Eyes, and San Francisco Classical Voice.