

Thursday, December 11, 2008, 7:30pm  
 Friday, December 12, 2008, 8pm  
 Sunday, December 14, 2008, 3pm  
 Zellerbach Hall

## Three Decembers

(West Coast Premiere)



### An Opera in Two Acts

Music by Jake Heggie

Libretto by Gene Scheer

Based on *Some Christmas Letters (and a Couple of Phone Calls)*,  
 an original play by Terrence McNally.

(Sung in English with English supertitles)

Commissioned and co-produced by Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera and Cal Performances.

First performance: Houston, February 29, 2008.

Three Decembers is supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation.

Three Decembers was developed with generous support from Cal Performances, Meet the Composer,  
 Betty Freeman and The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

These performances are made possible, in part, by Annette Campbell-White and Dr. R. Naumann-Etienne.

Wells Fargo Bank is the 2008–2009 Season Sponsor of Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera.

## Three Decembers

Patrick Summers *conductor*  
 Leonard Foglia\* *director & designer*  
 Cesar Galindo\* *costume designer*  
 Brian Nason\* *lighting designer*  
 Bryndon Hassman *musical preparation*  
 Morgan Robinson *assistant stage director*  
 Gina Hays\* *stage manager*  
 Tracy Davis *orchestra manager*  
 Carrie Weick *orchestra librarian*

\* San Francisco Opera debut



### PROGRAM

The action takes place in San Francisco, Hartford, Barbados and New York.

Part One (1986)

INTERMISSION

Part Two (1996)

Part Three (2006)

The performance will last approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes.



### San Francisco Opera

David Gockley, *General Director*  
 Donald Runnicles, *Music Director and Principal Conductor*  
 Nicola Luisotti, *Music Director Designate*

*Three Decembers*

## CAST

*(in order of appearance)*

*Charlie* Keith Phares\*  
*Beatrice* Kristin Clayton  
*Madeline Mitchell* Frederica von Stade

\* *San Francisco Opera debut*

## ENSEMBLE

*piano* Jake Heggie  
 Patrick Summers  
*violin* Kay Stern, *Concertmaster*  
 Laura Albers, *Associate Concertmaster*  
 Heidi Wilcox, *Assistant Concertmaster*  
*cello* David Kadarauach  
*bass* Joseph Lescher  
*oboe, English horn* Janet Archibald  
*clarinet, bass clarinet* Anthony Striplen  
*soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, flute* David Henderson  
*percussion* Patricia Niemi

## Education &amp; Community Event

**Key Notes: *Three Decembers***

December 12, 2008, 5–6:30pm  
 Zellerbach Hall Lobby Mezzanine

Composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer talk about their new chamber opera, presented in association with San Francisco Opera and Houston Grand Opera.

At last, to be identified!  
 At last, the lamps upon thy side  
 The rest of Life to see!  
 —*Emily Dickinson*

**S**HORTLY AFTER THE PREMIERE of my opera *Dead Man Walking* in 2000, Terrence McNally told me about a short play he had written for an AIDS benefit in December 1999. I am interested in anything and everything that Terrence writes, so I asked to see it. He gave me a copy and sent me on my way, but of course I couldn't wait. So I found a nearby pizza parlor, ordered a slice, sat in a window, and read. Instantly, this gem of a play worked its magic. It sang to me, and I started sketching musical ideas in the margins. It felt so true, honest and right. And I knew exactly who I wanted to write it for: Flicka. The great American mezzo-soprano, Frederica von Stade. She read it and fell in love with it, too.

Titled *Some Christmas Letters (and a Couple of Phone Calls)*, the play was produced one time only in 1999: at Carnegie Hall with the astonishing cast of Julie Harris (Madeline), Cherry Jones (Beatrice) and Victor Garber (Charlie), with music performed by the Gay Men's Chorus of New York. A brief but powerful 14 pages long, the play is about the stormy emotional lives of three people: the famous stage actress Madeline Mitchell and her two adult children, Bea and Charlie. Told through letters and phone calls, it follows these three characters through three Decembers in three different decades of their lives.

It is a play about identity. Identity as a member of the family one is born into and within the ones we create—the truth of who we are and who our parents are. It is a very big theme in all our lives, and certainly one that inspires me deeply. It permeates every one of my stage works, songs or scenes.

The piece needed to be a chamber opera that would focus entirely on the emotional lives of three characters. I decided that the sense of a clear, spare identity would extend to the orchestra, with just eleven instrumentalists: two pianos (the conductor at one of them), percussion, five strings and three wind players: one doubling oboe and English horn, one on clarinets, and one on flute and saxophones.

Houston Grand Opera and San Francisco Opera generously offered to commission the opera. Robert Cole at Cal Performances had been a staunch champion of the piece from the start and he wanted to see it through. Director Lenoard Foglia had joined the process in 2005 and was eager to take it to the stage. Patrick Summers fell in love with the original play and was eager to see it come to life on the opera stage. Flicka told me she was committed to creating the role of Madeline. Terrence gave us permission to base the opera on his original story, and, to everyone's great good fortune, wonderful Gene Scheer agreed to write a libretto.

In January 2007, Gene and I got started. He crafted his libretto the first few months of the year and I started writing music in July. I completed a draft in early November. After some revisions, and then a workshop in December with further revisions, I orchestrated the work. After seven years of development, the opera was composed and orchestrated in six months.

The piece takes place in 1986, 1996 and 2006, with the first dramatic event of each part having taken place in December. Part One (1986) begins in December with Bea and Charlie reading their famous mother's Christmas letter. Part Two (1996) begins in February, but with Charlie reflecting on a death in the December just passed. Part Three (2006) takes place in December at a Broadway theater.

The original title, *Last Acts*, was agreed upon before Gene and I had written anything. After the workshop in December 2007, we decided, along with Terrence McNally, that a more fitting title would be *Three Decembers*. A recording from the original production will be released by Albany Records.

*Jake Heggie*

JAKE HEGGIE AND I had done a number of projects together when he approached me with the idea of turning Terrence McNally's play *Some Christmases (and a Couple of Phone Calls)* into a chamber opera. I knew that Jake had been considering at various times and in various forms using music to explore Terrence's play. One of Jake's great gifts is his instinct for understanding what story or play might be interestingly explored through music. I was not surprised, therefore, to discover that when he sent me Terrence's script, I shared his enthusiasm for this beautiful play and for the musical possibilities it presented.

The libretto is filled with many of Terrence's beautiful words. But of course an opera libretto is different from a play. As Jake and I expanded the story, as arias, duets, and trios were written to explore our notions of how this family's story would emerge, the hope was always to find ways to allow music to amplify the human frailty and hope of redemption that is at the core of Terrence's original work.

The task of writing the libretto was greatly helped by the wise counsel of our director, Leonard Foglia. Jake, Lenny and I met in San Francisco about a month before the workshop and went through the piece as carefully and as critically as we could. The agenda was always simple, even if the writing of the piece was not. We wanted each

line to both ring true and to inspire music, which in the end is where the greatest poetry in opera is to be found.

When Jake mentioned that Madeline Mitchell was to be played by the great Frederica von Stade, I was truly overwhelmed with excitement. Keith Phares and Kristin Clayton round out an exceptional cast. All three of these extraordinary performers have dedicated themselves to breathing life into this new opera. I am so grateful for their enthusiasm and for the chance to benefit from their profound talents.

The writing of this piece has been a great joy. Terrence's original play, written for an AIDS benefit in New York, is both touching and important. Jake's score is inspired in the way in which it reveals the soul's pulse while it is having, as Robert Frost put it, "a lover's quarrel with the world."

On a personal note, my dear cousin Helen Radin passed away last December. As I was sitting at her funeral, I could not help but think of the words Terrence gave Madeline to say at the end of his play. Suffice it to say, those words, and the music that Jake imagined, bring me comfort. I expect many will feel the same way. The libretto is dedicated to Helen Radin, 1934–2007.

Gene Scheer  
January 2008

### A Life of Many Acts

Conductor Patrick Summers looks into the music—and the mind—of *Three Decembers* composer Jake Heggie.

VERDI, WAGNER, MASSENET AND PUCCINI wrote only opera, though they each made brief forays into other forms—I classify Verdi's monumental Requiem as his finest work. The focus of Handel's and Bach's lives was vocal music. Mozart, the exception to every rule, was creatively inspired by every musical genre and master of all of them, though he seemed to hold the most affection for stage works. But almost no one these days sets out to be a composer of operas. "Opera composer" is a vocation that must seek you and call you to it.

Frederica von Stade (since childhood she's been "Flicka" to all), for whom Jake Heggie has composed *Three Decembers* (originally titled *Last Acts*) has had as large an influence on his composing career as mezzo Pauline Viardot had over Berlioz and Meyerbeer more than a century ago. Though Flicka, unlike Pauline, has yet to write an opera of her own, hope does spring eternal. (How about it, Flicka?) Jake was working in the public relations department of San Francisco Opera when Flicka and I met him; remember, Berlioz was a professional librarian. Yes, Jake was writing press releases, though it wasn't long before the press releases were about him. Jake, driving me to a radio interview in 1994, mentioned that he had written some songs and asked if I would like to hear them. I was stunned by their depth and orchestral sweep. Flicka, who also heard Jake's songs around that time, became so enthused about them that I was able to respond to Lotfi Mansouri, then the general director of San Francisco Opera, when he said to me in 1995, "Patrick, I need a new opera for the year 2000. In 1999, we have André Previn writing *Streetcar*. In 2000, we should try a newcomer." I told Lotfi he had someone working in his press office who I thought was a born opera composer. Naturally curious, Lotfi called Flicka and Renée Fleming, among others, for advice. The engines were humming.

Shortly after Jake's journey to write his first opera began, he called me to ask what I thought

about quadruple Tony Award-winner Terrence McNally as librettist and Susan Graham and Flicka as the stars. "What do I think? I think you need to realize that not everyone's first opera is like this." We laughed. Terrence produced a fascinating list of potential projects. For Jake the choice was quick: *Dead Man Walking* hit him immediately as the right choice, the most precise moral tale, and he was drawn by the spiritual journey in this work. After all, *Dead Man Walking* is not about the death penalty any more than *Romeo and Juliet* is about suicide. It asks a simple moral question by never answers it: what does killing someone who kills say about killing? Jake and Terrence unfolded the tale from every angle. The parents of the murdered children want "closure," and through their grief they believe only the death of the murderer can bring it. The mother of the murderer can't see how recreating the crime will change anything. Sister Helen, as the murderer's spiritual adviser, simply wants him to admit what he did in hopes of finding some peace with the God she loves; she has no delusions about saving his life. Most brilliantly, none of the characters is wrong; their feelings are their feelings, and their heartbreaking questions deserve contemplation—two important points in Jake's work. *Dead Man Walking* premiered in 2000 at San Francisco Opera.

Jake has earned his right to question. The defining tragedy of his life, rarely discussed by important in understanding the focus of his artistry, was the suicide of his father when Jake was ten. It was a loss that created a lifetime of questions he has sought to answer as a composer. His second opera, *The End of the Affair*, based on Graham Greene's brooding World War II novel and commissioned by Houston Grand Opera, probed deep, spiritual subjects of worthiness and loss, and the price of honesty and passion.

I'm often asked these days what Jake is like. "Accessible" is not a dirty word to Jake, nor does it adequately describe the deceptively intricate intelligence of his music. He is a melodist of sweep and depth. Jake essentially writes music composed for specific occasions for specific performers, as did Bach, Handel and Verdi. He writes for the ears of all, not just the studied. He would not be proud of eccentric isolation; he is urban, uncomfortable

without a population around him to observe and with whom to interact. Rather than composing broad tonal pictures, he is at his best writing intimate emotions, turning his own keen eye on the human situation in ingenious ways. The voice is his natural medium.

That's the music. What about the man? For all of his surface humor, he is, more than almost anyone I've ever encountered, a deeply spiritual and just person. He is unnervingly empathetic. He views life not as a complex series of causes and effects, but as a simple matrix of shared emotions, and he loves tender, humanizing similarities. He has a unique ability to determine an exact point of hypocrisy long before most people notice it. Shy, serious, yet personable, he views most of life through the prism of humor, yet he is deeply committed to justice; hypocrisy is the only thing that utterly infuriates him. Were his life an opera, it would already have had several acts: one each for the pianist (he's a virtuoso), the student in Paris, the man who married and divorced young, the writer, the illustrator of children's books, the partner to his dear Curt with whom he shares a quiet life in San Francisco. But of all those acts, those facts of himself, the most important to him is that of composer. He lives to write music, and he believes that the quality of a person cannot be separated from his or her art.

*This article originally appeared in Houston Grand Opera's company magazine, Opera Cues.*



### First, the Words: Jake Heggie on the Art of Collaboration

**C**OMPOSITION CAN BE A LONELY BUSINESS. You spend days or even months by yourself, sometimes writing easily, sometimes smashing your head on a table or a keyboard to get any notes out at all. That is alternately enjoyable and frustrating. But a theater composer by nature has an intense need to be connected with people. For me, collaboration is what delivers the most inspiration

to compose. It always has. The alone time is terribly important, but the creative interaction invigorates my imagination like nothing else.

During the past 15 years, I have been fortunate to collaborate not only with some of the great singers of our time, but with inspirational conductors, directors, instrumentalists, arts administrators, and most of all: *wonderful* writers.

Collaborations with writers are especially important because, of course, without words there could be no songs and no opera. I cannot fathom why it is common practice in opera to leave the librettist's name off the billing. Why is it only Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and not Mozart and Da Ponte's? Yes, music makes it an opera. But if the libretto isn't strong, the opera will be flawed. A composer may write fabulous music, but a weak libretto can kill it as an opera. It is theater, and a good libretto gives the composer the best chance to create a successful opera.

When I was a teenager, I set my own texts and wrote pop songs and musical theater ballads (I was sure I'd be writing for Barbra Streisand and Carly Simon. No dice.) But when I was 17, my first composition teacher, the late Ernst Bacon, introduced me to poetry by Emily Dickenson and Walt Whitman and after that, nothing was the same. Those poems leapt off the page and sang to me, and throughout my twenties I wrote songs based on poetry by wonderful dead authors. A great and rewarding challenge, but very lonely. Rewrites are out, and there's no way to call and ask what this or that meant to the writer.

In my late twenties, I suffered an injury to my right hand (focal dystonia) that forced me to stop playing piano, and as a result I stopped composing too. In 1993, I moved from Los Angeles to San Francisco and landed a job first at Cal Performances, and then at San Francisco Opera as the staff writer. I was in the public relations and marketing department and interacted with some of the world's great singers on a daily basis. A few of them—first and foremost the amazing Frederica von Stade—became very good friends and inspired me to compose again. Thanks to watching rehearsals for Conrad Susa and Philip Littell's *The Dangerous Liaisons*, I became interested in collaborating with a writer.

So, for countertenor Brian Asawa and baritone Earle Patriarco, I asked my friend John Hall in Los Angeles for new texts (*Encountertenor* and *Thoughts Unspoken*). For soprano Nicolle Foland, I went to Bay Area poet Gini Savage (*Natural Selection*). For soprano Kristin Clayton, it was Philip Littell (*Eve-Song*). For Frederica von Stade, she herself wrote the words (*Paper Wings, On the Road to Christmas, and Winter Roses*). For Jennifer Larmore, it was Gavin Dillard (*Of Gods and Cats*), and so on. I also continued to set the classic poets, and it was a rich time of learning and growing through lively exchange, challenge and comparison. This period of exploration with writers led to a conversation that changed my life forever.

In 1996, Lotfi Mansouri, who was then general director at San Francisco Opera, called me into his office and said, "I want you to write a new opera for the millennium. And I want to send you to New York to meet with Terrence McNally. I think you would make a great team." Now remember, I was the PR guy at the time. The PR guy who wrote songs.

So how is a 35-year-old composer supposed to respond to that? A new work for San Francisco Opera? With Terrence McNally? It seemed impossible, improbable, terrifying, and incredibly exciting. What young composer would turn it down?

I met with Terrence in May 1996 when he was still working on the musical *Ragtime* and preparing his play *Love! Valour! Compassion!* to be made into a movie. He was also moving to a new apartment and sorting through his vast record collection. He was a bit distracted. Lotfi had proposed a comedy for the millennium. Terrence wasn't interested. I thought it was a no-go, and then I got a surprise phone call in February 1997. Terrence wanted to meet and talk about the opera. We met in June. He said the words "Dead Man Walking" and life again took a surprising turn. It was the last thing I'd expected to hear—but it was an inspired idea.

We talked about how we would work together and Terrence told me up front that he is not a poet, a novelist, or a librettist per se. He is a playwright. And he told me he would write a play and set up scenes and dialogue that he hoped would inspire music. If I felt the music taking me in a certain direction and the words were not going there, he

would rewrite, or I could fill in with my own words and he'd work on it later. It was to be a real exchange and collaboration. Terrence has a famous passion for opera and a brilliant sense of how to set things up to work on the stage. All I had to do was trust, listen, feel and write.

After discussing the opera for about nine months, Terrence was ready to write the first act of the libretto. He wanted me to be with him, so in March 1998 we flew to his house in Key West. On the cab ride to the airport, the main hymn "He will gather us around" came to me, so I knew it would be a good trip. He wrote the first act libretto in four days and then read it to me. Six months later, in December 1998, I played through Act I for him at his house in Bridgehampton, and he wrote the second act libretto in four days. Less than a year later, we had the entire opera. Revisions after a workshop in August 1999 were minimal and I had plenty of time to orchestrate. Throughout, there was a constant exchange of thoughts and ideas.

I had found a generous collaborator with an innate sense of how opera differs from straight theater, and what it does best. I had also found a great friend and mentor. That first major collaboration has served as the standard and model for every collaboration I have had since. It was my good fortune to start by working with the very best.

I learned several big lessons through that experience. Collaborators are creative partners who will often work together for many years. To make it work, each has to respect the other and share a common goal. They have to be able to depend upon each other. And they have to be flexible enough to see other points of view and make changes, but also know when to defend a position. They cannot be afraid to speak their minds, but must do so constructively—and always for the strength and benefit of the work.

Working with Terrence inspired me to go on to several other gratifying collaborations, including original works with Armistead Maupin, Sister Helen Prejean and Charlene Baldrige, among others. I also collaborated with Terrence to create a musical scene for soprano called *At the Statue of Venus*, and I set the final monologue from his play *Master Class*. These collaborations subsequently informed my perspective on classic poems and texts,



and have actually given me a new freedom to explore those with fresh eyes.

In 2004, I finally had the opportunity to work with the very gifted writer Gene Scheer. When we met, I knew I'd found a collaborator for life. From day one, there was a natural ease and free flowing exchange of ideas. Gene works passionately and with infectious enthusiasm. We have great respect for each other's work and we enjoy being together. We challenge each other, inspire each other, and feel free to comment on all aspects of our work together. My work is definitely better thanks to working with him, and I know he feels the same about his own work. He's quick and prolific and in a short time we've written several song cycles and two stage works.

For seven years, I searched for the right circumstances to create a music theater piece based on Terrence's short play *Some Christmas Letters*. I wanted it to be a chamber opera for three

characters. Gene felt inspired by it, and agreed to create a libretto based on the play, and that is how *Three Decembers* came to be. My two primary writing collaborators in the same project. Plus Patrick Summers, Leonard Foglia, the phenomenal Flicka von Stade, Kristin Clayton and Keith Phares. It was a dream come true.

The freedom and adventure I find in fresh, lively collaborations has led me to work almost exclusively with living writers now. Somehow, everything about the work feels more vibrant, flexible and theatrical this way. Maybe later I'll get back to some of the dead guys and gals whose work I adore. But for now, it is intensely rewarding to be able to look somebody in the eye and say, "So, I have this idea...."

*Jake Heggie*  
This article was originally published  
by Houston Grand Opera.

Described by *The New York Times* as "one of America's finest artists and singers," **Frederica von Stade** (*Madeline*)



has enriched the world of classical music for nearly four decades. Following her 1971 San Francisco Opera debut as Sextus (*La Clemenza di Tito*) with Spring Opera Theater

and her main stage debut in 1972 as Cherubino (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Ms. von Stade has appeared with the Company in more than a dozen roles, including Mélisande (*Pelléas et Mélisande*), Octavian (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Rosina (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), and the title roles of *La Sonnambula*, *La Cenerentola* and *The Merry Widow*. She also created two roles in world premiere productions by San Francisco Opera: Marquise de Merteuil in Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons* and Mrs. Patrick de Rocher in Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Von Stade has appeared with every leading American opera company, and new European productions have been mounted for her at La Scala; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; the Vienna State Opera; and Paris Opera. Known as a *bel canto* specialist, she is also beloved in the French repertoire, which includes the title role of Offenbach's *La Périchole*. She is also a favorite interpreter of the great "trouser" roles, from Strauss's Composer (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and Octavian to Mozart's Sextus, Idamante (*Idomeneo*) and Cherubino. The mezzo's artistry has inspired the revival of neglected works such as Massenet's *Chérubin*, Ambroise Thomas's *Mignon*, Rameau's *Dardanus* and Monteverdi's *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and she has garnered critical and popular acclaim in her vast French orchestral repertoire, including Ravel's *Shéhérazade*, Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'Été* and Canteloube's *Les Chants d'Auvergne*. Her 70 recordings have garnered numerous awards, including six Grammy Award nominations and "Best of the Year" citations by *Stereo Review* and *Opera News*, and she appears regularly on national television, including in a concert celebrating the

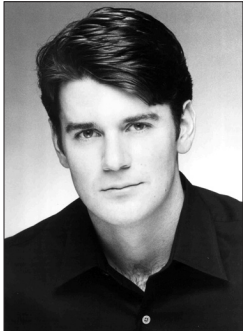
opening ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Ms. von Stade was appointed as an officer of France's *L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 1998, and in 1983 she was honored with an award given at the White House by President Reagan. She holds five honorary doctorates and an honorary chair at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Former Adler Fellow and Merola Opera Program alumna **Kristin Clayton** (*Beatrice*) made her San Francisco Opera debut in 1994 creating the role of Julie in Conrad Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*. She has since returned to

the Company in the roles of Wellgunde (*Die Walküre*), Echo (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and Nedda (*Pagliacci*), among others. The soprano created the role of Beatrice in Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* with Houston Grand Opera this past March. Ms. Clayton's recent engagements include the First Lady (*The Magic Flute*) with Houston Grand Opera and Opera Colorado; Greta Fiorentino (*Street Scene*) with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; and performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the Florida West Coast Symphony. Her other credits include Magda (*La Rondine*), Mimi (*La Bohème*) and Violetta (*La Traviata*) with Chautauqua Opera; Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*) and the First Lady with Wolf Trap Opera; and Donna Anna and Norina (*Don Pasquale*) with Festival Opera of Walnut Creek. On the concert stage, Ms. Clayton has performed *On the Town* with the San Francisco Symphony; Verdi's Requiem with the Modesto Symphony; and concert performances of *La Bohème* with the Marin Symphony. Her other collaborations with Jake Heggie include the world premieres of *Eve Song* and *At the Statue of Venus*; she is also featured on a recording of songs by the composer, entitled *The Faces of Love* (RCA Red Seal).

**Keith Phares** (*Charlie*) makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season in a role he created for



Houston Grand Opera earlier this year. The American baritone's recent engagements include Lubino in Martín y Soler's *Una Cosa Rara* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Haly (*L'Italiana in Algeri*) at the Opera Company of Philadelphia; Count

Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) with Arizona Opera; and the title role of Robert Aldridge's *Elmer Gantry* in a co-production by Nashville Opera and Montclair State University. A frequent guest artist at New York City Opera, Mr. Phares has performed the roles of Fritz (*Die Tote Stadt*), the Pilot (*The Little Prince*), Schaunard (*La Bohème*) and Moralès (*Carmen*), among others. His other credits include his Metropolitan Opera debut, under the baton of James Levine, in the French triple-bill *Parade*; Maurice Bendrix (Heggie's *The End of the Affair*) with Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Madison Opera; Harlequin (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) with the Dallas Opera; Chou-En Lai in Portland Opera's presentation of John Adams's *Nixon in China*; Danilo (*The Merry Widow*) with Lyric Opera of Kansas City; Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) at the Spoleto Festival USA; and Sebastian in the North American premiere of Thomas Adès's *The Tempest* with the Santa Fe Opera. A graduate of the Juilliard Opera Center, Mr. Phares was a national winner of the 1998 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and a finalist in Houston Grand Opera's 1999 Eleanor McCollum Competition. He also has been recognized with a Richard Gaddes Grant from the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and the 2000 Richard F. Gold Career Grant from The Juilliard School.

**Jake Heggie** (*composer, pianist*) is the composer of the operas *Dead Man Walking* (libretto: Terrence McNally), *Three Decembers* (libretto: Gene Scheer), *The End of the Affair* (libretto: Heather McDonald), *To Hell and Back* (libretto: Scheer), as well as the



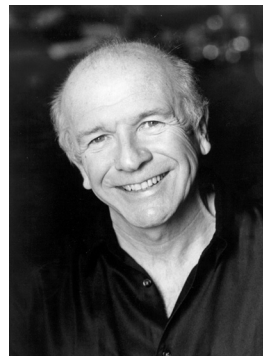
musical scene *At the Statue of Venus* (libretto: McNally) and the theatrical song cycle *For a Look or a Touch* (libretto: Scheer). He has also composed more than 250 songs, as well as concerti, orchestral, choral and chamber music. Future operas include *Moby-Dick* (libretto: Scheer) featuring tenor Ben Heppner, conductor Patrick Summers and director Leonard Foglia for Dallas Opera, San Francisco Opera, the San Diego Opera and Calgary Opera; and a project with playwright Richard Greenberg for the Metropolitan Opera in association with Lincoln Center Theater. Mr. Heggie's operas have been produced extensively throughout the United States as well as in Australia, Canada, Europe and Ireland. Since its San Francisco Opera premiere in 2000, *Dead Man Walking* has received more than 120 performances internationally. Mr. Heggie's work is championed by such singers as Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Audra McDonald, Kiri Te Kanawa, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Patti LuPone, Zheng Cao, Joyce DiDonato, Paul Groves and Bryn Terfel. As a pianist, he has accompanied many of these singers on recordings and in recital. His discography includes *Flesh & Stone* (Americus/Classical Action), *For a Look or a Touch* (Naxos), *To Hell and Back* (Magnatune), *The Deepest Desire* (Eloquentia), *Dead Man Walking* (Erato), *The Faces of Love* (RCA), *My Native Land* (Teldec) and *Holy the Firm: Essay for Cello and Orchestra* (Oakland East Bay Symphony with cellist Emil Miland). Mr. Heggie lives in San Francisco.

Lyricist, librettist and composer **Gene Scheer** (*librettist*) has collaborated on a number of projects with Jake Heggie, including the 2006 one-act opera *To Hell and Back*, the song cycles of *Statuesque* and *Rise and Fall*, and a chamber work titled *For a Look or a Touch*. He was the librettist for two



projects with Tobias Picker: *An American Tragedy*, which received its premiere at the Metropolitan Opera in 2005, and *Thérèse Raquin*, which had its premiere at the Dallas Opera in 2001 and was subsequently performed in Montreal, San Diego and London. The live recording of *Thérèse Raquin's* premiere (Chandos) was cited by *Opera News* as one of the 10 best of 2002. Mr. Scheer's work has been performed by such artists as Renée Fleming, Denyce Graves, Sylvia McNair, Stephanie Blythe, Jennifer Larmore and Nathan Gunn. Mr. Scheer's song "American Anthem" is sung by Norah Jones in *The War*, a seven-part film about World War II by Ken Burns, which was telecast on PBS in 2007. Nathan Gunn recently performed Mr. Scheer's song cycle *Voices from World War II* with the Isis Chamber Orchestra, having also sung the work's premiere at London's Wigmore Hall. Mr. Scheer's recent commissions include collaborations with Mr. Heggie, Wynton Marsalis, Steven Stucky and David Shire.

**Terrence McNally's** play *Some Christmas Letters* (*and a Couple of Phone Calls*) is the source material



for *Three Decembers*. He wrote the libretto for Jake Heggie's first opera, *Dead Man Walking*. Recent works include *Unusual Acts of Devotion*, *Deuce* (starring Angela Lansbury and Marian Seldes) and *Some Men*, which will be produced by

the New Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco this spring. He is also the author of the books for the musicals *Ragtime*, *The Kiss of the Spider Woman*, *The Full Monty*, *The Visit* and *A Man of No*

*Importance*. Recent credits include the Broadway revivals of his plays *The Ritz* and *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*. Other plays include *Corpus Christi*, *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, *Master Class*, *The Lisbon Traviata*, *A Perfect Ganesh*, *Lips Together*, *Teeth Apart*, *The Stendhal Syndrome* and *Dedication or The Stuff of Dreams*. For his work in the New York theater, he has received four Tony Awards. Mr. McNally also won an Emmy Award for his television script for *Andre's Mother*.

Houston Grand Opera Music Director **Patrick Summers** (*conductor, pianist*) has led a vast reper-



tory for San Francisco Opera in his long association with the Company, including *Ariodante*; *Samson et Dalila*; *Iphigénie en Tauride*; *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which had its world premiere at San Francisco Opera in 1998; and the world premiere

of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* in 2000. Mr. Summers has twice received Merola Opera Program's Otto Guth Award and was named its "Distinguished Alumnus" in 2001—an honor that has also been bestowed upon Ruth Ann Swenson, Carol Vaness, Thomas Hampson and Deborah Voigt. The maestro has conducted an array of productions at the Metropolitan Opera, including *La Traviata*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Così fan tutte*, *I Puritani* and *Rodelinda*. Other highlights include *La Cenerentola* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona and *Nabucco* and *Turandot* with Opera Australia. Mr. Summers's recent productions at Houston Grand Opera include *Billy Budd*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *La Bohème*, *Idomeneo*, *Il Trovatore* with Marcello Giordani, *Falstaff* with Bryn Terfel, *Giulio Cesare* with David Daniels, and Mr. Heggie's *The End of the Affair*. The Indiana University graduate was named Stolichnaya's "Artist of the Year" in 1998. Recent and upcoming engagements include *Madama Butterfly* and *Salome* at the Met; the world premiere of Paul

## About the Artists

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Moravec's *The Letter* at the Santa Fe Opera; and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Rigoletto* and the world premiere of André Previn's *Brief Encounter* at Houston Grand Opera.

American director **Leonard Foglia** (*director, designer*) makes his San Francisco Opera debut this



season. He made his Houston Grand Opera debut in 2004 directing the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *The End of the Affair*, which he later directed for Seattle Opera and Madison Opera. Other opera

credits include Mr. Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* for Opera Pacific, New York City Opera, and in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh and Detroit, as well as the world premiere of *Three Decembers* at Houston Grand Opera. Mr. Foglia's Broadway credits include Terrence McNally's Tony Award-winning *Master Class* (also on national tour and in London's West End); *On Golden Pond* (also at the Kennedy Center and on national tour); *Wait Until Dark*; and *Thurgood* this past season. Off Broadway he directed *The Stendhal Syndrome*, *One Touch of Venus*, *If Memory Serves*, *By the Sea* and *Lonely Planet*. Mr. Foglia's other theater credits include *Unusual Acts of Devotion* (Philadelphia Theater Company); *Distracted* (Mark Taper Forum); *Things Being What They Are* (Bay Street Theater); *Paper Doll* and *The Secret Letters of Jackie and Marilyn* (Pittsburgh Public Theater); *Thurgood* (Westport Playhouse); *The Subject Was Roses* (Kennedy Center); and *God's Man in Texas* (Globe Theatres). He is co-author, with David Richards, of the mystery novels *I Ragged Ridge Road*, *Face Down in the Park* and *El Sudario*. *La Sangre del Sudario*, a sequel to *El Sudario*, will be published next year.

**Cesar Galindo** (*costume designer*) makes his San Francisco Opera debut this season. A native Houstonian, he began his career on New York's Seventh Avenue during the mid-1980s as Carmelo

Pomodoro's assistant designer. After developing brand visibility for TSE cashmere during the initial stages of its introduction to the United States, Mr. Galindo began designing his own signature label, selling to upscale designer boutiques including Martha and Henri Bendel as well as large store chains such as Bloomingdale's. He works one-on-one with an extensive list of recording artists and television and film personalities, and he is often called upon to develop, customize, and refine a designer's vision. He has worked for Dolce & Gabbana and is also part of the creative development and design team at Calvin Klein Women's Collection. Beginning in 2003, Mr. Galindo began an ongoing collaboration with Seth Cohen, a menswear and accessory designer. Together they create cocktail and eveningwear collections that combine the technical skills and creative artistry of Mr. Galindo and the color and silhouette direction of Mr. Cohen.

American lighting designer **Brian Nason** makes his San Francisco Opera debut with this production. His opera and musical theater credits include Mr. Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* for New York City Opera, Opera Pacific, and the opera companies of Cincinnati, Michigan, Pittsburgh, Austin and Baltimore; *West Side Story* at La Scala and in Lebanon and Japan; *Salome* at New York City Opera and Opera Pacific; and Mr. Heggie's *The End of the Affair* at Madison Opera. He has designed lighting for numerous Broadway productions, including Ernest Thompson's *On Golden Pond*; Mike Poulton's adaptation of Turgenev's *Fortune's Fool*; Elaine May's *Taller than a Dwarf*; Sherman Edward's *1776*; Kafka's *Metamorphosis* (Tony Award nomination); Turgenev's *A Month in the Country* (Outer Critics Circle Award nomination); the world premiere of Arthur Miller's *Broken Glass*; *The Threepenny Opera*; David Henry Hwang's *M. Butterfly*; and Ad Van Dijk's *Cyrano, the Musical*. He has also designed lighting extensively for Off-Broadway productions, including *Richard II* and Charlayne Woodard's *Neat*, both of which earned Audelco Award nominations, and Ira Levin's *Cantorial*, which earned an Outer Critics Circle nomination.