



SAN FRANCISCO  
OPERA



**SAN FRANCISCO OPERA AND CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENT  
WEST COAST PREMIERE OF JAKE HEGGIE'S *THREE DECEMBERS*  
STARRING MEZZO-SOPRANO FREDERICA VON STADE, DECEMBER  
11 - 14 AT UC BERKELEY'S ZELLERBACH HALL**

SAN FRANCISCO, November 6, 2008—San Francisco Opera and Cal Performances present the West Coast premiere of *Three Decembers*, a poignant new chamber opera with music by Bay Area composer **Jake Heggie** (*Dead Man Walking*) and libretto by **Gene Scheer**, based on an original play by **Terrence McNally**. Created especially by Heggie for internationally celebrated mezzo-soprano and Bay Area favorite **Frederica von Stade**, *Three Decembers* will be presented at Zellerbach Hall on the campus of University of California, Berkeley, for three performances beginning December 11.

"Heggie has given the distinguished mezzo-soprano a role of a lifetime, and she fills it with style, charm, musical savvy and great singing," said the *Houston Chronicle* of the production's February 2008 world premiere at Houston Grand Opera. Set in San Francisco and New York, *Three Decembers* follows the loving but often strained relationship between famous stage actress Madeline Mitchell (sung by von Stade) and her two grown children: Beatrice, performed by soprano **Kristin Clayton**, and Charlie, a gay man whose partner is dying of AIDS sung by baritone **Keith Phares** in his San Francisco Opera debut.

This chamber opera features Broadway-style solo numbers and an 11-piece instrumental ensemble led by Houston Grand Opera Music Director and San Francisco Opera veteran **Patrick Summers**, with both the conductor and composer on piano. A frequent collaborator with Heggie and McNally, **Leonard Foglia** makes his San Francisco Opera debut directing *Three Decembers*, commissioned by Houston Grand Opera in association with San Francisco Opera and Cal Performances.

Sung in English with English supertitles, performances of *Three Decembers* run approximately two hours with one intermission and are scheduled for **December 11** (7:30 p.m.), **December 12** (8 p.m.) and **December 14** (3 p.m.).

A free, informative **Key Notes** talk will be given by Heggie and Scheer on Friday, December 12 from 5–6:30 p.m. in the mezzanine of Zellerbach Hall; light refreshments will be served. This pre-performance talk is open to all ticketholders.

### **Tickets**

Tickets for *Three Decembers*, performed at Zellerbach Hall at the University of California, Berkeley, are priced from \$48 to \$86 and may be purchased online at [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com) and through the San Francisco Opera Box Office [War Memorial Opera House, 301 Van Ness Avenue (at Grove Street), or by phone at (415) 864-3330]. Tickets can also be purchased through Cal Performances' Box Office [Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus, by phone at (510) 642-9988] or online at [www.calperformances.org](http://www.calperformances.org).

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San Francisco Opera 2008–09 Season Sponsor

Cal Performances 2008/09 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo. Classical 102.1 KDFC is the 2008/09 season media sponsor. *Three Decembers* is supported by a grant from The James Irvine Foundation.

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**Production Information**

\* San Francisco Opera debut

***THREE DECEMBERS***

**WEST COAST PREMIERE**

A Musical Play in Three Parts

Based on an original play by Terrence McNally

Music by Jake Heggie

Lyrics by Gene Scheer

Commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera

In association with San Francisco Opera and Cal Performances

Premiered by Houston Grand Opera in February, 2008

**December 11** (7:30 p.m.), **12** (8 p.m.), **14** (3 p.m.)  
Zellerbach Hall / University of California, Berkeley

Approximate running time: 2 hours

Sung in English with English supertitles

Cast:

*Madeline Mitchell*

*Beatrice*

*Charlie*

Frederica von Stade

Kristin Clayton

Keith Phares\*

Production Team:

*Conductor*

*Director*

*Pianists*

*Lighting Designer*

*Costume Designer*

Patrick Summers

Leonard Foglia\*

Jake Heggie, Patrick Summers

Brian Nason\*

Cesar Galindo\*

**About the Artists**

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*), 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; Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Vienna State Opera; and Paris Opera. Known as a *bel canto* specialist, she is also beloved in the French repertoire, including 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. Von Stade’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 seventy recordings have garnered numerous awards, including six Grammy 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. 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.

A 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 chamber opera *Three Decembers* with Houston Grand Opera this past March; she returns to the role for the West Coast premiere by San Francisco Opera and Cal Performances in December. 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 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 singing 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 *Sharpless* (*Madama Butterfly*) with Opera Ontario; *Lubino* in Martín y Soler’s *Una Cosa Rara* with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; and *Count Almaviva* (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) with Arizona Opera. He recently created 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, 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 *Adam’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, 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 of Music.

**JAKE HEGGIE** (*Composer, pianist*) is the composer of the acclaimed operas *Dead Man Walking* (libretto by Terrence McNally), *The End of the Affair* (libretto by Heather McDonald, Leonard Foglia, and the composer himself), the lyric drama *To Hell and Back* (libretto by Gene Scheer), and the musical scene *At the Statue of Venus* (libretto by Terrence McNally). The recipient of a 2005–06 Guggenheim Fellowship, he has also composed more than 200 songs, as well as concerti, orchestral works, and chamber music. His songs, song cycles, and operas are championed internationally by Frederica von Stade, Susan Graham, Audra McDonald, Patti LuPone, Isabel Bayrakdarian, Kristine Jenson, Joyce DiDonato, Joyce Castle, and Bryn Terfel, among many others. Recent and upcoming commissions include *Moby Dick* (libretto by Gene Scheer) for the Dallas Opera; a music theater work for the Metropolitan Opera in association with Lincoln Center Theater; a new song for mezzo Joyce DiDonato to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Merola Opera Program; duets for women for the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival; and *For a Look or a Touch*, a song cycle for baritone, narrator, and chamber ensemble about the persecution of homosexuals during the holocaust, commissioned by Seattle's Music of Remembrance (texts by Gene Scheer, based on interviews in the documentary film *Paragraph 175*). Heggie's operas have been performed at the San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, State Opera of South Australia, Cincinnati Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Opera Pacific, Calgary Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Madison Opera, Baltimore Opera, and Michigan Opera Theatre. *Dead Man Walking* recently received its European premiere in Dresden at the SemperOper in a new production by Nikolaus Lehnhoff. Heggie has been resident composer for San Francisco Opera, EOS Orchestra, Vail Valley Music Festival and the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival, and he has given lectures and master classes for singers and composers at the Cincinnati Conservatory, NYU, Bucknell University, DePauw University, and UCLA, among others. He has also been a guest artist at SongFest in Malibu, the Steans Institute at the Ravinia Festival, and the Grandin Festival in Cincinnati. Recordings of his work include *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). Heggie also contributed a song to the musical *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, lyrics by Mark Campbell (Ghostlight).

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 ten best of 2002. Scheer's work has been performed by such artists as Renée Fleming, Denyce Graves, Sylvia McNair, Stephanie Blythe, Jennifer Larmore, and Nathan Gunn. 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 Scheer's song cycle *Voices from World War II* with the Isis Chamber Orchestra, having also sung the work's debut at London's Wigmore Hall. Scheer's upcoming commissions include collaborations with Heggie, Steven Stucky, and David Shire.

**TERRENCE McNALLY's** (*Author of source material*) play *Some Christmas Letters (and a Couple of Phone Calls)* is the source material for *Three Decembers*. He wrote the libretto for Heggie's first opera, *Dead Man Walking*. Recent works include the plays *Deuce* (presented on Broadway) and *Some Men* (Off-Broadway) and the books for the musicals *Chita Rivera: The Dancer's Life* and *A Man of No Importance*. Recent Broadway credits include revivals of his plays *The Ritz* and *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* as well as writing the book for the musical *The Full Monty*. McNally won his fourth Tony Award for best book for a musical for *Ragtime* (music and lyrics by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens). He also received Tony Awards for *Master Class*, in which Zoe Caldwell created the role of Maria Callas; *Love! Valour! Compassion!*, which also garnered him Drama Desk, New York Drama Critics Circle, and Outer Critics Circle awards; and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb). McNally also won an Emmy Award for his television script for *Andre's Mother*. His other plays include *Dedication or The Stuff of Dreams*; *The Stendhal Syndrome*; *Crucifixion*; *Corpus Christi*; *A Perfect Ganesh*; *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*; *The Lisbon Traviata*; and *It's Only a Play*.

Houston Grand Opera Music Director **PATRICK SUMMERS** (*Conductor, pianist*) has led a vast repertory for San Francisco Opera in his long association with the Company, including *Ariodante*; *Samson and Delilah*; *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. 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. 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 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 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 Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* for Opera Pacific, New York City Opera, and in Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. 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); and *Wait Until Dark*. Off Broadway he directed McNally's *The Stendhal Syndrome*, *One Touch of Venus*, *If Memory Serves*, *By the Sea*, and *Lonely Planet*. Foglia's other theater credits include *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* (The 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*. Their new book, *La Sangre del Sudario* (a sequel to *El Sudario*), will be published next year.