

OPERA SAN JOSÉ EXTENDS ACCESS TO VIRTUAL PERFORMANCE OF
Jake Heggie’s “Three Decembers”

STARRING WORLD-RENOWNED MEZZO SOPRANO SUSAN GRAHAM
AND CELEBRATED ARTISTS MAYA KHERANI AND EFRAÍN SOLÍS

Available via online streaming anytime

SAN JOSE, CA (3 February 2021) – In keeping with **Opera San José’s** mission to expand accessibility to its work, the company has announced that through the support of generous donors it is able to extend access to its hit virtual production of Jake Heggie’s chamber opera, ***Three Decembers***, now making it available on a pay-what-you-can basis for streaming on demand. The production is being offered with subtitles in Spanish and Vietnamese, as well as English, furthering its accessibility to the Spanish and Vietnamese speaking members of the San Jose community, two of the largest populations in its home region. Featuring world-renowned mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** in the central role, alongside celebrated Opera San José Resident Artists soprano **Maya Kherani** and baritone **Efraín Solís**, this world-class digital production has been met with widespread critical acclaim. Based on an unpublished play by Tony Award winning playwright Terrence McNally, *Three Decembers* follows the riveting story of a famous stage actress and her two adult children, struggling to connect over three decades, as long-held secrets come to light. With a brilliant, witty libretto by Gene Scheer and a soaring musical score by Jake Heggie, *Three Decembers* offers a 90-minute fullhearted American opera about family – the ones we are born into and those we create. Tickets for the modern work, which was recorded last Fall in the company’s Heiman Digital Media Studio, are pay-what-you-can beginning at \$15 per household, which includes on-demand streaming for 30 days after date of purchase. *Three Decembers* is available via online streaming anytime. For more information or to purchase tickets, the public can visit operasj.org or call **(408) 437-4450** (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm).

Said Opera San José General Director Khori Dastoor, “We are grateful for the generosity of our long-time donors who have made it possible for us to extend *Three Decembers* at an accessible ‘pay-

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what-you-can’ price. Opera San José is committed to broadening access to its programming, bringing world-class musical experiences for everyone in our community to enjoy. The arts have never been more essential, and this final extension will allow for opera and music lovers everywhere to view this critically-acclaimed production.”

Opera San José’s production of *Three Decembers* was praised as “Skillful, makes chamber opera sparkle online. Buoyant. Elegant. A knockout” by Joshua Kosman in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, who noted Graham gives “a blazing performance. A winning combination of heedlessness and vulnerability” and Kherani and Solís “show a profound grasp of the stylistic demands of Heggie’s score.” Other critics have hailed it as “A modern masterpiece!” (*Opera Today*), “skillfully directed, powerfully acted and thrillingly sung.” (*Opera News*), “A real gem. Remarkably vivid. Heart-tugging.” (*Seen and Heard International*), “An intimate, immersive experience.” (*San Francisco Classical Voice*), and “A major achievement. Every bit as riveting as a live performance in a physical opera house.” (*Musical America*).

Determined to support artists and continue presenting art during this pandemic, Opera San José General Director **Khori Dastoor** envisioned this pioneering production as an opportunity to utilize the know-how of the company’s Silicon Valley environs to make music performances available during this crisis. The company operated under the strictest safety protocols to achieve a world-class digital capture, with the participating artists quarantined, allowing them to safely interact during the process. Cast and crew underwent frequent COVID testing and adhered to strict masking and social distancing protocols. The filming space was divided by clear plexiglass barriers, isolating musicians/conductors from singers, and all crew wore personal protective equipment (PPE). Members of the creative team included **Christopher James Ray** (Conductor), **Tara Branham** (Stage Director), **Steven C. Kemp** (Set Designer), **Alyssa Oania** (Costume Coordinator), **David Lee Cuthbert** (Lighting Designer) **Christina Martin** (Hair and Makeup Designer), **Flying Moose Pictures** (Video Production), and **Jake Heggie** (Artistic Advisor).

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Mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** makes her company debut at Opera San José as leading lady Madeline Mitchell, reuniting with composer Jake Heggie, who created the role of Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* especially for her. Hailed as “an artist to treasure” by *The New York Times*, Graham rose to the highest echelon of international performers within just a few years of her professional debut, appearing in the great opera houses of the world – from Milan’s La Scala to the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, Opéra National de Paris, Dresden’s Semperoper, and the Salzburg Festival. Graham sang the leading ladies in the Metropolitan Opera’s world premieres of John Harbison’s *The Great Gatsby* and Tobias Picker’s *An American Tragedy*, and made her musical theater debut in Rodgers & Hammerstein’s *The King and I* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. In concert, she makes regular appearances with the world’s foremost orchestras, often in French repertoire, while her distinguished discography comprises a wealth of opera, orchestral, and solo recordings. Among her numerous honors are a Grammy Award, an Opera News Award, and *Musical America’s* Vocalist of the Year.

Lauded for her vibrant voice and exciting characterizations, soprano **Maya Kherani**, an Opera San José 2020/21 Resident Artist, portrays Beatrice. Kherani previously appeared at OSJ as Despina in Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Yvette in Puccini’s *La Rondine*, and as Blonde (cover) in Mozart’s *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. She also starred in the title role of Handel’s *Partenope* with Opera NEO; Meera in the premiere of Jack Perla’s *The River of Light*, commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera; and Altisidore in Boismortier’s *Don Quichote chez la Duchesse* with Central City Opera.

Applauded by the *San Francisco Chronicle* for his “theatrical charisma and musical bravado,” Opera San José 2020-21 Resident Artist baritone **Efraín Solís** appears as Charlie. Solís is a recent graduate of the San Francisco Opera Adler Fellowship and while with the company sang Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Dandini in *La cenerentola*, Schaunard in *La bohème*, Silvano in *Un ballo in maschera*, Sciarrone in *Tosca*, and Prince Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly*. Other performances include Lieutenant Audeberet in Puts’s *Silent Night* (Utah Opera), Mark in Martinez’s *Cruzar la cara de la luna* (Houston Grand Opera, New York City Opera, El Paso Opera), Mercutio in Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* (Utah Opera, Virginia Opera, Opera Carolina, Toledo Opera), Figaro in Mozart’s *Le nozze di*

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Fiagro (Opera Memphis, Livermore Valley Opera), and El Payador in Piazzolla’s *Maria de Buenos Aires* (Opera Southwest).

Stage Director **Tara Branham** is Opera San José’s 2020-21 Resident Director. Her work has been seen in prior OSJ’s productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. Branham has built a robust directing portfolio both in opera and theatre across the country, with companies including Opera Theatre St. Louis, Chicago Opera Theatre, Long Beach Opera Theater, as well as Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Chicago’s famed Steppenwolf Theatre Company.

Conductor **Christopher James Ray** returns to Opera San José for a second consecutive year in the company’s resident ensemble. At the Bayreuth Festival he worked on productions of Wagner’s *The Flying Dutchman*, *Lohengrin*, *Götterdämmerung*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and *Parsifal*, and made his professional debut leading *Gianni Schicchi* and *Pagliacci* with Mississippi Opera. Past conducting credits with Opera San José include *Il trovatore*, *Hansel & Gretel*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Moby Dick*, and *Pagliacci*. As assistant conductor, Ray has worked with the San Francisco Symphony, Memphis Symphony, Salzburg State Theater, North Carolina Opera, and Sarasota Opera.

This production of *Three Decembers* was made possible by the Carol Franc Buck Foundation and the Ann and Gordon Getty Foundation. The Heiman Digital Media Studio was made possible by a generous lead donation from Opera San José trustee Peggy Heiman in honor of her late husband, devoted Opera San José supporter Fred Heiman. Opera San José is supported, in part, by a Cultural Affairs grant from the City of San Jose, and Applied Materials Foundation.

Opera San José is a professional, regional opera company that is unique in the United States. Maintaining a resident company of artists and supporting emerging talent in role debuts, Opera San José specializes in showcasing the finest young professional singers in the nation. In addition to mainstage performances, Opera San José maintains extensive educational programs in schools and

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in the community at large and offers preview lectures and Introduction to Opera talks for all mainstage productions.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS:

WHAT: In keeping with **Opera San José’s** mission to expand accessibility to its work, the company has announced that through the support of generous donors it is able to extend access to its hit virtual production of Jake Heggie’s chamber opera, ***Three Decembers***, now making it available on a pay-what-you-can basis for streaming on demand. The production is being offered with subtitles in Spanish and Vietnamese, as well as English, furthering its accessibility to the Spanish and Vietnamese speaking members of the San Jose community, two of the largest populations in its home region. Featuring world-renowned mezzo-soprano **Susan Graham** in the central role, alongside celebrated Opera San José Resident Artists soprano **Maya Kherani** and baritone **Efraín Solís**, this world-class digital production has been met with widespread critical acclaim. Based on an unpublished play by Tony Award winning playwright Terrence McNally, *Three Decembers* follows the riveting story of a famous stage actress and her two adult children, struggling to connect over three decades, as long-held secrets come to light. With a brilliant, witty libretto by Gene Scheer and a soaring musical score by Jake Heggie, *Three Decembers* offers a 90-minute fullhearted American opera about family – the ones we are born into and those we create.

WHEN: Available via online streaming anytime

TICKETS: Pay what you can per household, beginning at \$15 (includes on-demand streaming for 30 days after date of purchase).

INFO: For more information or to purchase tickets, the public can visit operasj.org or call **(408) 437-4450** (open Monday through Friday, 9:00am–5:00pm).

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MEDIA: Contact Sydney Albin, Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available here:
<http://www.cbpr.co/press/threedecembers>