

THE ATLANTA OPERA

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Contemporary Opera *Three Decembers* by Jake Heggie at the Alliance Theatre

Launch of the Atlanta Opera's Discoveries Series

ATLANTA – (April 16, 2015) - [The Atlanta Opera](#) brings *Three Decembers*, a chamber opera by American composer Jake Heggie, to Atlanta this May. The contemporary opera (set in the late 20th century) will launch the **Discoveries** series - dedicated to audience members looking for new operatic works, new ideas, and fresh perspectives.

Three Decembers will be presented on May 29, 30 and 31 at the [Alliance Theatre](#). Single tickets are currently available for \$35, plus convenience and venue fees, and can be purchased online at [atlantaopera.org](#) or by calling 404-881-8885. The opera will be performed in English.

Three Decembers, first performed at the Houston Grand Opera in 2008, is a chamber opera based on a short story by Terrance McNally. The production will be conducted by Steven Osgood and directed by Emma Griffin with scenic design by Laura Jellinek; all three are making their Atlanta Opera debuts. Costume Design is by Joanna Schmink and Lighting Design is by Ken Yunker. Both are Atlanta-based designers.

Taking place during three Decembers over the course of three decades (1986, 1996, 2006), the story hinges on evolving family relationships, mounting tensions, and deep secrets that lie between a mother and her adult daughter and son.

"We chose to launch this series with the southeastern premiere of a popular American Opera by one of the leading composers of our time-Jake Heggie," said Tomer Zvulun, General and Artistic Director of the Atlanta Opera. "Heggie, who is known for the blockbusters *Dead Man Walking* and *Moby Dick*, writes beautifully melodic, deeply theatrical and moving stories set to music. *Three Decembers*, which will be performed at the Alliance Theatre, will be a great introduction of this dynamic composer to Atlanta audiences."

Jake Heggie is a Guggenheim Fellow and composer of acclaimed operas *Dead Man Walking*, *Moby Dick*, *The End of the Affair* and the upcoming *Great Scott*. His work has been produced on five continents and recorded for Atlantic Records and Virgin Classics. He lives in San Francisco with his husband, Curt Branom.

Theodora Hanslowe plays Madeline Mitchell (Maddy), a stage actress who has become estranged from her children while absorbed in her career. Hanslowe is a frequent guest at the Metropolitan Opera (*The Death of Klinghoffer*, *The Nose*, *Eugene Onegin*), Santa Fe Opera (*Adriana Mater*) and San Francisco Opera (*La Cenerentola*). This is Hanslowe's Atlanta Opera debut.

Baritone **Jesse Blumberg** plays Charlie, the son. Blumberg previously performed with the New York City Opera (*VOX 2012*), Boston Lyric Opera (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Minnesota Opera (*The Magic Flute*, *Wuthering Heights*). This will be his Atlanta Opera debut.

Also making her Atlanta Opera debut is **Jennifer Black**, in the role of the unhappily married, Beatrice (Maddy's daughter). Black has performed with the Metropolitan Opera (*La Sonnambula*, *Carmen*), the Santa Fe Opera (*Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *The Elixir of Love*), and Theatre du Capitol (*La Bohème*).

The opera spans a period of 20 years, opening in 1986 with the children reading their Christmas cards from their mother. Christmas of 1996 reveals the death of Charlie's partner, Beatrice's disintegrating marriage, and the truth behind their father's death. The third December, set in 2006, finds the children eulogizing Maddy and reflecting on the tapestry of lies that has been exposed.

Librettist **Gene Scheer** frequently collaborates with Heggie, including their productions of *Moby Dick* and *To Hell and Back*. His operas have been performed at Houston Grand Opera, the Dallas Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera. Documentarian Ken Burns featured Scheer's song "American Anthem" (sung by Norah Jones) in his Emmy Award-winning World War II documentary, *The War*. Scheer's work on the oratorio for *August 4, 1964* earned him a Grammy nomination.

Steven Osgood will conduct the 11-piece chamber orchestra from the piano. The orchestra will be visible on stage as the composer intended. Osgood is known for his work conducting contemporary opera, including recent world premieres by Missy Mazzoli, Mohammad Fairouz, and Jeremy Howard Beck. He is the former Artistic Director of American Opera Projects.

Emma Griffin makes her Atlanta Opera debut as stage director. Griffin earned her BFA from NYU and is currently on faculty at the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music. Her work has been seen at Opera Philadelphia, Boston Lyric Opera, BAM Next Wave Festival and MASS MoCA.

The new Atlanta Opera **Discoveries** series was made possible by a generous grant from Rosemary and John Brown. It is dedicated to audience members who are seeking new works, new ideas and fresh perspectives. Further to this mission, in the 2015-16 season Discoveries will showcase an innovative take on a classic song cycle and the Southeast premiere of a timely new opera. As a part of the The Atlanta Opera's efforts to bring operas to new audiences all over the Atlanta Metro area, those productions will be performed in exciting alternative venues such as The Rialto Theatre, the Alliance Theatre, the Conant Theatre at Oglethorpe, and KSU.

The 2015-16 season opens with a theatrical version of Schubert's famed song cycle *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), featuring baritone David Adam Moore. Typically presented in a recital format, this will be a fully staged production, featuring interpretive projections and sophisticated multimedia designs. Sung in German, with English subtitles, *Winterreise* opens at the Conant Performing Arts Center at Oglethorpe University on September 16, 17, 19 and 20th. A special preview performance will be held at the Bailey Performance Center at Kennesaw State University on September 12th.

Soldier Songs is an evening-length multimedia event that combines elements of theater, opera, rock-infused-concert music, and animation, composed by American David T. Little and featuring baritone Matthew Worth. First performed in 2006, this new production of *Soldier Songs* will be the Southeast premiere of the work. With a libretto by the composer based on interviews with veterans of five wars, *Soldier Songs* will run November 11, 12, 14, 15th at the Rialto Center for the Arts.

About The Atlanta Opera

Founded in 1979, The Atlanta Opera is one of the finest regional opera companies in the nation. By producing live, mainstage performances of the highest quality and impactful community engagement experiences, The Atlanta Opera enriches lives through the power of opera. The Opera strives to attract the finest international, national, and regional singers, conductors, stage directors, and designers. Each season, The Atlanta Opera presents three productions at the Cobb Energy Centre, drawing audiences from the entire metropolitan Atlanta area as well as from the Southeast region.

Sponsors

The Atlanta Opera proudly recognizes The Coca-Cola Company as the Opening Night Sponsor of the Opera and Rosemary and John Brown for their support of the Discoveries series.

Three Decembers

By Jake Heggie

Libretto by Gene Scheer

Debut Atlanta Opera Performance. Commissioned by the Houston Grand Opera.

Running time is approximately 90 minutes. The show will be performed without an intermission.

Creative Team

Conductor	Steven Osgood*
Stage Director	Emma Griffin*
Scenic Designer	Laura Jellinek*
Costume Designer	Joanna Schmink
Lighting Designer	Ken Yunker

Cast

Madeline Mitchell	Theodora Hanslowe*
Charlie	Jesse Blumberg*
Beatrice	Jennifer Black*

**Denotes Atlanta Opera debut*