

STARRING JOYCE DiDONATO

MAY 10, 2021 | 7:00 PM | WINSPEAR OPERA HOUSE

thedallasopera

Presents

VIVA DIVA!

May 10, 2021, 7:00 PM

The Winspear Opera House at the AT&T Performing Arts Center

Joyce DiDonato, Mezzo-Soprano

Emmanuel Villaume, Conductor
The Dallas Opera Orchestra

La mort de Cléopâtre — Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

"Coriolan" Overture — Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Camille Claudel: Into the Fire — Jake Heggie (b. 1961)
Text by Gene Scheer (b. 1958)

The performance will be approximately 1 hour and 10 minutes with no intermission.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Krista Billings, *Lighting Designer*
Jessica Drayton, *Projection Designer*
Miranda Wilson, *Stage Manager*
Jeri Shaffer, *Projected Titles*
Viswa Subbaraman, *Assistant Conductor*
Kyle Naig, *Musical Preparation*

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VIVA DIVA! STARRING JOYCE DiDONATO

Program Notes by Emmanuel Villaume

I have always been attracted—with a mix of admiration and terror—to Camille Claudel. The body of work that remains of this immense artist conveys the conflicted and, ultimately, tragic existence in which she lived. Through her art, this extraordinary woman showed that destruction and unreachable longing can be consubstantial with immense love and redemption. Her art is, at the same time, a refuge and a miraculous solution that preserves both the dark and the sublime. *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire* is a new work of powerful tenderness. It marries Gene Scheer's poetry with Jake Heggie's music and gives back to Camille the love she deserved but never fully received during her life.

Cléopâtre of Berlioz is a strong counterpart to *Into the Fire*. With touching beauty, it deals with the suicide of Cleopatra. The young Berlioz put all his passion into this striking cantata, breaking rules while blazing a path of musical modernity with great panache. This masterpiece stands on its own as a powerful composition where drama and music intertwine in a hypnotic dance. Berlioz's discoveries go beyond that of Romantic music, foreshadowing compositional ideas that will reemerge more than a century later.

In *Cléopâtre*, Berlioz invokes Shakespeare to add depth to the imposed poem of Monsieur Vieillard. In his *Coriolan* Overture, Beethoven derives from Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, as well as Heinrich Joseph of Collin's original theatrical work. Programmed after *Cléopâtre* and before *Into the Fire*, the overture portrays the Roman general Garcius Marcus Coriolanus and his struggle between his thirst for vengeance toward Rome and his love for his wife and mother. Suicide, again, is the ultimate solution.

The three works presented on this program have great similarities, with differences in style and tone. But they also share a common conviction: that art is founded on life, and that its creation preserves both the tragic and beautiful tensions at the core of any existence.

CAMILLE CLAUDEL: INTO THE FIRE

Program Notes by Jake Heggie

The French sculptor Camille Claudel (1864-1943) was an artistic genius at a time when a woman was rarely taken seriously on her own. Art critic Octave Mirbeau described her as "a rebellion against nature: a *woman* of genius!" Claudel knew how gifted she was—and one of her great frustrations was that she was primarily known in connection with a man: Rodin, the mighty sculptor who had been her mentor, teacher, and lover. Their stormy and ill-fated romance, warring egos, clashing genius, her bold life choices, his broken promises, and the mental illness that resulted in her isolation and confinement—all of this is part of her tragic story. But only part.

For there are her sculptures: sublime, beautiful, inspired, aching, they dance and sing to us through time. Only a relatively few survive, for she destroyed much of her work before her family sent her away to an asylum; and there, she never sculpted again.

After seeing the brilliant film *Camille Claudel* in 1989, I had been looking for the opportunity to create a theatrical work based on her story. Finally, I saw the opportunity in 2010, when Ruth Felt (president of San Francisco Performances) asked me to create a new work to celebrate the Alexander String Quartet's 30th anniversary. Knowing I am primarily an opera composer, Ruth also said we could invite a singer to participate.

I called my friend Joyce DiDonato to ask her about the project. "Yes, please," was her reply. The writer Gene Scheer,

my frequent collaborator, enthusiastically signed on, as well. Instead of a full opera, a theatrical song cycle would be our foray into Claudel's story.

The cycle takes place the day she is to be taken to the asylum. As dawn breaks (**Awakening**), Camille wakes to the strange reality of what is about to happen and addresses her sculptures. The powerful, rugged bust of **Rodin** is first, followed by the lyrical **La Valse**—a sensuous dance of love and death.

Shakuntala, according to Hindu mythology, was the bride of King Dushyanta. Dreaming of her husband one day, she inadvertently offended a powerful *rishi*, or sage, whose curse was that she would be forgotten by the one she dreamed of. For many years, she and her child were banished and isolated, until the king was awakened to his error and sought her out to beg forgiveness. Claudel's sculpture depicts the difficult, emotional moment of their reunion.

La Petite Châtelaine is a tender, radiant portrait of innocence. In 1892, Claudel reluctantly aborted Rodin's child—likely at his behest—and ended their affair. This sculpture dates from shortly after, when Claudel began to sense a growing paranoia: a fear that Rodin was trying to steal her ideas and destroy her career.

The Gossips represents a real turning point for Claudel. While Rodin's sculptures and fame became more massive, hers became more intimate and small. Her paranoia led her to believe that she was being followed and persecuted by "la bande à Rodin" (or "Rodin's gang"). Here four women whisper and gossip in a corner. About whom?

L'Age Mûr ("Maturity" or "Destiny") is a large bronze sculpture in the Musée d'Orsay. It depicts three figures: an older man being led away by an ancient woman while a younger woman, on her knees, tries desperately to reach out to him. This also dates from about the time of Claudel's abortion and Rodin's refusal to leave his long-time lover, Rose Beuret.

In 1913, on her mother and brother's order, Claudel was taken to an asylum. To avoid further scandals, her brother, the diplomat and playwright Paul Claudel, had her confined in isolation. Her mother and sister never visited her, Paul only every few years. In 1929, her closest friend from their student days in Paris came to visit (**Epilogue**). Jessie Lipscomb and her husband were on their way to Italy and decided to seek out Camille. They found her quiet, reflective, and dear. A photograph Jessie's husband took of them is the last evidence we have of Camille Claudel. She died in 1943.

Musically, the cycle is tonally based with a strong sense of dance throughout, especially a strong undercurrent of time. Debussy's G minor string quartet is a primary source of inspiration. The composer was a close friend of Claudel and kept a copy of her sculpture La Valse on his mantle. There are a few recurring themes, most of which are permutations of the music from Camille's first line: "Last night, I went to sleep completely naked"—a line from an early letter she wrote to Rodin.

Camille Claudel: Into the Fire was completed in December 2011 and received its premiere at the Herbst Theater in San Francisco on February 4, 2012. It is lovingly dedicated to Joyce DiDonato, who recently gave the New York and European premieres of the piece. The work was commissioned by San Francisco Performances and generously underwritten by a gift from Linda and Stuart Nelson. An orchestral version received its first performance February 26, 2015, sung by mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke with The Berkeley Symphony led by conductor Joana Carneiro.

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ARTIST BIOS



Photo by Josef Fischnaller.

JOYCE DiDONATO (Mezzo-Soprano)

Winner of multiple Grammy Awards and the 2018 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, the Kansas-born mezzo-soprano stars annually at the world's most prestigious opera houses and concert venues. Her stylistic versatility encompasses recent successes in roles as diverse as the title role/*Agrippina* (Met premiere/new production, international tour of concert version with Il Pomo d'Oro), the title role/*Semiramide* (Bavarian State Opera and London's Royal Opera House), Didon/*Les Troyens* (Vienna State Opera), the title role/*Cendrillon* (Met premiere, after previous triumphs at The Santa Fe Opera and London's Royal Opera House), Charlotte/*Werther* (ROH), and Sister Helen/*Dead Man Walking* (Teatro Real Madrid, London's Barbican Centre). DiDonato has premiered numerous works, including Jake Heggie's opera *Great Scott* (The Dallas Opera) and his song cycle *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*. She triumphed as a featured soloist in the BBC Last Night of the Proms and has collaborated in recent seasons with such major orchestras and conductors as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Muti, the Berlin Philharmonic under Rattle, Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique under Gardiner, the Philadelphia Orchestra under Nézet-Séguin, and the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra USA under Pappano. The mezzo's activities during the pandemic have included a solo recital, filmed in Germany's Jahrhunderthalle and streamed worldwide. The latest additions to her exceptionally diverse discography include *Agrippina, Les Troyens* (Gramophone's 2018 Recording of the Year, among many other awards), and three solo discs: *In War & Peace, Songplay* (Gramophone Best Recital Award winner), and Schubert's *Winterreise*.



Photo by Marco Borggreve.

EMMANUEL VILLAUME (Conductor)

The French conductor has been TDO's Mrs. Eugene McDermott Music Director since 2013. Formerly Music Director of Spoleto Festival USA and Chief Conductor of the National Slovenian Philharmonic, he has held both of those positions with the PKF-Prague Philharmonia since 2015. Villaume has triumphed throughout America, leading productions at the Metropolitan Opera and the major companies of Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Santa Fe. He has also appeared at London's Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, all the major French and German houses, Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, Venice's Teatro La Fenice, the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, and the Tokyo Bunka Kaikan. Villaume's guest-conducting of symphonic repertoire has been hailed with the leading orchestras of Montreal, Chicago, San Francisco, Houston, Los Angeles, and Boston, as well as those of London, Paris, Munich, Copenhagen, Oslo, Stockholm, and Tokyo, among many others. Recent recordings include CDs with Anna Netrebko, Benjamin Bernheim, Andrew von Oeyen, Angela Gheorghiu, and Bryan Hymel.

ARTIST BIOS



Photo by Karen Almond.

JAKE HEGGIE (Composer)

Jake Heggie is the composer of 10 operas, including *Great Scott* (libretto by Terrence McNally), recently released on CD and on DVD by Erato. Other operas include *Dead Man Walking, Moby-Dick* (commissioned by The Dallas Opera), *It's a Wonderful Life, If I Were You, Three Decembers, and Two Remain*. He has also composed more than 300 art songs, as well as chamber, choral and orchestral works. Heggie recently completed "*What I Miss the Most…*" a new song cycle for mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton featuring new texts by Joyce DiDonato, Patti LuPone, Sister Helen Prejean, the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Kathleen Kelly. *Songs for Murdered Sisters* is a new song cycle based on poems by Margaret Atwood, created for baritone Joshua Hopkins and commissioned by Houston Grand Opera. Last season featured the premiere of *INTONATIONS: Songs from the Violins of Hope* (texts by Gene Scheer) with mezzo-soprano Sasha Cooke and violinist Daniel Hope. Heggie is currently at work on *INTELLIGENCE* with librettist Gene Scheer for Houston Grand Opera. *Great Scott* was a 2019 Grammy Award nominee for Best New Composition, Classical. *Dead Man Walking* has been recorded twice and, with 70 productions internationally, is one of the most performed American operas of our time. The Metropolitan Opera has announced a new production of *Dead Man Walking* for a future season, starring Joyce DiDonato and conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin. *Moby-Dick*, telecast throughout the United States as part of PBS *Great Performances'* 40th Season, was subsequently released on DVD.



Photo courtesy of Gene Scheer.

GENE SCHEER (Librettist)

Mr. Scheer's work is noted for its scope and versatility. With the composer Jake Heggie, he has collaborated on many projects, including the critically acclaimed 2010 Dallas Opera world premiere, *Moby-Dick* and *Three Decembers* (Houston Grand Opera), which starred Frederica von Stade. Their other works include *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, a song cycle premiered by Joyce DiDonato and the Alexander String Quartet. Mr. Scheer worked with Tobias Picker on *An American Tragedy*, which premiered in 2005 at the Metropolitan Opera. Other collaborations include the lyrics for Wynton Marsalis's *It Never Goes Away*, featured in Congo Square. With the composer Steven Stucky, Mr. Scheer wrote the Grammy-nominated *August 4, 1964* for The Dallas Symphony Orchestra. In 2015, Mr. Scheer collaborated with Joby Talbot on the opera *Everest*, based on a doomed expedition. With Jennifer Higdon, Mr. Scheer wrote an operatic adaptation of *Cold Mountain* for Santa Fe Opera, also nominated for a Grammy for best classical composition. In 2016, Mr. Scheer and Jake Heggie premiered an operatic adaptation of *It's a Wonderful Life* for the Houston Grand Opera. A composer in his own right, Mr. Scheer has written songs for singers such as Renée Fleming, Sylvia McNair, Denyce Graves, and Nathan Gunn. The distinguished documentary filmmaker, Ken Burns, prominently featured Mr. Scheer's song "American Anthem" (sung by Norah Jones) in his Emmy Award-winning PBS documentary, *The War*. President Joe Biden quoted a verse in his 2021 Inaugural Address.

THE DALLAS OPERA ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLIN
Ellen dePasquale, *Mary Anne Cree Concertmaster, in memory of Rosine Smith Sammons*
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Grace Kang Wollett, *Acting Assistant Concertmaster*
Florence Wang Conrad
Amy Faires
David Miles Wolcott
Junsoo Park
Oleg Larshin
Paige Kossuth
Natalie Floyd
Lauren Haseltine
Amela Koci

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Sondra Brudnak, *Assistant Principal*
Suneetha D'Apice
Lisa Shields
Barbara Allen
Norman Stone
Minhee Bae

VIOLA
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Katrina Smith, *Co-Principal*
Donna Hall
Paul Tullis
Colin Garner
Meghan Birmingham Vangeli

CELLO
Mitch Maxwell, *Catherine Brackbill Principal Cello Chair*
Shawna Hamilton, *Assistant Principal*
Eric Forman
Vilma Peguero
Philip Taggart
Zach Mansell

BASS
William Gowen, *Principal*
Michael Lelevich, *Assistant Principal*
Stephen Brown
Kirby Nunez

FLUTE
Helen Blackburn, *Principal*
Ebonee Thomas

PICCOLO
Ebonee Thomas

OBOE
Gina Ford, *Eleanor Ford Penrose Principal Oboe Chair*
Stewart Williams

ENGLISH HORN
Stewart Williams

CLARINET
Kenneth Krause, *Principal*
Forest Aten
Danny Goldman

BASS CLARINET
Forest Aten

BASSOON
John Searcy, *Acting Principal*
Shannon Highland

HORN
Katie Wolber, *Principal*
Heather Test
Gerald Wood
Brian Brown

TRUMPET
John Holt, *Principal*
Rick Bogard

TROMBONE
Ian Maser, *The Cece and Ford Lacy Principal Trombone Chair*
Tony Baker
Eric Swanson

BASS TROMBONE
Eric Swanson

TUBA/CIMBASSO
Jeff Baker, *Principal*

TIMPANI
Deborah Mashburn, *Principal*

PERCUSSION
Joseph Ferraro, *Acting Principal*
Drew Lang

HARP
Barbara Biggers, *Acting Principal*

Land and People Acknowledgement

We are on the original land of the Caddo, Wichita, and Comanche sovereign nations, whose people faced horrible treatment and policies that forced their removal from the land.

People were also stolen from their homes in Africa, enslaved, dehumanized, and forced to build Dallas through free labor.

While none of us created these conditions, we have the opportunity, responsibility, and honor to uplift these communities through truth-telling, greater connection, and holistic celebration.

Thank you for joining us in acknowledging this land and these peoples.