

**SFJAZZ & Opera Parallèle Celebrate  
Leonard Bernstein's Centennial with Seven Performances of**

**Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*  
&  
Jake Heggie's *At the Statue of Venus***

February 14-18, 2018, SFJAZZ Center, San Francisco

(San Francisco, CA, January 3 2018) - SFJAZZ and Opera Parallèle join forces again for a multi-media, multi-genre tribute to the centennial of iconic and versatile American composer Leonard Bernstein. This production links Bernstein's classic 1951 one-act opera *Trouble in Tahiti* with composer Jake Heggie's 2005 work *At the Statue of Venus* for an unique collaboration that celebrates the American voice in opera and its continuing legacy, featuring a cutting-edge production including atmospheric visual projections, costumes, and staging. In 2016, SFJAZZ and Opera Parallèle presented Terence Blanchard's *Champion* to sold-out audiences at the SFJAZZ Center.

Seven performances will be given at the SFJAZZ Center running Wednesday, February 14, at 7:30pm, Thursday, February 15, at 7:30pm; Friday, February 16, at 7:30pm; Saturday, February 17, at 3:00pm & 7:30pm; and Sunday, February 18, at 3:00pm & 7:30pm at SFJAZZ Center, 201 Franklin Street, San Francisco and tickets are priced \$30-\$170. For more information, visit [www.operaparallele.org](http://www.operaparallele.org) and [www.sfjazz.org](http://www.sfjazz.org).

The only piece for which Bernstein wrote both the music and the libretto, *Trouble in Tahiti* paints the portrait of a young couple whose loveless union defies the stereotypical ideal of marital bliss in the Atomic Age. With a title that compares the promised suburban utopia of the newly-affluent middle class in America to a sunlit tropical paradise, *Trouble in Tahiti*, first performed in 1952 at Brandeis University, is an incisive and pointedly relevant cultural touchstone that explores the deception behind the blissful mid-century idea of the "American Dream" created at a time when the media-perpetuated concept of suburban happiness was at its height after World War II. The longtime director of the New York Philharmonic who became a household name with his 1957 score to *West Side Story*, Bernstein built a uniquely inclusive, modernist approach to composition that fully embraced the popular song forms of the day, making him the most jazz-influenced "classical" composer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and among the most innovative of all time. The one-act opera in seven scenes features famed songs "Mornin' Sun" and "What A Movie."

Guggenheim Fellowship recipient Jake Heggie's *At the Statue of Venus* is a scene scored for soprano and piano and featuring a libretto by Tony-winning playwright and librettist Terrence McNally. In it, an expectant young woman waits in a museum by a statue of the Goddess of Love for her blind date to arrive, ruminating on the who she may meet and what her future may hold. *At the Statue of Venus*, which deals with a woman waiting in a museum for a blind date, is the perfect opening prequel to Bernstein's story. Heggie's lyrical style paints with great pathos McNally's libretto and gives us hope for what the future might hold.

For this production, Opera Parallèle's Artistic Director **Nicole Paiement** and Creative Director **Brian Staufenbiel** seamlessly link the two works with a before and after narrative that explores the struggles, victories, and revelations that occur in one's quest for "happiness," in which the sole character Rose in *At the Statue of Venus* becomes the wife Dinah from *Trouble in Tahiti*. We see what becomes of a young woman waiting for a blind date in a museum and what might happen after getting married and living the comfortable life of a housewife in suburban America.

Mezzo-sopranos **Renée Rapier** and **Abigail Levis** will portray the central character and will be double-cast. Baritones **Kyle Albertson** and **Eugene Brancoveanu** are also double-cast and will portray the same character. Renée Rapier and Kyle Albertson on 2/14, 2/16, 2/17 (3:00 pm), 2/18 (7:30 pm); Abigail Levis and Eugene Brancoveanu on 2/15, 2/17 (7:30 pm), 2/18 (3:00 pm). Soprano **Krista Wigle**, tenor **Andres Ramirez**, and baritone **Bradley Kynard** personify the Greek chorus in *Trouble in Tahiti*—a jazz trio whose syncopated comments, inspired by popular music, foreshadow *West Side Story*. The set design by **Dave Dunning** will include a giant turntable featuring revolving tableaux for the varied dramatic locations. Atmospheric visuals created by Media Designer **David Murakami**, and period costumes by Costume Designer **Christine Crook**, will evoke the troubled state of these souls adrift in the heart of Suburbia, in an aesthetic reminiscent of the *Mad Men* era. Mixed media collage artist Sherry Parker will collaborate with OP to surround the audience in an art gallery experience. Choreographer **Amy Seiwert** and dancer **Steffi Cheong** will bring to life the statue suggested in the title of Jake Heggie's work.

"Our partnership with SFJAZZ for *Champion* was so satisfying and positive," says Nicole Paiement, "Before the curtain fell on the final performances, we all knew we wanted to work together again. These I can't think of two composers of the past century who have crossed genres like Leonard Bernstein and our own Jake Heggie—perfect for another opera/jazz exploration during the Bernstein centennial."

"SFJAZZ cannot think of a better way to celebrate Leonard Bernstein's centennial than continuing our partnership with Opera Parallèle by presenting this meeting of musical genres, presenting styles, and Bay Area audiences," says SFJAZZ Founder Randall Kline.

This production is sponsored in part by Ann and Gordon Getty.

### **About Opera Parallèle**

The award-winning Opera Parallèle develops and performs contemporary operas in a dynamic balance of known and new works, in new productions that shed light on their subject matter and engage audiences' senses and sensibilities. Opera Parallèle is the only organization in the Bay Area presenting fully cast and staged contemporary operas exclusively. Opera Parallèle also commissions new orchestrations of contemporary grand operas, to give a sense of intimacy to its productions and to give a new life to works which might not otherwise be performed.

### **About SFJAZZ**

Founded in 1983, SFJAZZ presents the greatest names in jazz, Latin and global music and nurtures the art of improvisation through its year-round concert, commissioning and education programs. The West Coast's biggest jazz presenter serves over 200,000 fans and students every year and has several award-winning resident jazz ensembles - the world-renowned and award-winning SFJAZZ Collective and the SFJAZZ High School All-Stars. The SFJAZZ Center opened in January of 2013 and is the only stand-alone facility built specifically for jazz in the United States. Designed by San Francisco architect Mark Cavagnero, the LEED-Gold certified center offers the superb acoustics of a great concert hall and the relaxed intimacy of a jazz club.

### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

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