



presents

ALEXANDER STRING QUARTET 30TH ANNIVERSARY with
JOYCE DIDONATO, mezzo-soprano and **JAKE HEGGIE**, piano

Zakarias Grafilo, violin
Frederick Lifszitz, violin

Sandy Wilson, cello
Paul Yarbrough, viola

Saturday, February 4, 8pm

Herbst Theatre

HAHN

Venezia

Sopra l'acque indormenzada
La barcheta
L'avvertimento
La biondina in gondola
Che pecà!
La primavera

DEBUSSY

String Quartet in G minor

Animé et très décidé
Scherzo: Assez vif et bien rythmé
Andantino doucement expressif
Très modéré; Très mouvementé; Très animé

INTERMISSION

HEGGIE

Texts by Gene Scheer

Camille Claudel: Into the Fire (2012) [World premiere]
(for mezzo-soprano and string quartet)

Prelude (instrumental)
1. *Rodin*
2. *La Valse*
3. *Shakuntala*
4. *La Petite Châtelaine*
5. *The Gossips*
6. *L'Age Mûr (instrumental)*
7. *Epilogue: Jessie Lipscomb visits Camille Claudel, Montdevergues Asylum, 1929*

Commissioned for Joyce DiDonato and the Alexander String Quartet by San Francisco Performances and funded by a generous gift from Linda and Stuart Nelson.

The Alexander String Quartet is ensemble-in-residence with San Francisco Performances in association with San Francisco State University and the May T. Morrison Chamber Music Center.

The Alexander String Quartet is represented by Besen Arts, New York. Joyce DiDonato is represented by Intermusica Artists Management, Ltd, 36 Graham Street, Crystal Wharf, London N1 8GJ, UK; www.intermusica.co.uk.

The Quartet frequently performs and records on the Ellen M. Egger Quartet, a matched set of instruments by the San Francisco-based maker Francis Kuttner, circa 1987.

Hamburg Steinway Model D, Pro Piano San Francisco



The Alexander String Quartet

The **Alexander String Quartet** has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles over nearly three decades. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart and Shostakovich, the quartet has also established itself as an important advocate of new music through over twenty-five commissions and numerous premiere performances. The Alexander String Quartet is a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving there as directors of the Morrison Chamber Music Center at the School of Music and Dance in the College of Arts and Humanities at San Francisco State University and Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances.

The Alexander Quartet's annual calendar of concerts includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. The quartet has appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y and the Metropolitan Museum in New York City; Jordan Hall in Boston; the Library of Congress and Dumbarton Oaks in Washington; and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent. Recent overseas tours have brought them to the United Kingdom, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina and the Philippines. The many distinguished artists to collaborate with the Alexander String Quartet include pianists Menahem Pressler, Gary Graffman, Roger Woodward, Jeremy Menuhin and Joyce Yang; clarinetists Eli Eban, Charles Neidich, Joan Enric Lluna and Richard Stoltzman; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada and David Requiro; violinist Toby Appel; and soprano Elly Ameling. Among the quartet's more unusual collaborations have been numerous performances of Eddie Sauter's seminal Third Stream work, *Focus*, in collaboration with Branford Marsalis, David Sánchez and Andrew Speight.

A particular highlight of the season is a celebratory concert presented by SF Performances in February 2012 marking the quartet's thirtieth anniversary. For the occasion, San Francisco Performances commissioned a new work by Jake Heggie, *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, a work for string quartet and mezzo-soprano; the Alexander will be joined in the world premiere by Joyce DiDonato. Other highlights of the 2011-2012 season included two multiple concert series for San Francisco Performances, one presenting the complete quartets of Bartók and Kodály and the other music of Schubert; a Dvořák series

ARTIST PROFILES

The Alexander String Quartet is proud to celebrate its 30th anniversary this season. The quartet has been an ensemble-in-residence since 1989 with San Francisco Performances, the result of a unique partnership between SF Performances, San Francisco State University and the May T. Morrison Chamber Music Center. Starting in 1994, the Quartet joined with SF Performances' music historian-in-residence, Robert Greenberg, to present the Saturday Morning Series exploring string quartet literature.

The Quartet has appeared on SF Performances' mainstage Chamber Series many times since 1990, collaborating with such artists as soprano Elly Ameling, clarinetists Richard Stoltzman and Joan Enric Lluna, and pianists James Tocco, Menahem Pressler and Jeremy Menuhin. The Alexander String Quartet is also the cornerstone of SF Performances' educational outreach in public high schools.

This is Joyce DiDonato's second performance with San Francisco Performances; she previously performed in 2009. SF Performances has presented Jake Heggie in 1997, 1999, 2000 and he accompanied Frederica Von Stade twice in Family Matinees, in 2006 and 2011.



Round numbered anniversaries are a time for celebration, congratulations, retrospection, and expressions of gratitude. In the challenging waters of small arts organizations, just remaining afloat is an achievement to be celebrated. Survival relies upon a level of effort and support that must constantly be maintained. When circumstances require "all hands on deck", we are always on duty. No boss is more demanding than an art form, and no one less possible to strike against. Still, determination and internal hard work are often insufficient to guarantee survival. So as we congratulate one another on three decades of music making it is necessary also to recognize the incredible nurturing support of our adopted hometown, San

Francisco. Looking back, I can see no more crucial milestone in the ASQ's history, than the invitation in 1989 to depart NYC and relocate to SF. In retrospect it was so clearly the right move for us that it is easy to forget how we wrestled with that decision.

"I am inviting you to become resident quartet in the city of San Francisco" was how August Coppola, then Dean of Creative Arts at San Francisco State University phrased his job offer to us. We later realized that his words were not chosen carelessly. It was the unique collaboration of SFSU, the Morrison Trust and San Francisco Performances, which would provide a situation far more meaningful than a university post alone.

So many people and organizations deserve our gratitude, that it is impossible to do justice. We wish to give special thanks to Ruth Felt, whose brilliance and dedication in creating SFP has now been recognized nationally and internationally. Her constancy and loyalty to us have given hundreds of concerts, presentations, and school visits their genesis. It is impossible to imagine this residency without the benevolent vision and support of the late Jane Galante, Principal Trustee of the Morrison Trust for over 50 years. When Jane passed away late in 2010, we lost a steadfast friend and mentor. Her absence is acutely felt, but true to her form, she leaves behind a healthy and ambitious Morrison Trust in very capable hands. Finally we'd like to thank Dr. Robert Corrigan, President of SFSU, who has fostered the presence of the quartet not only within the University, but also as a resource for the Bay Area, in keeping with his tremendous commitment to the arts and service to community.

As we enter our fourth decade as an ensemble, stronger than ever, it is clear that our home in San Francisco has been and continues to be a safe harbor for us, thanks to our many local friends and supporters. The music goes on.

—Paul Yarbrough
for the Alexander String Quartet

for Mondavi Center; and a continuing annual series at Baruch College in New York City, this season featuring the Bartók cycle. Other important series include Concerts International in Memphis, the Tuesday Evening Concert Series in Charlottesville, the Asheville Chamber Music Series, and the inaugural concert of a new chamber music series at the Capitol Theatre for Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater, Florida. They also continue their annual residencies at Allegheny College and St. Lawrence University, this year in collaboration with the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam.

The Alexander Quartet's twenty-fifth anniversary as well as the twentieth anniversary of its association with New York City's Baruch College as Ensemble in Residence was celebrated through a performance by the ensemble of the Shostakovich string quartet cycle. Of these performances at the Baruch Performing Art Center Engelman Recital Hall, *The New York Times* wrote, "The intimacy of the music came through with enhanced power and poignancy in the Alexander Quartet's vibrant, probing, assured and aptly volatile performances.... Seldom have these anguished, playful, ironic and masterly works seemed so profoundly personal." The Alexander was also awarded Presidential Medals in honor of their longstanding commitment to the Arts and Education and in celebration of their two decades of service to Baruch College.

The Alexander String Quartet has added considerably to its distinguished and wide-ranging discography over the past decade. Recording exclusively for the FoghornClassics label, the Alexander's most recent release (June 2009) of the complete Beethoven cycle was described by *Music Web International* as performances "uncompromising in their power, intensity and spiritual depth," while *Strings Magazine* described the set as "a landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles." The FoghornClassics label released a three-CD set (Homage) of the Mozart quartets dedicated to Haydn in 2004. Foghorn released the six-CD album (*Fragments*) of the complete Shostakovich quartets in 2006 and 2007, and a recording of the complete quartets of Pulitzer prize-winning San Francisco composer, Wayne Peterson, was released in the spring of 2008. BMG Classics released the quartet's first recording of Beethoven cycle on its Arte Nova label to tremendous critical acclaim in 1999. The ASQ's three newest releases on FoghornClassics in the spring of 2012 include works by Brahms, Gershwin, Kern, Beethoven and new commissions from Paul Chihara, Veronika Krauses and Michael Gandolfi. A forthcoming Bartók/Kodály cycle

recorded on the renowned Ellen M. Egger matched quartet of instruments built by San Francisco luthier, Francis Kuttner will be released in the fall.

Recent Alexander premieres include *Rise Chanting* by Augusta Read Thomas, commissioned for the Alexander by the Krannert Center and premiered there and simulcast by WFMT radio in Chicago. The quartet has also premiered String Quartets Nos. 2 and 3 by Wayne Peterson and works by Ross Bauer (commissioned by Stanford University), Richard Festinger, David Sheinfeld, Hi Kyung Kim, and a Koussevitzky commission by Robert Greenberg.

The Alexander String Quartet was formed in New York City in 1981 and the following year became the first string quartet to win the Concert Artists Guild Competition. In 1985, the quartet captured international attention as the first American quartet to win the London International String Quartet Competition, receiving both the jury's highest award and the Audience Prize. In May of 1995, Allegheny College awarded Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees to the members of the quartet in recognition of their unique contribution to the arts. Honorary degrees were conferred on the ensemble by St. Lawrence University in May 2000.

Joyce DiDonato



"Perhaps the most potent female singer of her generation" according to the *New Yorker*, Joyce DiDonato entrances audiences and critics alike across the globe. With a voice nothing less than 24-carat gold as proclaimed by *The Times*, DiDonato has soared to international prominence in operas by Rossini, Handel, and Mozart, as well as through her wide-ranging, acclaimed discography.

Born in Kansas and a graduate of Wichita State University and The Academy of Vocal Arts, Joyce DiDonato trained on the young artist programmes of San Francisco, Houston, and Santa Fe opera companies. Her signature parts include the bel canto roles of Rossini, leading the *Financial Times* to

declare of her Elena in *La Donna del Lago*, "Simply the best singing I've heard in years."

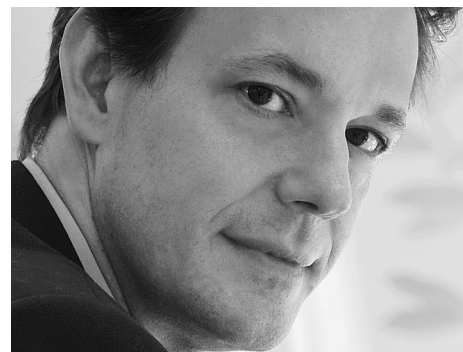
In 2010, DiDonato won the highly prized Artist of the Year at the Gramophone Awards, as well as the Recital of the Year for her album *Colbran: Rossini's Muse*. She also collected a German Echo Klassik Award as Female Singer of the Year. Other honours include the Mets Beverly Sills Award, the Royal Philharmonic Society's Singer of the Year, citations from Operalia, and the Richard Tucker, and George London Foundations.

Last season began with DiDonato's debut at the Deutsche Oper as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. She then returned to the Teatro Real, Madrid for her first European Octavian *Der Rosenkavalier* and sang Sister Helen in *Dead Man Walking* at Houston Grand Opera. She returned to the Metropolitan Opera in the spring of 2011 for Isolier *Le Comte Ory* and Komponist *Ariadne auf Naxos*, following this with a European tour in the title role of Ariodante with *Il complesso barocco*, to coincide with the release of her recording of the same opera on Virgin Classics. She triumphed at Covent Garden at the end of the season, in the title role of Massenet's *Cendrillon*.

Highlights of the current season include the feat of back-to-back title roles at La Scala, Milan (*Der Rosenkavalier* and *La donna del lago*), the world première of the baroque pastiche *The Enchanted Island* at the Metropolitan Opera, concerts with the New York Philharmonic in New York and London, and the title role of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* at Houston Grand Opera.

An exclusive recording artist with EMI/Virgin Classics, DiDonato's third EMI/Virgin Classics solo CD, *Diva Divo* is a collection of arias by male and female characters based on the same story.

Jake Heggie



Jake Heggie is the American composer of the internationally acclaimed operas *Moby-Dick* (libretto: Gene Scheer), *Dead Man Walking* (libretto: Terrence McNally), *To Hell and Back* (Scheer), *Three Decembers* (Scheer), *For a Look*

or a Touch (Scheer), *The End of the Affair* (McDonald), more than two hundred and fifty art songs, orchestral and chamber music. As pianist and composer, he collaborates with many of the world's most beloved singers, including Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Frederica von Stade, Kiri Te Kanawa, Ben Heppner, Stephen Costello, Paul Groves, Morgan Smith and Nathan Gunn. His songs are programmed internationally and the operas have been produced by dozens of companies around the world; since its premiere in 2000 at San Francisco Opera, *Dead Man Walking* has been performed more than one hundred and fifty times in great international opera houses in Vienna, Sydney, Dublin, Copenhagen, Dresden, New York, Cape Town and Houston, to name a few. *Moby-Dick* will receive three productions in the coming year: Calgary, San Diego and San Francisco. Upcoming projects include his first symphony for the University of North Texas ("Ahab" Symphony), as well as commissions from San Francisco Performances (for Joyce DiDonato), The Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle's Music of Remembrance, Pacific Chorale and the Orcas Island Chamber Music Festival. The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, Heggie coaches and teaches young singers and composers at universities and conservatories throughout the U.S., as well as at summer festivals like SongFest and Ravinia. Jake Heggie lives in San Francisco. www.jakeheggie.com

Gene Scheer



Gene Scheer's work is noted for its scope and versatility, and his music and lyrics have gained enthusiastic admirers among a broad audience. Mr. Scheer has collaborated with the composer Jake Heggie on a number of different projects, including the critically acclaimed 2010 Dallas Opera world premiere, *Moby-Dick*, starring Ben Heppner as Captain Ahab; *Three Decembers* (Houston Grand Opera), which starred Frederica von Stade; and the lyric drama *To Hell and Back* (Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra), which featured Patti LuPone. Other works by Scheer and Heggie include a

number of song cycles as well as *For a Look or a Touch*, a forty-five-minute lyric drama written for baritone, actor, and chamber ensemble. Mr. Scheer worked as librettist with Tobias Picker on *An American Tragedy*, which premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 2005. Their first opera, *Thérèse Raquin*, written for the Dallas Opera in 2001, was subsequently performed in Montreal (in a French translation), in San Diego, and at the Linbury Theater at Covent Garden in London. The recording was cited by *Opera News* as one of the ten best recordings of 2002. Other recent collaborations include the lyrics for Wynton Marsalis's *It Never Goes Away*, featured in Mr. Marsalis's work Congo Square. With the composer Steven Stucky, Mr. Scheer wrote the oratorio *August 4, 1964*. The work was premiered by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra in 2008 and was recently performed again by the orchestra, with Japp von Sweeden conducting, at Carnegie Hall during the inaugural "Spring for Music" festival. Also a composer in his own right, Mr. Scheer has written a number of songs for singers such as Renée Fleming, Sylvia McNair, Stephanie Blythe, Jennifer Larmore, Denyce Graves, and Nathan Gunn. The distinguished documentary filmmaker, Ken Burns, prominently featured Mr. Scheer's song *American Anthem* (as sung by Norah Jones) in his Emmy Award-winning World War II documentary for PBS, *The War*.

Program Notes

Venezia

REYNALDO HAHN

Born August 9, 1874, Caracas
Died January 28, 1947, Paris

Born in Venezuela to German parents, Reynaldo Hahn was taken to Paris at age three and had all his musical training in the City of Light. Hahn appears to have been one of those people who could do it all. He was a fine pianist and had a beautiful baritone voice, and he would give recitals in which he sang his own songs while he played the piano, a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth as he sang. He was an accomplished conductor who conducted at the Salzburg Festival, became director of the Paris Opera in the final years of his life, and was an early champion of Mozart's operas. He also served for some years as music critic of *Le Figaro*. Hahn composed operas, ballets, orchestral music, songs and operettas, and it was as a composer of op-

erettas that he had his greatest success: one of these—*Ciboulette* of 1923, set in a fruit and vegetable market—ran for over a thousand performances. Hahn struck a distinctive, elegant, and witty figure in Paris salons; he was Marcel Proust's lover, and he also wrote a biography of Sarah Bernhardt, one of his close friends. A dandy, Hahn is reported to have dismissed members of orchestras if he felt they were not sufficiently well-dressed at rehearsals.

Given all this, it may not be surprising to learn that Hahn gave the first performance of *Venezia* in Venice on a gondola that also carried a piano and all the members of the audience. Hahn composed *Venezia* in 1901, when he was supporting himself as a music critic in Paris. *Venezia* is subtitled "Six Songs in Venetian Dialect," and the poems come from that region. These are lovely, charming songs, and all of them spring from local subjects. The first two songs are in fact set in a gondola—they are love-songs that take us on an evening ride through the moonlit waters of the city. *Sopra l'acqua indormenzada* sways along its easy lilt, while *La barcheta*—one of Hahn's most famous songs—offers a beautifully-shaded setting of its charming text. Two of the songs are about being in love with two different women, Nana and Nina. *L'avvertimento* sounds its warning in a sprightly song: Nana may be beautiful, but watch out. *Che pecà!* is a wise song about love that rocks along happily, even as the singer understands exactly what has happened. Between them, *La biondina* is another gondola song, this one charged with a happy combination of sensuality and bliss. Marked *Andantino*, it rocks along gently, moving into the 6/8 meter of the gondoliers' songs in its central section. *La primavera* celebrates spring with beauty and delight.

Those interested in these songs should know that Hahn recorded two of them—*La barcheta* and *Che pecà!*—in 1909, in the early days of recording. Those recordings have been released on compact disc in quite good sound, and they give some sense of Hahn's charm as composer, singer, and pianist.

String Quartet in G minor

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Born August 22, 1862, Saint Germain-en-Laye
Died March 25, 1918, Paris

Early in 1893, Debussy met the famed Belgian violinist Eugene Ysaÿe. Debussy was at this time almost unknown (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was still a year in the future), but he and Ysaÿe instantly became friends—though Ysaÿe was only four years older than Debussy, he treated the diminutive Frenchman like "his little brother." That

summer, Debussy composed a string quartet for Ysaÿe's quartet, which gave the first performance in Paris on December 29, 1893. Debussy was already notorious with his teachers for his refusal to follow musical custom, and so it comes as a surprise to find him choosing to write in this most demanding of classical forms. Early audiences were baffled. Reviewers used words like "fantastic" and "oriental," and Debussy's friend Ernest Chausson confessed mystification. Debussy must have felt the sting of these reactions, for he promised Chausson: "Well, I'll write another for you . . . and I'll try to bring more dignity to the form."

But Debussy did not write another string quartet, and his *Quartet in G minor* has become one of the cornerstones of the quartet literature. The entire quartet grows directly out of its first theme, presented at the very opening, and this sharply rhythmic figure reappears in various shapes in all four movements, taking on a different character, a different color, and a different harmony on each reappearance. What struck early audiences as "fantastic" now seems an utterly original conception of what a string quartet might be. Here is a combination of energy, drama, thematic imagination, and attention to color never heard before in a string quartet. Debussy may have felt pushed to apologize for a lack of "dignity" in this music, but we value it today just for that failure.

Those who think of Debussy as the composer of misty impressionism are in for a shock with his quartet, for it has the most slashing, powerful opening Debussy ever wrote: his marking for the beginning is "Animated and very resolute." This first theme, with its characteristic triplet spring, is the backbone of the entire quartet: the singing second theme grows directly out of this opening (though the third introduces new material). The development is marked by powerful accents, long crescendos, and shimmering colors as this movement drives to an unrelenting close in G minor.

The *Scherzo* may well be the quartet's most impressive movement. Against powerful pizzicato chords, Debussy sets the viola's bowed theme, a transformation of the quartet's opening figure; soon this is leaping between all four voices. The recapitulation of this movement, in 15/8 and played entirely pizzicato, bristles with rhythmic energy, and the music then fades away to a beautifully understated close. Debussy marks the third movement "Gently expressive," and this quiet music is so effective that it is sometimes used as an encore piece. It is in ABA form: the opening section is muted, while the more animated middle is played without mutes—the quartet's opening theme reappears subtly in this middle section. Debussy marks the ending, again

played with mutes, "As quiet as possible."

The finale begins slowly but gradually accelerates to the main tempo, "Very lively and with passion." As this music proceeds, the quartet's opening theme begins to appear in a variety of forms: first in a misty, distant statement marked "soft and expressive," then gradually louder and louder until it returns in all its fiery energy, stamped out in double-stops by the entire quartet. A propulsive coda drives to the close, where the first violin flashes upward across three octaves to strike the powerful G major chord that concludes this most undignified—and most wonderful—piece of music.

—Program notes by Eric Bromberger

Camille Claudel: Into the Fire

JAKE HEGGIE

Born March 31, 1961, West Palm Beach, Florida

The heart-wrenching French film *Camille Claudel* has haunted me since I first saw it in 1989. Isabel Adjani's magnificent, complex portrayal of the French sculptor opposite Gérard Depardieu's ferocious Rodin struck me as extraordinarily theatrical; something I wanted one day to explore through music.

Claudel (1864–1943) was an artistic genius at a time when a woman was rarely taken seriously on her own. The famed French art critic Octave Mirbeau described her as "a rebellion against nature: a woman of genius!" Claudel knew she was a genius, but it was only in connection with a man that she would be known. In her case, this was Rodin: her mentor, teacher and lover. She was called "Rodin's muse," "Rodin's protégée," "Rodin's mistress," "Rodin's whore"—but hardly ever her own person. Their stormy and ill-fated romance, warring egos, clashing genius, her bold life choices, his broken promises, and the mental illness that would lead to her isolation and confinement in a remote asylum—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 the asylum; and there, she never sculpted again.

I had been seriously considering an opera based on Claudel, when about two years ago, Ruth Felt asked me if I would be interested in creating a new work to celebrate the Alexander String Quartet's 30th anniversary. I don't think she knew that I first heard the quartet at UCLA twenty years ago in concert with soprano Elly Ameling. I remember particularly their radiant performance of Strauss's *Mor-*

gen. Knowing I am primarily an opera composer, Ruth also said we could invite a singer to participate. Well, that was that.

I called my friend, the great mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato and asked her about the project. "Yes, please," was her reply. Then, I contacted wonderful Gene Scheer, my frequent collaborator, to see if he would write new texts and he enthusiastically signed on, as well. Instead of a full opera, a theatrical song cycle would be our first foray into the story of Camille Claudel.

The cycle takes place the day Camille is to be taken to the asylum. As dawn breaks (*Awakening*), she wakes to the strange reality of what is about to happen and addresses her sculptures. The powerful 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

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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 any more scandals, her brother, the diplomat and playwright Paul Claudel, had her confined in isolation. Though her caregivers insisted that she did not need to be thus confined, that what she needed was society with people, her mother and sister never visited her, and Paul only every few years. In 1929, her closest friend from their

student days in Paris came to visit her (*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. The photograph Jessie's husband took of them is the last evidence we have of Camille Claudel.

Musically, the cycle is tonally based with a strong sense of dance throughout, especially a strong undercurrent of $\frac{3}{4}$ time. 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.

Special thanks go to the amazing Ruth Felt,

San Francisco Performances, the extraordinary and generous Linda and Stuart Nelson for underwriting the commission, Gene Scheer for being the most giving and versatile of collaborators, and to soprano Ann Moss and mezzo Laura Krumm for helping to prepare and rehearse the piece. Camille Claudel: Into the Fire was completed in December 2011 and is lovingly dedicated "To Joyce DiDonato and in Celebration of the Alexander String Quartet's 30th Anniversary."

—Jake Heggie