



AMERICAN CLASSICS



Jake
HEGGIE

Connection: Three Song Cycles

Natural Selection • Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia • Eve-Song

Regina Zona, Soprano • Kathleen Tagg, Piano



Jake
HEGGIE
(b. 1961)

Connection: Three Song Cycles

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Jake Heggie (b. 1961)

Natural Selection • Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia • Eve-Song

The American composer Jake Heggie is known primarily for his internationally acclaimed operas, including *Moby-Dick*, *Dead Man Walking*, *At The Statue of Venus*, and *Three Decembers*. But he has always been, first and foremost, a devoted songwriter. To date, he has composed more than 250 art songs as well as orchestral, choral and chamber music. For poetry and texts, he has turned to an unusual range of writers, including Maya Angelou, W.H. Auden, Charlene Baldrige, Raymond Carver, Emily Dickinson, John Hall, A.E. Housman, Galway Kinnell, Vachel Lindsay, Philip Littell, Armistead Maupin, Terrence McNally, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sister Helen Prejean, Gini Savage, Gene Scheer, Vincent Van Gogh, Frederica von Stade, and Eugenia Zukerman. He has also, on occasion, set his own texts, as in the first song of the cycle *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*.

His long-standing collaboration with writer Gene Scheer has yielded several operas as well as numerous song cycles, including *Camille Claudel*, *Rise and Fall*, *Statuesque*, *A Question of Light*, and *Friendly Persuasions*. With the great American playwright Terrence McNally, he created *Dead Man Walking* – one of the most-performed new operas of our time – and is at work on *Great Scott*, commissioned by The Dallas Opera for a première in 2015, starring mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato.

This recording features three of Heggie's early song cycles for soprano and piano: *Natural Selection* (1997), *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia* (1999), and *Eve-Song* (1996).

Heggie states: "I wrote each of these cycles for a soprano who was an Adler Fellow at San Francisco Opera while I was the company's staff writer, and before I wrote my first opera. *Eve-Song* was composed for Kristin Clayton, *Natural Selection* for Nicolle Foland, and *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia* for Peggy Kriha-Dye ... and each work was premiered on a Schwabacher Debut Recital in San Francisco. I knew these singers so well as close, personal friends – and was able to give them a piece they could really get inside and make their own. I wanted to give them strong, powerful, yet vulnerable women ... and

wanted the music to give them the opportunity to explore the many and complex facets of these women."

Heggie's music reflects a wide range of influences. As he says: "In these songs, the singer encounters the full gamut of the influences I grew up with: folk music, jazz, pop, opera, musical theater, rock, art song. I encourage performers to embrace these elements in the songs and not shy away from them. If it feels jazzy, well, it probably is."

Natural Selection (1997)

Natural Selection is a set of five songs composed in 1997 to poetry by the San Francisco Bay Area writer Gini Savage. The songs trace a young woman's search for identity, first breaking away from her parents (*Creation*) to find her way in the world. The next part of her journey is a sexual awakening of desires and fantasies described in *Animal Passion*, set to jazzy riffs and tango rhythms. She wants to be reckless and unfettered, to experience wild abandon and passion – and imagines how thrilling it will be. In *Alas! Alack!* she bemoans falling over and over again for the wrong guy; and in *Indian Summer – Blue* we find her actually married to the wrong guy: a real Bluebeard. In *Joy Alone (Connection)*, she at last finds contentment and happiness where it has been all along: within herself. Alone in nature, she revels in a peaceful, beautiful, vibrant connection to the earth.

Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia (1999)

In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, Ophelia seems on the surface a naïve, innocent, obedient young girl – used mercilessly as a pawn in the lives of the overbearing men around her. She doesn't exhibit any typical heroine qualities, yet she has great influence on the plot and subplots of the work. So while Ophelia doesn't seem to have a voice, without her the story would have been very different.

In *Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia*, Heggie attempts to give Ophelia her voice. Through the texts (three by the

American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay and one by the composer), Ophelia exhibits the innocence and vulnerability of the character we know, but Heggie is quick to not peg her as a victim. Though she is indeed a tragic victim of circumstance, she does not view herself with a victim mentality. Heggie states that, in his song cycle, Ophelia has made the decision to take her life right from the beginning. Truth has brought her clarity. "She is very strong, smart and determined," says Heggie. "And ultimately, the choice to kill herself is a way of exerting some power and control in the world ... so from her perspective it is powerful, not sad or pathetic."

In the first song (*Ophelia's Song*) she sings: "The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there." In other words, she is a prisoner of eternal optimism and hope, though surrounded by darkness and death. In the next two songs, she remembers events that led her to her choice. *Woman Have Loved Before* finds her overjoyed that she has identified heroic, tragic women in literature who feel a burning love as deeply and powerfully as she does, though the stories always end with the heroine's death. In the song *Not in a Silver Casket*, Ophelia is finally able to tell Hamlet the ways she loves him – as well as the ways she does not. Her love rejected, she comes to the end of her journey in *Spring*. Disappointed, angry and frustrated at the relentless, remorseless cycle of things, she at last sees her helpless place in the world. Yet, with the final "hum" of the song, she ends her life end with grace, beauty and optimism.

Eve-Song (1996)

Heggie approached the New York-born writer Philip Littell about a song cycle for soprano Kristin Clayton in 1995, and they decided to create a dramatic work that would offer a modern perspective on the biblical Eve. Heggie has stated that a real singing actress is required for this large group of eight songs. In particular, the first song (*My Name*) requires vast, imaginative resources from a singer, as it alternately explores lullaby, recitative, arioso, a Kurt Weill parody, and a ballad. It is quixotic and hard to pin down, just like Eve herself. In this song, Heggie imagines

Eve is an old woman rocking her grandchild (also named Eve) on a porch in the South ... and the memories come flooding back.

The second song, (*Even*) is one of beauty, sadness and wonder as Eve sits beside a river and observes the world at sundown. A long, arching vocal line is accompanied by a gently swirling piano figure – the introduction of the winding, seductive snake motif that will be developed in subsequent songs.

It was Eve's job to name the animals of the newly formed Earth, and *Good* is her light-hearted, joyful romp in not only naming them, but figuring out which ones are best to eat. This leads her, inevitably, to the apple.

Listen follows as the start of a deeper, sensual awareness and awakening for Eve. There is a shiver and shudder of excitement and anticipation as the snake's words entice and caress Eve's imagination. *Snake* is the full awakening of that imagination in a swinging tune that introduces the freedom of jazz. Eve follows the snake as he leads her through shadow and light, and convinces her to bite the apple. With that bite comes a stunning awakening – and a range of tastes and feelings she had never known, ranging from sweet, sour, salty and bitter to rotten. "Now I know," she says.

Woe to Man is Eve's stinging curse to all men, performed as an old-fashioned, music-hall showcase. With her new knowledge, she also possesses an awareness of how she is discriminated against, stereotyped, discounted and cast out. She cries out for all women against this outrage.

The Wound is a slow, tender lullaby about birth and the sharing of legacy. It is the story of a single child, and that of the entire human race. It leads to the final song in the cycle (*The Farm*) in which Eve, as an old woman, tries to remember details about Eden. In Heggie's words: "She tries to find the words, the tune, the memory ... and it is difficult, because she has moved on without bitterness. She chooses to remember the good, though a current of sorrow and hurt will always be part of what makes her Eve."

Kathleen Tagg, Regina Zona and Jake Heggie

Regina Zona



Photo: Goran Stanic

Soprano Regina Zona has had a diverse career on the operatic and concert stage. Her operatic repertoire includes the heroines of Strauss and Verdi: Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* as well as some of the great *verismo* and twentieth-century principal roles, including Tosca and Vanessa. She has performed leading roles with several companies including Sarasota Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Hawaii Opera Theatre and has been guest soloist with orchestras around the world including the Tokyo Symphony, Opera Orchestra of New York and the State Orchestra of Mexico. Regina Zona has also won numerous competitions including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Regional Auditions and the Neue Stimmen Competition in Gütersloh, Germany. An avid recitalist, she specializes in the performance of American art song. In the summer of 2010, she completed an American Song recital tour of South Africa, commemorating Samuel Barber's centenary year, with South African pianist, Kathleen Tagg. She continues to concertize all over the United States.

Kathleen Tagg



Photo: Goran Stanic

Kathleen Tagg is a South African pianist, composer and producer who has lived in New York since 2001. A 2014 South African Music Awards nominee for best classical album, she has performed on four continents with a host of leading musicians, and co-founded the New York group SongFusion. Her numerous Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center performances have received high acclaim, but she is equally at home in experimental venues or theater. Her performances and numerous recordings range from classical to world music, musical theater to her own music mixing improvisation with fully realized scores. She has premiered countless works and holds the Helen Cohn Award as outstanding Doctoral graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, as well as degrees from Mannes College and the University of Cape Town. Her recordings and arrangements have been featured in film and television, and her musical, *Erika's Wall*, co-written with Sophie Jaff, was produced by The Music Theater Company of Chicago.

NATURAL SELECTION*Texts by Gini Savage***1 Creation**

I give birth to myself
 my own mother and father
 for years I ran like a clock-work mouse
 Mama says, Papa says,
 when does Goldilocks say
 I am
 Driven
 I didn't stop
 expected more from the umbilicus
 never once got off the hook line or sinker
 now before the world
 I reach out

2 Animal Passion

Fierce as a bobcat's spring
 with start-up speeds of sixty miles per hour
 I want a lover to sweep me off my feet
 and slide me into the gutter
 without the niceties of small-talk roses or champagne.
 I mean business.
 I want whiskey
 I want to be swallowed whole,
 I want tiles to spring off the walls
 when we enter hotel rooms or afternoon apartments
 I won't pussy-foot around responsibility
 "shoulds" and "oughts" are out for good.
 And I don't want to be a fat domestic cat
 I want to be frantic,
 yowls and growls to sound like the lion house
 at feeding time
 I don't give a damn who hears,
 I don't give a damn!
 no discreet eavesdroppers' coughs can stop us
 in our frenzy.
 Let the voyeurs voient
 and let the great cats come.

3 Alas! Alack!

Alas! Alack!
 I have a knack for falling for the wrong man
 Cavaradossi or Don Ottavio were just too tame
 I never seem to want to stick to my own script
 It's the chain-smoking bad guy in leather
 the one who'll ruffle my feathers, the most
 who gets me
 I fear it's a lack___Alas!
 As Tosca I lost it over Scarpia
 not such a bad fella
 he had the power and a steady job
 the better tune
 so when they asked me to pick up the knife
 and dispatch him
 I demurred
 perhaps it was his theme song I preferred
 I know there's a lack___Alas!
 If I were Oberon, I'd choose Puck,
 for Pamina, it's Papagena
 If I'm Brünnhilde it's bound to be Wotan
 on whom I'm stuck
 If Isolde were smitten by King Mark or Melot
 would it make her a zealot?
 Damn!
 I know there's a lack___Alas!

4 Indian Summer – Blue

When I was sixteen I had a red hot Chevy
 Bucket seats, white top, the steering not too heavy
 I loved that car like a child loves a pony
 shoe-blacked its tires
 my freedom to ride
 Now I am Bluebeard's wife
 I'd rather be Sleeping Beauty
 "Honey, don't open that door," he says
 though he gave me a master key
 and I've peeked through the keyhole
 always a guard on duty
 a red light and odor of rusty gardenia
 slips out from under the door
 no bushes grow in the garden
 a saint's blood smells of roses
 Blue was married before at least three times
 no family portraits and I don't ask
 It's so hot
 I get tired here in the east
 I could doze away the days
 Blue thinks I'm too fat
 too this
 too that
 Mama says
 Curiosity killed...
 the Cat may well undo me.

5 Joy Alone (Connection)

the stunning silence of myself
 from the hearts of forests
 middle of mountains
 a late low sun rests her friendly hand
 on the crowns of uncompromised trees
 a fox streaks across the sand and scented sagebrush
 a chatter of chipmunks scatters
 squirrels who stuff their briefcases for the winter
 blue collar workers long term plans
 the resinous crunch of orange pine needles
 warm under foot
 a windfall of sweet cones
 joy alone
 a startle of saplings
 the power of trees
 unraveling of rivers
 joy alone
 joy

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SONGS AND SONNETS TO OPHELIA

6 Ophelia's Song

Text by Jake Heggie

The hills are green, my dear one,
and blossoms are filling the air.
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

In this flowery field I'll lay me
and dream of the open air.
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

Taste of the honey. Sip of the wine.
Pine for a chalice of gold.
I have a dear one and he is mine.
Thicker than water. Water so cold.

In this flowery field I'll lay me
and dream of the open air.
The spring is arisen and I am a prisoner there.

7 Women Have Loved Before

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)

Women have loved before as I love now;
At least, in lively chronicles of the past—
Of Irish waters by a Cornish prow
Or Trojan waters by a Spartan mast
Much to their cost invaded—here and there,
Hunting the amorous line, skimming the rest,
I find some woman bearing as I bear
Love like a burning city in the breast.
I think however that of all alive
I only in such utter, ancient way
Do suffer love; in me alone survive
The unregenerate passions of a day
When treacherous queens, with death upon the tread,
Heedless and willful, took their knights to bed.

8 Not in a Silver Casket

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

Not in a silver casket cool with pearls
Or rich with red corundum or with blue,
Locked, and the key withheld, as other girls
Have given their loves, I give my love to you;
Not in a lovers'-knot, not in a ring
Worked in such fashion, and the legend plain—
Semper fidelis, where a secret spring
Kennels a drop of mischief for the brain:
Love in the open hand, no thing but that,
Ungemmed, unhidden, wishing not to hurt,
As one should bring you cowslips in a hat
Swung from the hand, or apples in her skirt,
I bring you, calling out as children do:
"Look what I have!—And these are all for you."

9 Spring

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return again?
Beauty is not enough.
You can no longer quiet me with the redness
Of little leaves opening stickily.
I know what I know.
The sun is hot on my neck as I observe
The spikes of the crocus.
The smell of the earth is good.
It is apparent that there is no death.
But what does that signify?
Not only under ground are the brains of men
Eaten by maggots.
Life in itself
Is nothing,
An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs.
It is not enough that yearly, down this hill,
April
Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

EVE-SONG

Texts by Philip Littell (b.1950)

10 My Name

Eve, Eve, must be the sound I made
as I was being made.
Eve. Eve. Eve.
Out I came, made up by a couple of men.
Old man made me out of Adam's rib...
Oh, did he?
God made Adam
God made Adam
God
Adam
God
Damn it!
My children are going to know who their mother is.
Eve.
Mad bad Eve the amnesiac,
Eve, Eve the nymphomaniac,
ME!
Was young man Adam completely unconscious
as I was manufactured?
Did he groan and whimper EVE as I slipped out?
Did God mutter EVE as he slapped me into shape?
Did I scream EVE at the inevitable rape?
Or was EVE the last breath shaped into a sound
by my mother's mouth as I came out?
I was too little to save her or remember anything about
her...
Eve.
What are they trying to tell me with their stories?
I am allowed no clothing.
I have nothing to wear but my beautiful hair,
My body, my face, MY NAME.
Eve.

11 Even

in the evening I am at peace.
in the evening I hear ev'rything more clearly
ev'rything
to the hearer all the world does sing
with a ringing and a quickening
overhead the birds wheel and turn
overhead the setting sun
reddening no longer burns
at the water's edge a wind brushes by me
with a susurraton:
grass and leaves
flowers glow against the dark'ning trees
eyesight and the light both go
ev'ry evening the forest darkens
in the evening my senses sharpen
I have no peace at night
I have no peace at night

12 Good

Good Morning Whoever you are.
Good Morning. Do you have a name yet?
Let me name you.
It must be the right name
So I don't Forget.
What Shall I name you?
What *is* your name?
I have not Eaten yet.
Are you slow?
Are you fleet?
Are you obedient?
Are you Good to eat?
Mm..
Almost Ev'rything is good to eat.
Good morning.
If I could I would eat the world
Because it's Good.
Mm.

13 Listen

It's entire body ripples back and forth like a sentence,
fascinating.

Do you want to be like God?
Do you want to be like God?

How do you mean?
Be old and have a penis?
I don't think so.

Do you want to be like God?
Do you want to be like God?
You know what I mean.

Yes. I do.
My entire body ripples up and down like a story.
I am listening.

14 Snake

Snake, is it true
About the fruit?
My intuition tells me what you say about this fruit is true.
I'd like to find out, snake.
I'd love to know.
Go ahead in front of me
Where I can see you.
I will follow you.
Oh!
The snake is in the tree.
Where I cannot see him.
He is now the color of Shadows.
Very few things are
As visible as I am
When I'm clean.
When a thing is visible,
It always mean that the thing,
The tree frog, or that fruit,
means to be seen.
Visibility's
A warning
or
An invitation
And it never tells you
Which.
What's visible will either
Feed you,
Mate with you,
Or kill you.
Either way you gain
Experience.
Here goes.
Sweet.
Sour.
Salty.
Bitter.
And the taste of air,
Of rottenness,
Earth,
And water.
Now I know.

15 Woe to Man

Woe to man
Woe to man
What can a man expect?
What can a man expect?
Think of all the riches, gifts,
Woman brings in her train,
Oh,
Besides her obvious differences
(Inside out below the waist,
Bigger breasts, smaller brain)...
Can you think of any?
Anything?
Anything?
She is nothing
But trouble
Oh nothing but trouble.
Nothing.
Nothing.
She is no thing.
Ah!
You haven't lived until
A man has said that to you.
Woman
Because she was born of man.
Woe to man
Because he is born of woman.
La da dee da dum.
La da dee da da dum.
La la da deed um da.
Ah.

16 The Wound

The wound
Reopened
Opens the tomb
Her womb
Quickens
The woman
Sickens
And hungers
Hugely
The world in her belly
The sky in her head
Limbs heavy
She swells
She swells
A drop of water
Will not hold
Let it go
Let go
Let go
Not yet
Not yet
The new-formed baby
Will not let me
Let it go
Just yet.
What is already
In that head?
Forget. Forget.
Forget. Forget.

17 The Farm

As I recollect
It was more like a farm
Than a garden.
We all worked.
It was a nice farm.
Trees.
Ev'rything grew.
Good soil
And plenty of water.
No, it didn't rain,
We lived by the rivers.
The Tigris and the Euphrates.
You might say
That's where it all started.

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Jake Heggie



Photo: Ellen Appel

Jake Heggie was born in West Palm Beach, Florida and has made his home in San Francisco since 1993. Heggie has been drawn to topics that reflect his passion for human rights and social justice (as well as his love of literature), and his operas have been acclaimed for their emotional honesty and dramatic power. Those operas include *Moby-Dick* (libretto by Gene Scheer), *The End of the Affair* (libretto by Heather McDonald), and *Dead Man Walking* (libretto by Terrence McNally). They have been performed on five continents, and by more than a dozen American opera companies that include San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, The Dallas Opera, Seattle Opera, Ft. Worth Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, and Madison Opera. Heggie's *Great Scott*, commissioned by Dallas Opera with story and libretto by McNally, will have its premiere in October 2015. He has written more than 250 songs, as well as orchestral, choral and chamber music. Recordings of Heggie's compositions include *here/after* (PentaTone Classics), *At The Statue of Venus* (GPR), *PASSING BY: Songs by Jake Heggie* (Avie), *Dead Man Walking* (Virgin Classics), *Three Decembers* (Albany), *Flesh and Stone* (Americus), *To Hell and Back* (Magnatune), *The Faces of Love* (RCA Red Seal), *The Deepest Desire* (Kansas City Symphony), and *For a Look or a Touch* (Naxos 8.559379).

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|--------------|--|--------------|
| 1-5 | Natural Selection (1997) | 18:15 |
| 6-9 | Songs and Sonnets to Ophelia (1999) | 12:15 |
| 10-17 | Eve-Song (1996) | 28:09 |

FIRST COMPLETE RECORDING OF THE CYCLE

Regina Zona, Soprano
Kathleen Tagg, Piano

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

The sung texts are included, and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/559764.htm

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Famed for his operatic music, Jake Heggie has always been a devoted and prolific songwriter. Three early song cycles for soprano and piano feature in this release, each cycle exploring the many varied facets of the three women depicted, who include Ophelia and Eve. Each was written for a specific singer and they all reflect Heggie's very personal and exciting lexicon of musical influences, which range from folk and jazz to art song and music theater.

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Playing
Time:
58:40