

# Jake Heggie

## The Radio Hour

A Choral Opera  
in One Act

Gene Scheer, librettist

John Alexander Singers  
Members of Pacific Symphony  
John Alexander, conductor  
with other works featuring  
Susan Graham, mezzo-soprano



DE 3484  
O 13491 34522 1

# JAKE HEGGIE

**The Radio Hour (2014) \***

**Gene Scheer, Librettist**

A Really Bad Day • Through the Door • A New Day

**Patterns (1999) \***

**I Shall Not Live in Vain (1995, rev. 1998) \***

**He Will Gather Us Around (solo version, 2000) †**

**He Will Gather Us Around (choral version, 2003) \***

John Alexander Singers • John Alexander, conductor  
Susan Graham, mezzo-soprano • David Clemensen, piano  
Members of Pacific Symphony

\* World Premiere Recording

† from *Dead Man Walking*

# Jake Heggie ♦ The Radio Hour

## **THE RADIO HOUR** (2014) \* [38:43]

Gene Sheer, librettist

1. Part One: A Really Bad Day [15:38]

2. Part Two: Through the Door [19:14]

3. Part Three: A New Day [3:48]

John Alexander Singers • Members of Pacific Symphony • David Clemensen

Soloists: Ricardo V. McKillips, Jr. • Denean Dyson

4. **Patterns** (1999) \* [14:25]

Susan Graham • Women of the John Alexander Singers • David Clemensen

5. **I Shall Not Live in Vain** (1995, rev. 1998) \* [4:20]

Susan Graham • Women of the John Alexander Singers • David Clemensen •  
Handbell Choir

6. **He Will Gather Us Around** (solo version, 2000) † [0:50]

Susan Graham

7. **He Will Gather Us Around** (choral version, 2003) \* [6:19]

John Alexander Singers

John Alexander, conductor

\* World Premiere Recording

† from *Dead Man Walking*

Total Time: 65:05



## THE RADIO HOUR

We've all experienced "one of those days." When everything in the world seems to be set against you, ready to mock and make life more difficult.

If only a magic door would open and transport you to a different place. After all, Alice fell into Wonderland, Dorothy barreled to Oz, and Wendy flew with Peter Pan to Neverland. But what about Nora? A lonely, hard-working, middle-aged woman no longer in the playground of childhood fantasy. Is there still a magic door for her?

Welcome to *The Radio Hour*, where sound tracks and sound waves are going on inside, around and through us all the time: it's up to us to decide what to tune into and what to turn off. But first, along with Nora, we have to discover that the connection begins within.

By now, Gene Scheer and I have created two full-length operas (*Moby-Dick*, *Three Decembers*), a one-act opera (*To Hell and Back*), numerous song cycles (*Camille Claudel*, *Rise and Fall*, *Pieces of 9/11*, etc),

as well as *Out of Darkness*, a Holocaust remembrance opera in three parts ("Another Sunrise" – "Farewell, Auschwitz" – "For a Look or a Touch"). One of our guidelines for taking on a new project is that it has to terrify us a little bit. We actively seek out challenging projects, but, truthfully, when John Alexander asked us to create a choral opera, our first response was:

A what?

John had a feeling that there was new territory to be explored in the choral repertoire, and that it had to do with the mixing of genres. But, operas require action, characters, conflicts, journeys, transformation, movement. Choirs stand still and make beautiful sound. Right? Still, loving a challenge, Gene and I said: "Yes! Of course. A choral opera!"

What seemed like a challenge turned out to be a mind-bending, extraordinarily difficult climb. What does a choral opera look and sound like? We thought of existing stories, but soon realized that we'd need an original story. The biggest question was what all those choristers

were going to DO on stage? We needed a goal, a motivation that would bring it all together.

Choirs are about community, participation; a collective of human voices working together to express emotions. We decided we wanted to find a way to celebrate the transformative power of singing in our lives. But we needed a unifying focus for our journey, and we needed an actor.

That's when Gene found our central character, Nora, to be played by a silent actress. The choir would be her inner voice as well as the sounds she "channels." With the choir split in two at the beginning, we could hear Nora's inner voice as well as the sounds she chooses to hear. Recalling Ravel's magical *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, the choir could become objects in Nora's apartment, too. And the transformative journey would be actually to enter the sound waves, to open a portal into the radio, to make the choice to connect and become joyful, youthful and energized again.

This concept also allowed us to explore a wonderful variety of textures, colors and sounds: traffic noise, swing tunes, radio ads, a quasi-rap song, big band, a touch of 12-tone music, and finally a full, celebratory flowering of grand choral singing. It was an immensely challenging world to enter, and all of us experienced many "Nora days" along the way. But always, the magic of the choir, of connection, of community through singing, took us to the hopeful place on the other side of a door marked "possibility."

### **The Radio Hour**

Opera in One Act for Chamber Choir,  
Silent Actress, and Instruments  
Libretto by Gene Scheer (b. 1958)

*The choir is split into two groups:*

*NORA – the internal voice for Nora, who is played by a silent actress. The group is also the voice of her immediate world, including furnishings in her apartment.*

*RADIO CHOIR – ever present, though occupying a special, magical place apart from Nora's real world.*

## PART ONE: A Really Bad Day

*The RADIO CHOIR intones mysteriously in the background. An energetic change of rhythm and sound comes with NORA's sudden entrance. She is perhaps in her late 40s or 50s and looks completely "thrown together." The actress is followed by the NORA CHOIR, which snakes in behind her, criticizing and commenting. She is frantic, distressed, unhappy and making her way home after a truly horrible day at the office.*

NORA (to herself)

Nora, I swear.

Bad day. Bad news. Bad dress.

I swear.

Bad hair. Bad shoes. Big mess.

You're a mess, Nora. You're a mess.

I swear.

*(She looks at her cell phone.)*

No "friends." No "likes." No texts.

No messages. No sex.

No one calls and no one cares.

Especially not me!

Put down the phone, Nora.

Put down your stupid, stupid, stupid phone.

Go home, Nora. Go home!

*(Shouting)*

Hey! Hey Buddy! Watch it!

What?!?

Up yours!

*Suddenly chaos. Random whistling, yelling, and screaming as Nora finally gets to her apartment and slams shut the door. There are many locks.*

"Click" "Click" "Click" "Click" "Bolt"

"Slide" "Chain"

*A sad quiet hovers. The NORA sopranos become her MIRROR. The altos are a CHAIR. The tenors a LAMP. The baritones a CLOCK. The RADIO CHOIR continues to sing in its magical, separate space.*

CLOCK

Tick Tock Tick Tock ...

LAMP

You forgot to get a light bulb. We need a light bulb, Nora. I swear...

MIRROR

Nora, I swear you look like hell on legs.

CHAIR

No, I don't.

MIRROR  
Yes, you do.

CHAIR  
Do not.

MIRROR  
Do, too.

CHAIR  
I swear.

LAMP  
If we had a light bulb, you'd see you do.

MIRROR  
So there.

CHAIR  
Thanks a lot.

CLOCK  
(Alarm is ringing obnoxiously.) Beep  
beep beep

(NORA stops the clock and looks closely in  
the mirror.)

MIRROR  
More lines.

CHAIR  
More years.

LAMP  
No laughs.

CLOCK  
Just tears.

CHAIR  
I swear.

MIRROR  
Pity party! Pity party for pathetic Nora,  
again!

ALL  
Pity party! Pity party!  
(Crying like babies) Waa waa waa waa  
WAA!  
Stop it! Just stop. Now.

(A change of tempo and mood. NORA de-  
termines to distract herself and get out of  
her awful funk.)

MIRROR & CHAIR  
Read a magazine, perhaps?

*(The RADIO CHOIR makes sounds of flipping pages as she thumbs through.)*

ALL

*(Intrigued)* Hmm...

*(Surprised)* Ohhh!!

*(Pleased)* Aaahh!!

*(Disappointed)* No...

LAMP

Some chocolate ice cream, perhaps?

ALL

Mmmmmmmmm...

MIRROR

No!

ALL

No no no no no no... Nora.

*(NORA looks at a bouquet of dead flowers in a vase and throws them away. Then, she takes a letter out of her purse and looks at it long and hard.)*

MIRROR & CHAIR

What kind of jerk returns a handwritten letter unopened?

*(The tone has gotten very sad. NORA goes to a large, old console radio and turns it on. It warms up and the RADIO CHOIR comes into full view singing a jolly swing tune.)*

RADIO CHOIR

Let others waste the night

Let them curse their fate

For us, it's time to taste delight tonight!

And just in case,

I've got wicked, wonderful plans!

Every little spark that shines in the dark

Seems to start up a fire gone cold.

Although though though in the day

I hide hide hide it away

At night it's you you you that I hold.

*(A fun musical break proves irresistible. NORA claps and stomps along and even laughs a little.)*

So when I hear a car – BEEP BEEP

BEEP! – out on the street

When I hear a little knock – KNOCK

KNOCK KNOCK – knock at my door

It better be special delivery

It's you you you: the one I adore!

Open the door! (KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK)



Open the door! (KNOCK KNOCK  
KNOCK)

NORA CHOIR

Nora! Nora! Open the door!

*(Caught up in the enthusiastic lyrics, she runs and unlocks the door.)*

LAMP

Hurry!

MIRROR

Hurry!

NORA CHOIR

Click Click Click Bolt Slide Chain  
Chain! The stupid chain!

RADIO CHOIR

Let others waste the night  
Let them curse their fate  
For us, it's time to taste delight tonight!  
And just in case,  
I've got wicked, wonderful plans!

*(NORA opens the door. Nobody is there.)*

And you've got a date!  
You've got a date!

You've got a date!  
You've got a date!  
You've got a ...

NORA CHOIR

Agh! Stupid song!

*(NORA slams and locks the door and changes the station through several commercials.)*

RADIO CHOIR

...problem with your plumbing? We'll  
clean your pipes today!  
...KYRU-U-U-U!!  
...heartbreak of psoriasis...  
...fleas and ticks...  
...You're losing your country!

*(At last she hits a rap song, listens and even improvises some "beat box" rhythms.)*

RADIO CHOIR

Yo-Hey-Yo-Hey-Yoooooo  
Sittin' in a chair there starin' right  
through me.  
You don't hear me sayin' come over here  
do me.  
Don't you walk away, I got somethin' to  
itch, yeah.  
Come on over, baby, you can be my...

*(She abruptly changes the station back to the swing song.)*

Date! You've got a date!  
You've got a date!  
You've got a date!  
You've got a ...

*(She shrieks & changes it to a Latin number à la Doris Day.)*

*(Soloist)*  
...whisper none but you can hear.  
My cheek is dry, but you I thought  
would see the tear.

LAMP  
I love this song!

MIRROR, CHAIR, CLOCK  
Shhhhhh!!!

RADIO CHOIR  
*(Soloist)*  
Yes, here my darling deep within my heart  
Is what you missed when we kissed and  
parted.

CHAIR  
Wait for it.

CLOCK  
Here it comes!

RADIO CHOIR and NORA CHOIR  
*sway and sing together.*  
Nada mas. Nada mas.  
Nothing more, my love. Oh, my darling.  
Nada mas. Nothing left but this sorrow.  
Nothing's right  
Since you left.

*(The song swells into a grand heartrending chorus. NORA clutches her returned letter.)*

Nada mas! Nada mas!  
Nothing more, my love! Oh, my darling!  
Nada mas! Nada mas! Nothing left!

RADIO CHOIR *only*  
*(Soloist)* Nothing's better since you sent  
back my letter unopened.

*(NORA gasps)*

*(Soloist)* I poured my heart out, you  
didn't even bother to read  
A single word and now my life is...

*(Disturbed that the song is suddenly about exactly what's bothering her, NORA abruptly changes the station again and we hear a commercial jingle.)*

... Cuckoo! Cuckoo! It's time to try  
*Stabilify!*

Cuckoo! Yes, you!

Yes, you have forgotten what it's like to smile.

Every step feels like it takes a mile.

You get up, sit down and start to cry.

It's time to try *Stabilify!*

Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo! Yes, you!

Yes, you will be feeling so much better!

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

When you try *Stabilify! Stabilify! Stabilify!*

And throw away that letter!

That letter...

That ...

*(Once again, a direct address about her letter. Even more disturbed, NORA switches stations several times...)*

...date! You've got a date! You've got a date! You've got a...

...Yo! Hey! Yo! Hey! Yo! Go go go...

...Nothing's right since you left. Nada mas...

*(...and winds up back at the commercial. And suddenly the dial is frozen. She can't turn it off or move it around at all.)*

...side effects may include nausea, vomiting, anal leakage, heart attack, stroke, kidney, liver failure, chest pain, dead brain, weak arms and legs, erratic pulse and heartbeat, trouble breathing, coughing, wheezing, suicidal thoughts and death!

Trust *Stabilify*, Nora!

*(The radio has spoken to her directly. Terribly alarmed, she hits the radio and it seems to go silent for a moment.)*

MIRROR

That's a really weird radio.

CLOCK

Spooky.

LAMP

I'm scared.

*(The radio starts repeating NORA's name  
louder and louder.)*

RADIO CHOIR  
Nora ... Nora ... Nora ...

MIRROR  
Go away!

CHAIR  
Who's there?

CLOCK  
Who's there?

LAMP  
Who's there? I'm scared!

NORA CHOIR  
Go away! Go away!

*(She unplugs the radio, but the voices  
continue.)*

RADIO CHOIR  
Nora! What are you looking for?  
Do you know?  
Do you remember ever really letting go?

LAMP  
Letting go...

CHAIR  
That's funny.

[ARIA]

NORA CHOIR  
Wake up, go to work, come home and then  
Tomorrow, start all over again  
And again and again and again...

RADIO CHOIR  
Nora ... Nora ... Nora ...

NORA CHOIR  
Long before I noticed something had  
changed  
Did I realize? Was I aware when my heart  
Became estranged from all I hoped to  
share?

RADIO CHOIR  
Turn the dial, you're still you.  
Same old song, different tune.

ALL  
Waiting and hoping for something  
Or somebody to come through.



RADIO  
Who are you? Who are you?

NORA  
Who am I? Who the hell are you?

RADIO  
We're here, Nora, waiting. Waiting for you.

NORA  
No one's there. This is crazy. I'm going  
crazy. I'm going mad!

RADIO  
Open the door, Nora. Open the door!

NORA  
What door? What for?

RADIO  
Were you aware  
When your heart became estranged  
From all you hoped to share?  
Nora, who are you  
When you cease to care?

## **PART TWO: Through the Door**

NORA  
That's right! That's right! I don't care!

Careless, empty, unlovable Nora.  
No one knows she's around.  
Boring, "nice," unremarkable Nora.  
Ignorable Nora! Invisible Nora!  
The luckiest woman in town!

*(Frustrated and deeply unhappy, NORA hits the radio. And again. And finally a third time. The front of the console seems to loosen. NORA opens it and realizes it is a door. Magical music seems to call her.)*

RADIO CHOIR  
Nora ... Nora ... Nora ...

*(She hesitates, then decides to go in. The Nora Choir precedes the silent actress playing NORA so that she is all alone. After a final hesitation, she enters. The two choirs join as one, forming a long and winding tunnel with their arms: NORA's pathway. From this point forward, NORA is portrayed only by the actress.)*

CHOIR  
Where are you?  
Somewhere lost in the waves.  
Over, under and through.  
Lost in the waves.  
The deepest tunnels are carved with sound.

The way to a heart that is yet to be found.  
Where are you?  
Lost in the waves.  
Over, under and through.  
What will you find waiting for you?

*(The Choir pulls away and NORA is alone in near silence. What next? She finds and follows a long cable that leads to a microphone. She plugs in the cable and music seems to flow through her – as though she were the conduit. It is a joyful experience.)*

#### CHOIR

Shhh! Yes! Ah ha!  
A kite string sings.  
A jump rope hums.  
You're inside the waves!  
Your heart strings wake  
A melody strums  
When you're inside the waves!

There's a rat-a-tat-tat rat-a-tat-tat waking  
up the band.  
And something is tickling the palm of  
your hand!  
Oooooooooo!  
Look! The stars are just bubbles  
In a glass of champagne  
Inside the waves!

Your dance has only just begun.  
It's the dreamer's refrain!

*(The choir becomes a big swing band with members imitating instruments. NORA begins to dance and move to the music. Then the choir invites her to create her own song.)*

Your hidden song is something new:  
Your dream melody!  
Make it up. It's all up to you.  
Nora, what will it be?

Long or short? High or low? Which way  
will your melody go?  
Up and down, a windblown kite, where  
will your song take us tonight?  
Oooooooooo!  
Look! The stars are just bubbles  
In a glass of champagne  
Inside the waves!  
This is your show.  
Just give us the cue.  
Nora, show us the way!

Your hidden song is something new:  
your dream melody.  
Twelve tones in a row. It's all up to you.  
Nora, you hold the key.

*(Twelve choristers stand in front of NORA. She reaches out and touches one. Then another. Each has a single word and a single tone. 12 choristers. 12 words. 12 tones. NORA must solve the puzzle of these words and tones.)*

YOU'RE  
NOT  
LIMITLESS  
HERE  
SOMEHOW  
THROUGH  
WAVES  
WHY  
TRY  
RIDE  
ON  
SKY

*(NORA is baffled. How on earth will she make sense of this? She tries rearranging a few choristers.)*

RIDE  
THROUGH  
ON  
WAVES  
*(An idea.)*

RIDE  
ON  
WAVES  
  
YOU'RE  
NOT  
HERE  
WHY  
TRY  
LIMITLESS  
SKY  
SOMEHOW

WHY  
TRY

WHY  
TRY

*(NORA thinks about giving up, then gets an idea and goes at it again with new determination.)*

WHY  
NOT  
TRY

RIDE  
ON  
WAVES

YOU'RE  
HERE  
THROUGH  
LIMITLESS  
SKY  
SOMEHOW  
WHY  
NOT  
TRY

YOU'RE  
HERE  
SOMEHOW

*(Aha! NORA has solved the puzzle.)*

SOMEHOW YOU'RE HERE  
WHY NOT TRY?  
RIDE ON WAVES  
THROUGH LIMITLESS SKY.

*(The full choir joins in to sing and surround NORA. They present her with a dozen roses – one for each of the 12 tones.)*

A dozen roses  
12 notes, enchanted keys  
Combined, assorted, shuffled, rearranged,  
A bouquet of possibilities!

Where are you going?  
How will you start?  
We're here, always here with you  
Inside your heart

Open the door  
To the secret place we're in

Somehow you're here  
Why not try?  
Ride on waves  
Through limitless sky.

A secret world  
Where the greatest of sins  
Are “*would* have” (“I would have...”)  
“*could* have” (“I could have...”)  
and “*should* have been...”

Where there's nothing to conquer  
But a mountain of chance  
And you're lost in the waves  
Lost in the dance!

Somehow you're here  
Why not try?  
Ride on waves  
Through limitless sky.



### PART THREE: A New Day

*(The music calms. The lights dim. After a moment, the lights come up again. NORA is back in her apartment, waking as from a dream. Was it all a dream? She listens and the furniture is not talking to her. The radio is silent. Then, she looks over and sees the beautiful, red roses that were presented to her in the Radio. On the roses is a note, which she reads as the choir sings...)*

A dozen roses  
12 notes, enchanted keys  
Combined, assorted, shuffled, rearranged,  
A bouquet of possibilities!

Where are you going?  
How will you start?  
We're here, always here with you  
Inside your heart.  
Open the door...

*(NORA looks at the returned letter that caused her so much grief the day before. She smiles, tears it into pieces and throws it in the air like confetti.)*

Shhh! Yes! Ah ha!

Oooooooooo!

Look! The stars are just bubbles

In a glass of champagne

Inside the waves!

This is your show, just give us the cue.

Nora, you lead the way.

### PATTERNS

Early in my career, I was lucky enough to become a friend and frequent collaborator of the great, generous American mezzo-soprano Frederica ("Flicka") von Stade. In addition to accompanying her in recitals, I was invited to compose songs for her. By now, in addition to dozens of songs, I've also composed three starring opera roles for her: Mrs. De Rocher (*Dead Man Walking*), Madeline Mitchell (*Three Decembers*) and Winnie Flato (*Great Scott*). In 1999, just before completing my first opera, I was invited by the San Francisco Girls Chorus to create a short, dramatic work that would feature a solo role for Flicka. I chose Amy Lowell's *Patterns*, the story of a passionate, young aristocratic woman who suffers the death of her fiancé in a

war-torn world. Though her life has been turned upside down, she grieves privately and internally, compelled to maintain a façade of formality and strength – her passion warring against the relentless, heartless patterns of life and society that trap her. The first performance was given at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco on May 24, 1999, led by Sharon J Paul.

### **Patterns**

Text by Amy Lowell (1874–1925)

I walk down the garden paths,  
And all the daffodils  
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.  
I walk down the patterned garden paths  
In my stiff, brocaded gown.  
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,  
I too am a rare  
Pattern. As I wander down  
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,  
And the train  
Makes a pink and silver stain  
On the gravel, and the thrift  
Of the borders.

Just a plate of current fashion,  
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.  
Not a softness anywhere about me,  
Only whale-bone and brocade.  
And I sink on a seat in the shade  
Of a lime tree. For my passion  
Wars against the stiff brocade.  
The daffodils and squills  
Flutter in the breeze  
As they please.  
And I weep;  
For the lime tree is in blossom  
And one small flower has dropped upon  
my bosom.

And the splashing of waterdrops  
In the marble fountain  
Comes down the garden paths.  
The dripping never stops.  
Underneath my stiffened gown  
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a  
marble basin,  
A basin in the midst of hedges grown  
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,  
But she guesses he is near,  
And the sliding of the water  
Seems the stroking of a dear  
Hand upon her.  
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!

I should like to see it lying in a heap  
upon the ground.  
All the pink and silver crumpled up on  
the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran  
along the paths,  
And he would stumble after,  
Bewildered by my laughter.  
I should see the sun flashing from his  
sword-hilt and the buckles on his shoes.  
I would choose  
To lead him in a maze along the pat-  
terned paths,  
A bright and laughing maze for my  
heavy-booted lover,  
Till he caught me in the shade,  
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised  
my body as he clasped me,  
Aching, melting, unafraid.  
With the shadows of the leaves and the  
sundrops,  
And the plopping of the waterdrops,  
All about us in the open afternoon  
I am very like to swoon  
With the weight of this brocade,  
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom  
In my bosom,

Is a letter I have hid.  
It was brought to me this morning by a  
rider from the Duke.  
“Madam, we regret to inform you that  
Lord Hartwell  
Died in action Thursday sen’night.”  
As I read it in the white, morning  
sunlight,  
The letters squirmed like snakes.  
“Any answer, Madam,” said my footman.  
“No,” I told him.  
“See that the messenger takes some  
refreshment.  
No, no answer.”  
And I walked into the garden,  
Up and down the patterned paths,  
In my stiff, correct brocade.  
The blue and yellow flowers stood up  
proudly in the sun,  
Each one.  
I stood upright too,  
Held rigid to the pattern  
By the stiffness of my gown.  
Up and down I walked,  
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my  
husband.  
In a month, here, underneath this lime,  
We would have broke the pattern;

He for me, and I for him,  
He as Colonel, I as Lady,  
On this shady seat.  
He had a whim  
That sunlight carried blessing.  
And I answered, "It shall be as you have  
said."  
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk  
Up and down  
The patterned garden paths  
In my stiff, brocaded gown.  
The squills and daffodils  
Will give place to pillared roses, and to  
asters, and to snow.  
I shall go  
Up and down,  
In my gown.  
Gorgeously arrayed,  
Boned and stayed.  
And the softness of my body will be  
guarded from embrace  
By each button, hook, and lace.  
For the man who should loose me is  
dead,  
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,  
In a pattern called a war.  
Christ! What are patterns for?

## I SHALL NOT LIVE IN VAIN

It's been a singular pleasure to explore Emily Dickinson's poems through the years and to set some of them at different periods of my life. *I shall not live in vain* states a credo that I try to live by. I had long been drawn to the poem, but it wouldn't sing to me and so a musical setting remained elusive. Then in 1995, I heard the radiant American soprano Renée Fleming in a production of Dvořák's *Rusalka* in San Francisco. Completely knocked out and deeply inspired by her voice and presence, I went home and in a couple of hours composed the song. I offered it to Renée as a gift and she gave the first performance in New York at Alice Tully Hall in May of 1996.

The poem is stated twice in my setting. The first time, I imagine a person feeling at a loss for her purpose on earth. She yearns to matter, to make a difference in just one heart, one life, even to one small robin. And then joyfully she realizes that her words are a personal call to action: that if she reaches out generously to one other life, then her own has purpose and meaning, and her presence on the planet is not in vain.



Two years after the song was first performed, Frederica von Stade asked me to make a special arrangement for her to sing with girls choir, handbells and piano to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Convent of the Sacred Heart. For this, I added a setting of *Salve Regina* for the choir to intone throughout. The first performance was October 6, 1998 at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Purchase.

### **I Shall Not Live in Vain**

Text by Emily Dickinson (1830–86)

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;  
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.

### **HE WILL GATHER US AROUND**

The opera *Dead Man Walking* tells the story of a convicted man on death row

(Joseph DeRocher) and the nun who becomes his spiritual advisor (Sister Helen). With a libretto by Terrence McNally, based on the best-selling book by Sister Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking* has received more than 40 international productions since its world premiere at the San Francisco Opera in October of 2000, making it one of the most performed new American operas. The original production starred the beloved mezzo-soprano Susan Graham as Sister Helen in a searing performance that was hailed as dazzling and groundbreaking. The drama opens with Joseph's brutal crime, immediately followed by the appearance of Sister Helen, who intones the hymn *He Will Gather Us Around*. This original hymn becomes an anchor for her throughout the opera and provides a melodic motif that pervades the score.

In 2003, I was invited for a weeklong residency at Wichita State University to coach students on my songs as well as scenes from *Dead Man Walking*. The SATB arrangement of *He Will Gather Us Around* was commissioned for this occasion and received its premiere there on April 6, 2003, conducted by Dr. Thomas Wine.

**He Will Gather Us Around**  
from the opera *Dead Man Walking*  
Text by Jake Heggie

He will gather us around, all around  
By and by  
You and I  
All around him, gather us around.

Peace will gather us around, all around  
By and by  
You and I  
All around, gather us around.

“Don’t be afraid, I have called and you  
are mine.”  
Oh love will gather us around.  
“I will be with you”  
All around, love will gather us around.

God will gather us around, all around  
Our sisters and our brothers  
Our fathers and our mothers  
Love will gather us around  
By and by  
You and I  
We will gather all around.

By and by.  
You and I.

All around us, peace.  
All around us, light.  
All around us, love.  
Love will gather us around.

— Notes by Jake Heggie



Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer



Jake Heggie

## Jake Heggie

Jake Heggie is the composer of the operas *Moby-Dick* (libretto by Gene Scheer), *Dead Man Walking* (libretto by Terrence McNally), *Three Decembers* (Scheer), *The End of the Affair* (McDonald), *Out of Darkness – A Holocaust Triptych* (Scheer), *To Hell and Back* (Scheer) and, *At the Statue of Venus* (McNally) in addition to *The Radio Hour: A Choral Opera* (Scheer). Two newer stage works are *Great Scott* (McNally) for The Dallas Opera (2015), and an opera based on *It's a Wonderful Life* (Scheer) for the Houston Grand Opera (2016). Heggie has also composed more than 250 art songs, as well as concerti, chamber music, choral and orchestral works, including his *Ahab Symphony* (2013).

The operas have been produced on five continents. *Dead Man Walking* has received more than 40 productions worldwide since its San Francisco Opera premiere in 2000 and has been recorded live twice. *Moby-Dick* has received six international productions since its 2010 premiere at The Dallas Opera and was telecast nationally in 2013 as part of Great Performances' 40th Anniversary

Season. A production from the San Francisco Opera has been released on DVD (EuroArts).

A Guggenheim Fellow, Heggie was Composer-in-Residence at San Francisco Opera and served for three years as a mentor for Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative. He is also a frequent guest artist and master teacher at universities and conservatories, including Boston University, Bucknell, Cornell, The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, University of North Texas, University of Colorado, USC's Thornton School, Vanderbilt University, and at festivals such as SongFest at the Colburn School, Ravinia Festival, and VISI in Vancouver.

Jake Heggie frequently collaborates as composer and pianist with some of the world's most loved singers, including sopranos Kiri Te Kanawa, Ailyn Pérez and Talise Trevigne; mezzo-sopranos Jamie Barton, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham and Frederica von Stade; Broadway stars Patti LuPone and Audra McDonald; tenors William Burden, Stephen Costello and Jay Hunter Morris; baritones Nathan Gunn, Michael Mayes and Morgan Smith.



### Gene Scheer

Mr. Scheer's work is noted for its scope and versatility. With the composer Jake Heggie he has collaborated 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 *Camille Claudel: Into the Fire*, a song cycle premiered by Joyce di Donato and the Alexander String Quartet. 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 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, nominated for a Grammy in 2013, was premiered by the

Dallas Symphony Orchestra in 2008 and in 2011 was performed by the orchestra, with Japp von Sweeden conducting, at Carnegie Hall.

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 entitled *The War*.

### Susan Graham

Susan Graham—dubbed "America's favorite mezzo" by *Gramophone* magazine—rose to the highest echelon of international artists within just a few years of her professional debut, mastering an astonishing range of repertoire and genres along the way. Her operatic roles span four centuries, from Monteverdi's *Poppea* to Sister Helen Prejean in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*, which was written especially for her. Graham won

a Grammy Award for her collection of Ives songs, and her recital repertoire is so broad that 14 composers from Purcell to Sondheim are represented in a recent album, *Virgins, Vixens & Viragos*. Throughout her career, however, this distinctly American artist has been recognized as one of the foremost exponents of French vocal music; a Texas native, she was awarded the French government's prestigious "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur," both for her popularity as a performer in France and in honor of her commitment to French music.

The mezzo's earliest operatic successes were in such "trouser" roles as Cherubino in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Her technical expertise soon brought mastery of Mozart's more virtuosic roles, like Sesto in *La clemenza di Tito*, Idamante in *Idomeneo*, and Cecilio in *Lucio Silla*, as well as the title roles of Handel's *Ariodante* and *Xerxes*. She went on to triumph in the iconic Richard Strauss mezzo roles, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* and the Composer in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. These brought Graham to prominence on all the world's major opera stages, including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of

Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, La Scala, Bavarian State Opera, Vienna State Opera, the Salzburg Festival, and many more. In addition to creating the role of Sister Helen Prejean in the world premiere production of *Dead Man Walking* at San Francisco Opera, Graham sang the leading ladies in the Met's world premieres of John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* and Tobias Picker's *An American Tragedy*, and made her Dallas Opera debut as Tina in a new production of *The Aspern Papers* by Dominick Argento. As Houston Grand Opera's Lynn Wyatt Great Artist, she launched the 2013-14 season as Prince Orlofsky in the company's first staging of *Die Fledermaus* in 30 years, before heading an all-star cast as Sycorax in the Met's Baroque pastiche *The Enchanted Island* and making her rapturously received musical theater debut in a new production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *The King and I* at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris.

It was in an early Lyon production of Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* that Graham scored particular raves from the international press, and a triumph as Massenet's *Chérubin* at Covent Garden sealed her



Susan Graham

operatic stardom. Further invitations to collaborate on French music were forthcoming from many of that repertoire's pre-eminent conductors, including Sir Colin Davis, Charles Dutoit, James Levine, and Seiji Ozawa. New productions of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Berlioz's *La damnation de Faust*, and Massenet's *Werther* were mounted for the mezzo in New York, London, Paris, Chicago, San Francisco, and elsewhere. She made title role debuts in Offenbach's comic masterpieces *La belle Hélène* and *The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein* at Santa Fe Opera, and proved herself the standout star of the Met's star-studded revival of Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, which was broadcast live in 2015 to cinema audiences worldwide in the company's celebrated Live in HD series. In 2015, she returned to the Met in the title role of Susan Stroman's production of Lehar's *The Merry Widow*, before closing the season opposite Bryan Hymel in a new staging of *Les Troyens* at San Francisco Opera. In 2014 she was a headliner in gala concerts at Los Angeles Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago, where she joined Jane Lynch, Renée Fleming, Ramsey Lewis, and others to celebrate the latter company's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Graham's affinity for French repertoire has not been limited to the opera stage, and serves as the foundation for her extensive concert and recital career. Such great oratorios and symphonic song cycles as Berlioz's *La mort de Cléopâtre* and *Les nuits d'été*, Ravel's *Shéhérazade*, and Chausson's *Poème de l'amour et de la mer* take her to the world's leading orchestras, with regular appearances at the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, and London Symphony. In 2014, she joined Bernard Haitink and the Boston Symphony for *Shéhérazade* in Boston and at Carnegie Hall, and in 2014-15 she sang Berlioz with the Royal Flemish Philharmonic for *La mort de Cléopâtre*, and *Les nuits d'été* with both the London Symphony Orchestra and John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Revolutionnaire et Romantique. Marking her first duo recital tour in 2013, the mezzo teamed up with soprano Renée Fleming at venues including Disney Hall and Carnegie Hall. In 2015, she reunited with regular recital partner Malcolm Martineau for a West Coast tour and a season-closing recital in Classical Action's Michael Palm Series.

Graham's distinguished discography features all the works described above, as well as solo albums including *Un frisson français*, a program of French song recorded with pianist Malcolm Martineau for Onyx; *C'est ça la vie, c'est ça l'amour!*, an album of 20<sup>th</sup>-century operetta rarities on Erato; and *La belle époque*, an award-winning collection of songs by Reynaldo Hahn with pianist Roger Vignoles, from Sony. Among the mezzo's additional honors are *Musical America's* Vocalist of the Year and an Opera News Award.

### **John Alexander**

Artistic Director of Pacific Chorale since 1972, John Alexander is one of America's most respected choral conductors. His inspired leadership both on the podium and as an advocate for the advancement of the choral art has garnered national and international admiration and acclaim.

Alexander's long and distinguished career has encompassed conducting hundreds of choral and orchestral performances nationally and in 27 countries around the globe. He has conducted his sing-

ers with orchestras throughout Europe, Asia, the former Soviet Union and South America and, closer to home, with Pacific Symphony, Pasadena Symphony, Musica Angelica and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. Equally versatile whether on the podium or behind the scenes, Alexander has prepared choruses for many of the world's most outstanding orchestral conductors, including Zubin Mehta, Pierre Boulez, Seiji Ozawa, Michael Tilson Thomas, Leonard Slatkin, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Gustavo Dudamel, Lukas Foss, Max Rudolf, Carl St.Clair, Gerard Schwarz, Marin Alsop, John Mauceri, John Williams and Keith Lockhart.

A proponent of contemporary American music, Alexander is noted for the strong representation of American works and composers in his programming. He has conducted many premieres of works by composers such as Jake Heggie, Morten Lauridsen, Eric Whitacre, Frank Ticheli, and James Hopkins.

Alexander is nationally recognized for his leadership in the musical and organizational development of the performing arts. He is a board member and former





John Alexander

president of Chorus America, the service organization for choruses in North America. Alexander also has served on artistic review panels for national, statewide and local arts organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Alexander retired in spring 2006 from his position as Director of Choral Studies at

California State University, Fullerton, having been awarded the honor of Professor Emeritus. From 1970 to 1996, he held the position of Director of Choral Studies at California State University, Northridge. Alexander continues his involvement in the pre-professional training of choral conductors. He is in demand as a teacher, clinician, and adjudicator in festivals, seminars and workshops across the United



States. In 2003, Chorus America honored him with the establishment of the “John Alexander Conducting Faculty Chair” for their national conducting workshops.

Alexander is a composer of many works and serves as the editor of the John Alexander Choral Series with Hinshaw Music, as well as the John Alexander Singers Choral Series with Pavane Publishing. His numerous tributes and awards include the “Michael Korn Founders Award for Development of the Professional Choral Art” from Chorus America (2008); The “Distinguished Faculty Member” award from California State University, Fullerton (2006); the Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award (2003), presented in honor of his lifetime achievement as an artistic visionary in the development of the arts in Orange County; the “Outstanding Individual Artist” Award (2000) from Arts Orange County; the “Gershwin Award” (1990), presented by the county of Los Angeles in recognition of his cultural leadership in that city; and the “Outstanding Professor” Award (1976) from California State University, Northridge.

### **John Alexander Singers**

The John Alexander Singers, Pacific Chorale’s professional chamber choir, is a 24-voice ensemble of outstanding choral musicians from throughout Southern California. While most of these singers also serve as part of the professional core of Pacific Chorale’s 140-voice ensemble, their work with the John Alexander Singers focuses on specialized repertoire appropriate for a professional chamber chorus.

The Pacific Chorale regularly presents the John Alexander Singers in concert venues throughout Southern California. The Singers have collaborated extensively with Musica Angelica, Southern California’s premier period instrument orchestra. Other notable collaborations include performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic on their new music “Green Umbrella” series, and performances with the Kronos Quartet, Mark Morris Dance Company, The Royal Ballet of Covent Garden, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra, and Pacific Symphony.

The John Alexander Singers’ first recording, *Sweet Harmony*, contains music by



John Alexander Singers

Lili Boulanger, Benjamin Britten, Cecil Effinger and Frank Ticheli. In addition, *Sweet Harmony* features the world premiere recordings of John Alexander's compositions "Sweet Harmony" and "In Praise of Music," as well as James Hopkins' cycle "The Rossetti Songs," commissioned by Pacific Chorale. The Singers' follow-up CD, *Shenandoah: Songs of the American Spirit*, which focuses on American folk song, is available on the Gothic Records label. A later recording, *American Voic-*

*es*, featuring works by various American composers, was released on Delos in 2014. The John Alexander Singers may be heard as well on selected tracks of Pacific Chorale's 2013 recording of the collected choral works of Frank Ticheli, also on Delos. The John Alexander Singers have appeared as a featured chorus at conferences of the American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America's national conference in Los Angeles, and the Association of California Symphony Or-

chestras' annual conference in Costa Mesa in August 2007. They have served as the resident chorus for the California State University Summer Arts Festivals at Humboldt State University and CSU Long Beach. They also served as resident professional choir for the California Conducting Symposium, co-sponsored by Chorus America and CSU Fullerton.

### **David Clemensen**

David Clemensen is active as a pianist, teacher, church musician and composer. A native Californian, he holds degrees from Chapman University, CSU Fullerton and USC. He has been the principal accompanist for Pacific Chorale and the John Alexander Singers since 2003. He is in demand throughout Southern California as a collaborator and coach.

Dr. Clemensen has taught at Biola University and Orange Coast College, and maintains a private studio as an accompanist and teacher. Often called upon to lead music for events of the C. S. Lewis Foundation, in 2002 he directed the Service of Dedication for the Study Center

at Lewis's home, the Kilns, at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, England.

A lifelong church musician, he currently serves as accompanist for Irvine United Congregational Church. His compositions have been performed by many choirs throughout the U.S. In 1995 he won the American Orff-Schulwerk competition for his William Blake setting *The Tyger and the Lamb*. Dr. Clemensen has been married to Diane since 1980. They are the proud parents of Steven.

## **John Alexander Singers**

### **SOPRANO**

Kellee King  
Maria Cristina Navarro  
Katharin Rundus  
Sarah Thompson  
Lorraine Joy Welling  
Andrea Zomorodian

### **ALTO**

Denean Dyson  
Laura Harrison \*  
Stacey Kikkawa  
I-Chin Lee  
Chelsea Lyons  
Jane Shim  
Yilin Hsu Wentlandt †

### **TENOR**

Daniel C. Babcock, *Roger W. Johnson  
Memorial Chair*  
Jason Francisco  
Aaron Mosley  
Nicholas Preston  
John St. Marie  
Gregorio Taniguchi

### **BASS**

Ryan Antal  
Aram Barsamian  
Matthew Kellaway  
Gordon LaCross  
Ricardo V. McKillips, Jr.  
Emmanuel Miranda

\* *Patterns, I Shall Not Live in Vain, and He  
Will Gather Us Around*  
† *The Radio Hour*

## **Members of Pacific Symphony**

Carl St.Clair, Music Director

Raymond Kobler, violin  
Kevin Plunkett, cello  
Steven Edelman, bass  
Lawrence Kaplan, flute  
David Chang, clarinet  
James Rotter, saxophone  
Robert Slack, percussion

## **Handbell Choir**

Alex Guebert  
Christian Guebert  
Trinity King  
Carol Pickford  
Megan Wright

Executive Producer: Carol Rosenberger

Producer: Richard Messenger

Associate Producers: Brian Sullivan & Ryan McSweeney

Recording Engineers: Ted Ancona & Matthew Snyder

Editing, Mixing & Mastering: Matthew Snyder

Booklet Editor: Lindsay Koob

Art Design & Layout: Lonnie Kunkel

Photo Credits: Susan Graham (Benjamin Ealovega), Jake Heggie & Gene Scheer (Robert Hart), John Alexander (Stan Sholik), Cover photo (Ellen Appel)

*The Radio Hour* was co-commissioned by Pacific Chorale, Conspirare, The Philadelphia Singers, and VocalEssence. It was premiered on May 18, 2014, and recorded on May 20, 2014, in the Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa, California. Eve Himmelheber portrayed Nora in the premiere performance, with stage direction by James R. Taulli.

The commission of *The Radio Hour* was made possible, in part, by the generous support of Martin and Margie Hubbard.

*Patterns, I Shall Not Live in Vain*, and *He Will Gather Us Around* were recorded in Meng Concert Hall, Clays Performing Arts Center, California State University, Fullerton on November 12, 13 and 15, 2014.

This project has been made possible, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



---

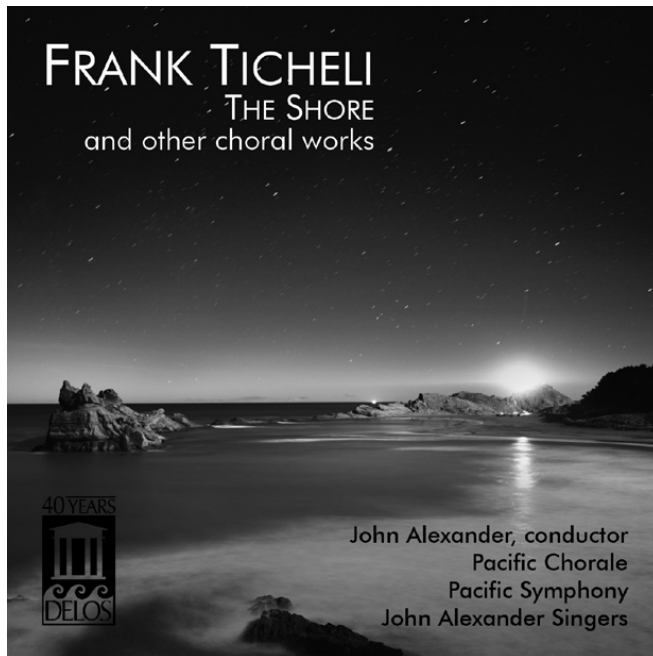
© 2015 Delos Productions, Inc., P.O. Box 343, Sonoma, CA 95476-9998

(707) 996-3844 • Fax (707) 320-0600 • (800) 364-0645

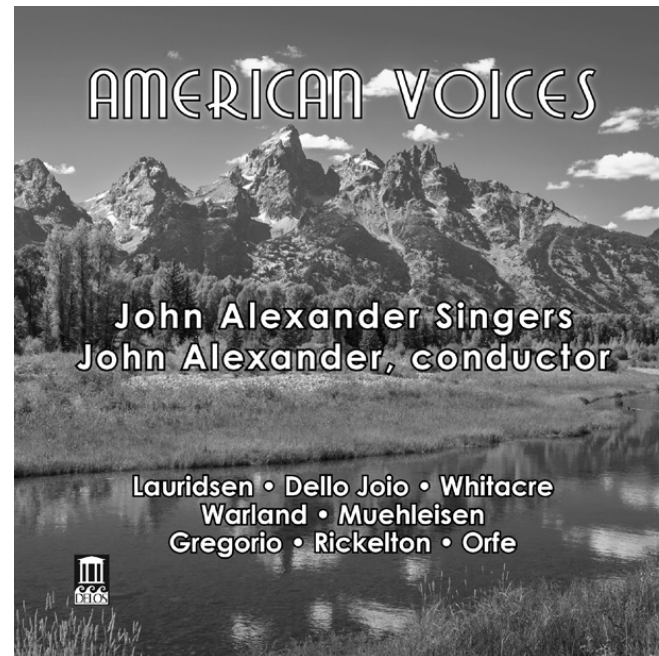
contactus@delosmusic.com • [www.delosmusic.com](http://www.delosmusic.com)

Made in USA

# Also Available



**DE 3461**



**DE 3473**



Eve Himmelheber and the John Alexander Singers in the premiere production of *The Radio Hour*, May 18, 2014.

