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**CAL PERFORMANCES AND SAN FRANCISCO OPERA PRESENT
THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *THE SECRET GARDEN*
BY NOLAN GASSER AND CAREY HARRISON
ON MARCH 1-10 IN ZELLERBACH HALL**

A full array of Education and Community events will be given including interactive family workshops to introduce children to opera and Artist and Sightlines talks

[Watch an exclusive video with the production's visual designer Naomie Kremer](#)

Berkeley, January 24, 2013—Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera present the world premiere of composer Nolan Gasser and librettist Carey Harrison's *The Secret Garden*, a new opera based on the beloved children's novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett. Opening Friday, March 1 at Zellerbach Hall with four subsequent performances through March 10, this new opera will be conducted by Sara Jobin, directed by Jose Maria Condemi and will feature scenic visual designs by Naomie Kremer. Soprano Sarah Shafer stars as Mary Lennox, alongside tenor Scott Joiner as Dickon Sowerby, 14-year-old tenor Michael Kepler Meo as Colin Craven, bass-baritone Philippe Sly as Archibald Craven and mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm as Martha Sowerby. Maestra Jobin will lead a chamber ensemble comprised of members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. "*The Secret Garden* has been an ideal operatic vehicle – a timeless tale of triumph over tragedy, and a paean to the value of friendship and the healing power of nature," commented composer Nolan Gasser. "It is especially inspiring to create an opera geared for the entire family, and to play a role in our vital need to grow the operatic audience."

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera, this new opera, is created for the entire family. It tells the tale of Mary Lennox, a pampered but lonely young girl. Following the sudden death of her parents, she is sent to live with her uncle, where she finds herself in a bleak and unfamiliar land. Unexpected friendships blossom between Mary and her maid's brother and her sickly cousin Colin Craven when they discover the hidden wonder of an abandoned secret garden. Together they make the garden—and

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each other—thrive, leading both young and old on a path of healing and understanding. Complete casting information can be found at <http://sfopera.com/Profile-Bios>.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

A pre-performance Artist Talk will take place before the first performance on March 1 in Zellerbach Hall at 6:00 p.m. Composer Nolan Gasser and director José Maria Condemi will discuss the process of creating a new opera. This event is free and open to the public.

Cal Performances and the San Francisco Opera also join forces to present interactive workshops based on the themes, story, characters and music of *The Secret Garden*. These events will introduce youngsters and their families to opera through dynamic and engaging activities and will be held on March 2 and 9 prior to performances. *Exploration Workshop: Inside the Secret Garden!* will be led by San Francisco Opera's Stage Manager Rachel Henneberry. The workshops take place at 3:30–4:30 p.m. and 5:00–6:00 p.m. on Saturday March 2 and Saturday March 9 at the Toll Room, Alumni House on campus at UC Berkeley. Snacks will be served after each workshop. These events are recommended for children ages 6 and older. Children should be accompanied by a parent or guardian. For more information, please visit sfopera.com/gardenworkshop.

A Sightlines talk with the creators will be given on Sunday, March 10 at 1:00 p.m. with the artists in a location to be announced. This event is free to event ticket holders and designed to enrich the experience of concertgoers.

THE ARTISTS

Nolan Gasser is a critically acclaimed composer, pianist, and musicologist, as well as the architect of Music Genome Project—the technology behind Pandora Radio. His original works have been performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, La Salle Pleyel and the Rose Bowl, among many others. His upcoming projects include a new musical, *Benny and Joon*, in partnership with MGM On Stage, and a forthcoming book on musical taste and the interrelation of music and science. Outside of composition, Gasser is the artistic director of Classical Archives, the largest classical music website on the Internet. He received his Ph.D. in musicology from Stanford

University, where he had been an adjunct professor in Medieval and Renaissance music history. As a pianist, Gasser performs and records as a soloist and with the San Francisco Jazz Quartet.

Carey Harrison is the author of 35 stage plays and 16 novels, most notably *Richard's Feet*, winner of the U.K. Society of Authors Encore Award. He has received numerous grants from the U.K. Arts Council, as well as the Sony Radio Academy Awards, Giles Cooper Award, Prix Marulic, U.K. Writers' Guild Award for Best Play, Prix Italia Silver Award, and Best Play Award from the Berlin Akademie der Künste. His drama output for radio and television includes *Hitler in Therapy*, which won the 2005 WorldPlay Award for best broadcasted play in the English language. Harrison is professor of English at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York and has been a book reviewer for numerous publications including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Chicago Tribune*, *The New York Sunday Times*, and the *London Review of Books*.

Conductor Sara Jobin, who has previously led performances of *Tosca*, *Der fliegende Holländer*, *Norma*, the world premiere production of Philip Glass's *Appomattox*, and Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince* at San Francisco Opera, returns to conduct members of the San Francisco Opera Orchestra. Jose Maria Condemni, artistic director of Opera Santa Barbara who has directed *Così fan tutte*, *Tosca*, *Faust*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Carmen* at San Francisco Opera, directs this new production.

A painter and multi-media artist, Naomie Kremer has created text animations, painting animations and video for stage performance. Kremer's large-scale, intensely colored abstract paintings incorporate text, architectural elements, nature, and figures inscribed beneath the bold brush strokes and bright, startling colors. Her work includes an all video set for the Berkeley Opera's production of Béla Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*, and a video-based set for *Light Moves*, a collaboration with the Margaret Jenkins Dance Company. Her paintings are in many public and private collections including the Fine Arts Museums of SF, the Magnes Museum, the Berkeley Art Museum and the US Embassy in Beijing. In 2008 she began making hybrid paintings: oil on canvas paintings with video projected on their surface, marrying the physical world of canvas and paint with the digital world of video. To view an exclusive video about Kremer's work on *The Secret Garden*, click [HERE](#).

Soprano Sarah Shafer holds the Alfred Greenberg Memorial Fellowship in Opera at the Curtis Institute of Music. Shafer recently made her professional operatic debut in the role of Barbarina and covered the role of Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro* at the Glyndebourne Festival and at the BBC Proms in London's Royal Albert Hall. This season she will make her American debut with Opera Memphis as Adina (*L'Elisir d'Amore*) and with Opera Company of Philadelphia as Papagena (*Die Zauberflöte*).

Since his professional debut in 2009, at age 10, Michale Meo has performed as a principal singer with Portland Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, New York City Opera and with the opera companies of St. Louis and Wexford (Ireland). He has also appeared as a soloist with the Portland Baroque Orchestra, Oregon Bach Festival, Portland Chamber Orchestra, and the Corvallis Symphony. Meo recently created the title role of Northwest Children's Theater's world premiere production of *El Zorrillo*, a performance that earned him the Portland Area Musical Theater Award for Outstanding Young Performer.

Tenor Scott Joiner has performed with Opera Colorado, Central City Opera, Knoxville Opera, Asheville Lyric Opera, the Opera Company of Brooklyn, American Opera Projects, the Intermezzo Opera Festival and Teatro Magnani di Fidenza in addition to performances with the Escher String Quartet, Bryan Symphony Orchestra and the Asheville Symphony Orchestra. As a principal artist with Asheville Lyric Opera, Joiner has sung nine roles over four seasons, including Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Goro (*Madama Butterfly*).

A winner in the 2011 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, bass-baritone Phillippe Sly is a first-year Adler Fellow and makes his San Francisco Opera main-stage debut in 2013 as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*. A native of Ottawa, Ontario and a graduate of the 2011 Merola Opera Program, he is a member of the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio. Sly's first solo album, *In Dreams*, was released in 2012.

Mezzo-soprano Laura Krum is a first-year Adler Fellow who makes her San Francisco Opera debut in this fall's *Rigoletto*. She has her master's from the University of North Texas and was a 2011 participant of the Merola Opera Program. She was a finalist in the 2011 Dallas Opera Guild Competition.

TICKETS INFORMATION

Tickets for *The Secret Garden* on Friday-Sunday, March 1-10 in Zellerbach Hall, range from \$30.00 to \$80.00 and are subject to change. Tickets are available through the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Tickets can also be purchased at sfopera.com through the San Francisco Opera Box Office [301 Van Ness Avenue (at Grove Street)], or by phone at (415) 864-3330. Tickets for the workshops are \$5 per person, regardless of age. Half-price tickets are available for UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5.00 discount (Special Events excluded). For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior, and community rush tickets. For more information about discounts, go to <http://calperformances.org/buy/discounts.php> or call (510) 642-9988.

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Cal Performances thanks Wells Fargo and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their major support of the Season.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, March 1, 6:00–7:00 p.m.
ARTIST TALK

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Program: A talk with composer Nolan Gassar and director José Maria Condemi.

Tickets: This event is free and open to the public.

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Saturday, March 2, 3:30–4:30 p.m. & 5:00 –6:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 9, 3:30–4:30 p.m. & 5:00 –6:00 p.m.
FAMILY WORKSHOPS

Alumni House, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Dana Court, Berkeley

An introductory workshop titled, *Inside the Secret Garden*, is aimed at families. Presented in association with the San Francisco Opera. Open to the entire family including children over the age of 6. Children should be accompanied by a guardian.

Tickets: \$5.00, and are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at calperformances.org; and at the door.

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Friday & Saturday, March 1 & 2, at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 3, at 3:00 p.m. [FF]
Saturday, March 9, at 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, March 10, at 3:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Special Event

The Secret Garden

by Nolan Gasser (music) and Carey Harrison (libretto)

Based on the book by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Jose Maria Condemi, director

Naomie Kremer, visual designer

Kristi Johnson, costume designer

Christopher Maravich, lighting designer

Program: Cal Performances and San Francisco Opera co-present the world premiere of *The Secret Garden*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's beloved children's classic come to life as a fully staged opera.

Tickets: Range from \$30.00–\$80.00, subject to change, and are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988; at calperformances.org; and at the door. Tickets can also be bought at sfopera.com, SF Opera Box Office (301 Van Ness Ave), or by phone at (415) 864-3330.

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Sunday, March 10, from 1:00 p.m.–1:30 p.m.

Place to be announced

SIGHTLINES

The Secret Garden pre-performance talk will be given with the artists. Sightlines is a continuing program of pre-performance discussions with artists and scholars, designed to enrich the concertgoer's experience. These talks are free to event ticketholders.
