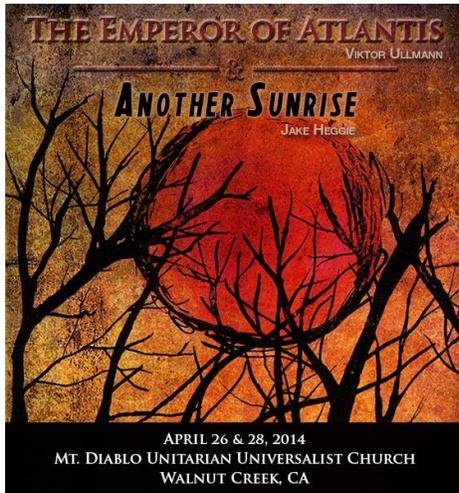


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# Festival Opera Announces Spring 2014



## Chamber Operas Commemorating the Holocaust

### Powerful Operas Grapple with Themes of Survival and Justice

In commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day, April 28, 2014, Festival Opera will present two chamber operas -- Viktor Ullmann's *The Emperor of Atlantis* and Jake Heggie's *Another Sunrise*.

*The Emperor of Atlantis* ("Der Kaiser von Atlantis oder Die Tod-Verweigerung) is also called *The Emperor of Atlantis or Death Abdicates*. It is a one-act opera by Viktor Ullmann with libretto by Peter Kien. They collaborated on the work while interned in the Nazi concentration camp of Theresienstadt (Terezín) around 1943. The opera dared to satirize the political situation of WWII while delivering timeless messages of the power of life and death. A struggle between a deluded, warring emperor and Death itself wreaks havoc on humanity until one of them gains the upper hand in *The Emperor of Atlantis*. The Nazis did not allow the opera to be performed, and both composer and librettist were sent to their deaths at Auschwitz. Written in four scenes, the opera features a small cast of singers as well as a thirteen-piece chamber orchestra. The opera's West Coast premiere was in 1977 at the San Francisco Spring Opera Theater, a branch of the San Francisco Opera.

Bay Area composer Jake Heggie and librettist Gene Scheer are the creative team behind the 2010 opera *Moby-Dick*, which has been hailed as a triumph and instant classic. This will only be the second production of *Another Sunrise*, which made its world premiere as a commission by Music of Remembrance in Seattle in 2012. In this moving short work, Krystyna Żywulska, a Polish resistance fighter and Holocaust survivor, struggles to tell her story to a tape recorder during a sleepless night. She shows us that sometimes the memories may be there, but there are no words to describe them. This brief work goes to the essence of what it takes to survive. Composer Heggie explained: "I'm particularly inspired by stories of social justice and the

inequities of life, and how we are all connected as human beings despite those inequities. The full breadth of Krystyna Żywulska's work as a memoirist, poet and satirist is still being revealed and given new appreciation. Her story cries out to be told through theater and poetry.”

New York stage director Beth Greenberg will direct the productions. Greenberg has earned a solid reputation for her collaborations with living American opera composers, and was Festival Opera's stage director for the West Coast premiere of Ned Rorem's *Our Town* in 2007. Matilda Hofman will conduct the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble. Hofman is music director of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra, a regular guest conductor with Empyrean Ensemble and the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, and assistant conductor at Sacramento Opera.

The cast is comprised of several Festival Opera and Bay Area favorites: Marie Plette will portray Krystyna Żywulska in the one-woman, half-hour *Another Sunrise*, and Eugene Brancoveanu (Emperor Overall), Philip Skinner (Death), Roberto Perlas Gomez (The Loudspeaker), Rebecca Garcia (The Maiden), Christopher Bengochea (The Soldier and Harlekin), and Valentina Osinski (The Drummer Girl) comprise the cast of *The Emperor of Atlantis*. Both operas will be sung in English.

**Festival Opera's *The Emperor of Atlantis and Another Sunrise* are scheduled for three performances only: April 26 and 28 at 7:30 pm, and April 28 at 2 pm. Location: Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, 55 Eckley Lane, Walnut Creek. General Seating – All Tickets: \$35. Purchase options, at Brown Paper Tickets: online: <http://festivalopera.bpt.me/> or by phone (800)-838-3006. For more information, visit [www.FestivalOpera.org](http://www.FestivalOpera.org).**

### **About Festival Opera**

Festival Opera has emerged as one of the most respected opera companies in the San Francisco Bay Area and one of the top professional arts companies based in Walnut Creek. Founded in 1991, the non-profit organization has become a showcase for providing young, emerging artists – many of them San Francisco Opera Adler Fellows and Merola Opera Program participants – with principal roles in professional productions.

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