



For immediate release
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Cast Change Announcement for *Moby-Dick*

Canadian tenor Ben Heppner joins San Diego Opera cast as Captain Ahab

Moby-Dick receives its West Coast Premiere in San Diego on February 18, 2012

San Diego, CA – San Diego Opera is pleased to announce that Canadian tenor **Ben Heppner** will reprise the role of Ahab in *Moby-Dick*, which he created for the opera's world premiere in Dallas last year. Heppner replaces **Jay Hunter Morris** who has been released from his contract to sing Siegfried in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* at the request of the Metropolitan Opera which faced a difficult casting problem due to a cancellation.

Considered one of the world's leading dramatic tenors, Ben Heppner's portrayal of Ahab in the world premiere of *Moby-Dick* lead *The Dallas Morning News* to say "one of the biggest-name singers around these days, Ben Heppner simply *is* Ahab. Hobbling heavily on his peg leg, he exudes both macho charisma and hints of schizophrenia. And he sings a role of Wagnerian heft with a beefy tenor of many colors and textures, and strikingly clear diction."

The Associated Press commented "Heppner, of course, is the star. The music is written to fit his voice... He sneers, puffs and pontificates, his tenor riding over waves of sound. Limping on the peg leg that replaces the flesh torn away in an earlier clash with the great whale, his Ahab is every bit tragic as Lohengrin, Tristan, Otello and Ghermann, some of the roles that made him famous."

These performances will mark Ben Heppner's Company debut.

“For years we have wanted to introduce Ben to San Diego audiences, but dates have not worked until now. His availability allows us not only to welcome one of the world’s truly great tenors, but gives Jay Hunter Morris a wonderful opportunity with the Metropolitan Opera. Cooperation between opera houses facing casting difficulties seldom works as favourably as this for the artists concerned, and both we and the Metropolitan Opera are delighted with the outcome.

Jay has served San Diego Opera admirably in *Katya Kabanova*, *Wozzeck* and *Boris Godunov*, and we are pleased for him to have this opportunity” adds San Diego Opera General and Artistic Director Ian Campbell.

Moby-Dick receives its West Coast Premiere when it opens at San Diego Opera on February 18, 2012.

A more detailed bio for Ben Heppner follows:

Ben Heppner is recognized worldwide as the finest dramatic tenor before the public today. He excels in the most challenging roles, from Wagner’s Tristan and Lohengrin to Verdi’s Otello and Berlioz’s Aeneas. He is acclaimed in music capitals around the world for his beautiful voice, intelligent musicianship, and sparkling dramatic sense. His performances on the opera stage, in concert with the world’s leading orchestras, in the most prestigious recital venues, and in recordings have set new standards in his demanding repertoire.

Mr. Heppner opened last season in a solo recital at the Four Seasons Centre in Toronto for the Canadian Opera Company. He joined Daniel Harding and the Mahler Chamber Orchestra on tour for performances of the title role in *Otello* in Baden-Baden, and was heard in the title role of *Lohengrin* with Los Angeles Opera and the Bavarian State Opera. He sang the title role in *Peter Grimes* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and performs the title role in *Samson et Dalila* in Toulouse. He finished the season with a return to the Bavarian State Opera in the summer to sing the title role of *Tristan und Isolde* during the Munich Opera Festival.

In the 2009 – 2010 season, Mr. Heppner returned to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden to sing the title role in a new production of *Tristan und Isolde*. Mr. Heppner was heard in concert with the Calgary Philharmonic and revisited the Wagnerian repertoire as Lohengrin at Deutsche Oper Berlin. He returned to the United States to create the role of Captain Ahab in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Moby-Dick* for The Dallas Opera. He finished his season in Europe, appearing in concert performances of Act II of *Tristan und Isolde* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment at the BBC Proms in London and the Festspielhaus in Baden-Baden.

In August 1998, Mr. Heppner sang his first performances of *Tristan und Isolde* in a new production for Seattle Opera. The international press was ablaze with accolades for “a Tristan for the new millennium.” He subsequently sang this heroic role at the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Berlin State Opera, Salzburg Easter

Festival, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and in a new Peter Sellars production for Paris Opera. He has been associated with the Wagner repertoire since 1988, when he won the first Birgit Nilsson prize, and the following year, when he sang *Lohengrin* with the Royal Swedish Opera and at the Bolshoi Theatre.

Many of Ben Heppner's greatest portrayals have been revealed in new productions at the Metropolitan Opera, which include Robert Wilson's production of *Lohengrin*, Walther von Stolzing in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, Florestan in *Fidelio*, Aeneas in *Les Troyens*, Ghermann in *The Queen of Spades*, and the Prince in *Rusalka*. He has also been heard at the Met in *Otello*, his first performances of *Parsifal*, and as Laca in *Jenufa*. He has sung these and other roles at Covent Garden, Vienna State Opera, La Scala, Bavarian State Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Ben Heppner can be heard on RCA Red Seal on several solo discs, including *My Secret Heart*, *Dedication*, *Ben Heppner sings German Romantic Opera*, and *Great Tenor Arias*. His complete opera recordings include *Lohengrin*, *Turandot*, and *Fidelio* for RCA Red Seal, *Die Meistersinger* for both Decca and EMI, *Rusalka* for Decca, *Hérodiade* and *Oberon* for EMI, *The Flying Dutchman* for Sony, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* for Teldec, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Deutsche Grammophon. Also for Deutsche Grammophon he has released *Airs Français*, *Ideale*, a collection of Tosti songs, and a disc of arias from Wagner's *Die Walküre* and *Siegfried*. The label inaugurated its new series of live-recorded Metropolitan Opera performances on DVD with Mr. Heppner as Tristan and as Florestan in *Fidelio*.

He is a 1988 winner of the Metropolitan Opera auditions and received Grammy® Awards in 1998 for his recording of *Die Meistersinger* on London/Decca records and in 2001 for his recording of *Les Troyens* with the London Symphony Orchestra on LSOLive. Ben Heppner is a Companion of the Order of Canada.

Moby-Dick Performance Schedule

Saturday, February 18, 2012 at 7 PM

Tuesday, February 21, 2012 at 7 PM

Friday, February 24, 2012 at 8 PM

Sunday, February 26, 2012 at 2 PM

About the Production Sponsors

These performances of *Moby-Dick* are dedicated to Title Sponsors **Joan and Irwin Jacobs**, Platinum Producers' Circle Sponsors **Darlene Shiley**, Platinum Producers' Circle Sponsors **Peg and Peri Urvek** and Producers' Circle Sponsors **Mary and Russell Johnson**.

Purchasing Tickets

Single ticket prices, through December 31, are \$50, \$100, \$120, \$130, \$160, \$200 and \$210 (with some seats on select nights slightly higher) and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com.

Tickets to Renée Fleming in concert start at \$100 and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com.

Three or four-opera subscriptions for the 2012 International Season are still available. Subscriptions range from \$120 - \$1,100 and can be purchased by calling (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com

Tuesday Night Senior Discounts are also available for a full series four-opera subscription. Proof of age is required. Call (619) 533-7000 or online at www.sdopera.com for more information.

The 2012 International Season

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| <i>Salome</i> | Richard Strauss | January 28, 31, February 3 and 5 (mat), 2012 |
| <i>Moby-Dick</i> | Jake Heggie | February 18, 21, 24 and 26 (mat), 2012 |
| <i>Don Pasquale</i> | Gaetano Donizetti | March 10, 13, 16 and 18 (mat), 2012 |
| Renée Fleming in Concert | | March 24, 2012 |
| <i>The Barber of Seville</i> | Gioachino Rossini | April 21, 24, 27 and 29 (mat), 2012 |

General Information

A widely respected member of the international opera community, *San Diego Opera* brings the world's finest artists to San Diego. Founded in 1965, and led for the last 28 years by General Director and Artistic Director Ian D. Campbell, San Diego Opera produces performances of the highest artistic quality while remaining financially stable.

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