DOLORA ZAJICK WITHDRAWS FROM *DOLORES CLAIBORNE*, TOBIAS PICKER'S NEW OPERA BASED ON STEPHEN KING'S NOVEL

PATRICIA RACETTE NOW SET TO ASSUME TITLE ROLE FOR FIRST FOUR PERFORMANCES CATHERINE COOK TO SING FINAL TWO PERFORMANCES

WORLD PREMIERE SEPTEMBER 18–OCTOBER 4 WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE

SAN FRANCISCO (August 26, 2013)— San Francisco Opera today announced a change in the principal casting for the upcoming world premiere of composer Tobias Picker's opera *Dolores Claiborne*: American mezzo-soprano Dolora Zajick who was originally cast in the title role of Dolores Claiborne has withdrawn from the project. The decision to effect a change in the casting was mutually reached by Ms. Zajick and San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley.

Dolora Zajick said, "I am devastated that I am unable to continue my work on *Dolores Claiborne*. The opera proved to be more challenging physically and vocally than I had anticipated and, exacerbated by my knee problems, I feel it is best to withdraw at this point rather than try to push forward. I sincerely wish the cast, the incredible production team and Tobias good luck with the remaining rehearsals and the opening. I will miss being part of it. "

American soprano Patricia Racette, who is currently in San Francisco preparing for her dual roles as Marguerite and Elena in Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele*, will now assume the *Dolores Claiborne* assignment for the first four performances on September 18, 22, 25 and 28. Ms. Racette will continue to sing all eight of the regularly scheduled *Mefistofele* performances. San Francisco Opera veteran performer Catherine Cook, who is the designated Dolores Claiborne role cover attending rehearsals since August 9 and having essayed the title role at the *Dolores Claiborne* workshop in December 2012, will perform the final two performances on October 1 and 4.

Commissioned by San Francisco Opera and General Director David Gockley, *Dolores Claiborne* is a new opera by American composer Tobias Picker with a libretto by J.D. McClatchy based on the novel of the same name written by Stephen King, and presented by arrangement with Andrew Welch. *Dolores Claiborne*, the first Stephen King novel adapted for the lyric stage, will be given its world premiere Wednesday, September 18 at the War Memorial Opera House.

San Francisco Opera General Director David Gockley commented, "We were aware earlier this summer that there was a problem when Dolora cancelled her engagement at the Orange Festival and had hoped her pain and mobility issues would be less problematic here. We've been working on how to adjust the Dolores Claiborne staging and production in order to find a middle ground, but it ultimately proved to be too physically demanding. This decision for Dolora to withdraw from the project was mutually agreed upon and she regrets having to bow out at this late date. She has also expressed her utmost concern for the remaining rehearsal process and ultimate world premiere. I look forward to welcoming Dolora back to the War Memorial Opera House stage in future seasons and wish her a full recovery."

David Gockley continued: "I am very grateful to Patricia Racette for stepping in at this late date in the rehearsal period and agreeing to take on this very demanding role, particularly while she is here performing in *Mefistofele*. Patricia is familiar with Tobias Picker's works having performed in two of his earlier operas *Emmeline* and *An American Tragedy*, each to great success, and I am confident that given Patricia's vocal stamina and dramatic stage presence she

will make this nothing short of a tour-de-force performance. Similarly, I have every bit of confidence in Catherine Cook's abilities to perform this role to great effect, and remain ever thankful for her agreement to now actively take on this assignment."

The *Dolores Claiborne* cast includes soprano Elizabeth Futral as Vera Donovan, Susannah Biller as Selena St. George, Wayne Tigges as Joe St. George, Greg Fedderly as Detective Thibodeau and Joel Sorensen as Mr. Pease. In his Company debut, conductor George Manahan leads the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus in this two-act opera sung in English. The creative team is led by director James Robinson, set designer Allen Moyer, costume designer James Schuette, lighting designer Christopher Akerlind, and projection designer Greg Emetaz.

Picker's opera reconceives award-winning author Stephen King's 1993 novel *Dolores Claiborne* for the operatic stage. The book was previously adapted into a feature film starring Kathy Bates, Jennifer Jason Leigh and Judy Parfitt in 1995. Spanning a time period from the spring of 1950 to the winter of 1992, the opera takes place on a working class island in rural Maine and follows its title character as she fiercely deals with the terrible adversity she is dealt by those around her.

"The role of Dolores is a kind of American Tosca," says composer Tobias Picker. "She is forced to make cataclysmic choices to save the one she loves." Adds librettist J.D. McClatchy: "She is not your average operatic heroine. She is complex: not always likeable, but always sympathetic. It was a challenge but an absolute delight to help bring her to life on stage."

Since 2006, San Francisco Opera General Director has commissioned seven world premieres: *Appomattox* by Philip Glass and Christopher Hampton, *Bonesetter's Daughter* by Stewart Wallace and Amy Tan; *Heart of a Soldier* by Christopher Theofanidis and Donna DiNovelli; *The Secret Garden* by Nolan Gasser and Carey Harrison; *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* by Mark Adamo; *Dolores Claiborne* by Tobias Picker and J.D. McClatchy; and upcoming in June 2015 *La Ciociara* by Marco Tutino and Fabio Ceresa.

For further information about *Dolores Claiborne* and San Francisco Opera's 2013-14 Season, please visit sfopera.com.

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American soprano **PATRICIA RACETTE** celebrates her twenty-fourth anniversary with San Francisco Opera this season by appearing in *Mefistofele,* the title role of *Madama Butterfly,* and in her role debut as Julie La Verne in *Show Boat.* A participant in the Adler Fellowship and Merola Opera Program, she has sung 28 roles with the Company, most recently the title role of *Tosca,* the three heroines of Puccini's *Il Trittico*, and Marguerite (*Faust*); Racette previously appeared as Margherita in Boito's *Mefistofele* in 1994. Other recent engagements include Cio-Cio-San in Barcelona; Tosca, Cio-Cio-San, Leonora (*Il Trovatore*), and Madame Lidoine (*Dialogues des Carmélites*) with the Metropolitan Opera; Tosca and the title role of *Manon Lescaut* at Washington National Opera; the Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*) with Los Angeles Opera; and the title role of *Kát'a Kabanová* for English National Opera. She has also appeared in several world premieres: as Leslie Crosbie in Moravec's *The Letter* for the Santa Fe Opera; Love Simpson in Floyd's *Cold Sassy Tree* for Houston Grand Opera; the title role of Tobias Picker's *Emmeline* at the Santa Fe Opera; and Roberta Alden in Picker's *American Tragedy* at the Met. Racette has performed leading roles abroad at Milan's La Scala; the Royal Opera, Covent Garden; Paris Opera; the Vienna State Opera; Genoa's Teatro Carlo Felice; Bavarian State Opera; and the Maggio Musicale Festival. Her Met portrayals of Cio-Cio-San and Ellen Orford (*Peter Grimes*) were captured for that company's HD series and are available on DVD. Her latest recording, *Diva on Detour,* is a cabaret album produced by GPR Records and Naxos—a program she has performed live at the celebrated Below 54 (formerly Studio 54), the Ravinia Festival, and New York's Century Club. Upcoming highlights include *Diva on Detour* at San Francisco's Jewish Community Center, Tosca for both Turin's Teatro Regio in Tokyo and the Met (live in HD), and Maddalena (*Andrea Chénier*) at the Met.

Mezzo-soprano **CATHERINE COOK** has appeared with San Francisco Opera in more than forty roles since her debut in 1991. Company credits include originating the roles of Jade Boucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* and Arlene Kamen and Wang Tai-Tai in Stewart Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter,* Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*), Mother Goose (*The Rake's Progress*), Annina (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Berta (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*), Flora (*La Traviata*), Lapák the Dog and Woodpecker (*The Cunning Little Vixen*), Emilia (*Otello*), Marthe (*Faust*), Mrs. Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), and La Frugola, Sister Monitor, and La Ciesca (*Il Trittico*). Cook has sung with the Metropolitan Opera in *Faust* and *Kát'a Kabanová*; at Lyric Opera of Chicago in *Peter Grimes, Le Nozze di Figaro,* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*; with Houston Grand Opera as Marthe and Tisbe (*La Cenerentola*); and she has appeared at Los Angeles Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, Opera Company of Philadelphia, and Portland Opera. A winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Cook is a graduate of the Merola Opera Program and a former Adler Fellow, and she chairs the voice department at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Recent and upcoming engagements include creating the role of Mistress Hibbons in the world premiere of Lori Laitman's *The Scarlet Letter* and Berta at Houston Grand Opera and with San Francisco Opera later this fall.

For further press information or to obtain *Dolores Claiborne* photographs, please visit sfopera.com/press or contact:

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