

Mark Adamo first attracted national attention with his uniquely successful debut opera, *Little Women*, after the novel by Louisa May Alcott. Introduced by Houston Grand Opera in 1998, *Little Women* has since enjoyed over sixty national and international engagements. It is one of the most frequently performed North American operas. Comparable acclaim greeted the premiere of *Lysistrata*, or the Nude Goddess. *Lysistrata* was commissioned by Houston Grand Opera for its 50th anniversary and premiered in March 2005 with additional performances at New York City Opera in 2006. San Francisco Opera commissioned and premiered of his third full-length opera, *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, in 2013.



Photo by Martin Gram

Learn more about *Becoming Santa Claus* at www.musicsalesclassical.com. Photos from *Becoming Santa Claus* by Karen Almond for the Dallas Opera.

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Mark Adamo

Becoming Santa Claus

A comedic opera for singers, orchestras, and handbells (2015)



Becoming Santa Claus

A comedy for singers, orchestras, and handbells (2015)



Music and book by Mark Adamo
Starring Juan Jose de León, Jennifer Rivera, Matt Boehler
Conducted by Emmanuel Villaume
Directed by Paul Curran

Duration: 1 hr 30 min

Premiere: December 2015, Dallas Opera, Dallas, TX

cast list

Queen Sophine: <i>Lyric-coloratura mezzo-soprano</i>	The Elves*
Prince Claus: <i>Tenor leggero</i>	Yan: <i>High lyric soprano</i>
Donkey-Messenger: <i>Basso cantante</i>	Yab: <i>Lyric tenor</i>
Ib: <i>Mezzo-contralto</i>	Ossia: <i>SATB Chorus; dancer</i>
Ob: <i>Lyric Baritone</i>	

orchestra

1(afl,pic).2(2Ebcl,2bcl).0.0/1.Ctpt(Dtpt).1.0/timp.2perc/pf(cel).hpd(pf 1/4-tone flat)/str; Children's Handbell Ensemble in audience: 48 players (4 chromatic octaves)

*Casting for the Elves should favor singers with other vocal skills such as jazz improvisation, rap, etc., as their principal sequence, the toy quartet, will extend as far outside traditional operatic technique as taste and ability will permit. *Becoming Santa Claus* is performable without chorus. Optional chorus sequences are indicated in the score, as are segments where development through dance is welcome.

"A wild Christmas gift... a delightfully inventive and over-the-top holiday show that explores Santa's backstory with wit and whimsy. . ."

- D Magazine

"A Pixar-esque opera with an explosion of kaleidoscopic music. . ."

- Theatre Jones

composer's statement

Becoming Santa Claus casts its title character as an elfin version of the kind of struggling American child who may have been taught to confuse a parent's presence with the shiny gifts he brings; and imagines both how Claus became that child and how he grew into the angel of generosity (we'd like to believe) he is today.

In this original story, Claus is a prince of an Elven realm, son of a conflicted Queen sorceress and a King vanished under mysterious circumstances. No one expects Claus's father at the boy's glittering 13th birthday, but his uncles (the Three Kings of Christmas legend) are hoped for; when, called to the crib of a mysterious Child, they send, instead, regrets and gifts. The stung Claus recruits his quartet of hapless Elves to make the most spectacular toys ever created to dazzle the Child and exact a rejected nephew's revenge. It doesn't quite turn out that way...

Musically, the work portrays the central royal trio (yes, the King returns) in an aristocratically melismatic but harmonically skewed mode — Handelian vocalism soaring above a needle shower of quarter-tone pianos and baroque trumpets — while the Elves begin in traditional operatic vocalism but extend from quasi-percussive chorale through liquid jazz and unhinged rap as they give voice to the ever-the-more surreal and magical toy creations.

Planned as a single 90-minute arch, gilded at the finale by a shimmer of 48 handbells stationed throughout the theatre, the creators of *Becoming Santa Claus* are hoping for an opera that moves and dazzles by turns throughout its length, but leaves its youngest viewers (and their parents) talking about its ideas all the way home. - *Mark Adamo*