

Kirke Mechem is a prolific composer with a catalogue of over 250 works. He enjoys an international presence, as ASCAP recently registered concert performances of his music in 42 countries. Born and raised in Kansas and educated at Stanford and Harvard Universities, Mechem conducted and taught at Stanford, and served as composer-in-residence for several years at the University of San Francisco.



Mechem also lived in Europe, spending three years in Vienna where he came to the attention of Josef Krips, the San Francisco Symphony. He has been honored and recognized for his contributions from such organizations as the United Nations, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Gallery, the American Choral Directors Association, and the Music Educators National Conference. He was presented with a lifetime achievement award from the National Opera Association.

Learn more about these operas at www.musicsalesclassical.com.
Front cover photo of *Tartuffe* by Olaf Struck, Theater Hagen.

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Kirke Mechem

OPERAS

John Brown (2008), *Pride and Prejudice* (2007),
The Rivals (2002), *Tartuffe* (1980)



John Brown

 An opera in three acts (2008)

Duration: 2 hours 7 minutes

Premiere: May 3, 2008; Lyric Opera of Kansas City

Cast & Orchestra: S, Mz, 3T, Bar, B-Bar, B; chorus

3332/4331/timp.2perc/hp/str

Libretto in English by Kirke Mechem

synopsis

The opera details the events leading up to and surrounding the abortive attempt by John Brown, a charismatic abolitionist, to destroy American slavery by force of arms. However harsh and single-minded his struggle for black freedom, Brown's story concerns issues key to the historical development of America and perhaps still central to its fate. Following an unsuccessful attack in 1859 on the US arsenal in Virginia, Brown, who had confided to Frederick Douglass that he, like Moses, was chosen by God to lead the slaves to freedom, is sentenced to execution by hanging. As the opera closes, Douglass proclaims, 'You cannot bury him! As long as men love freedom, John Brown will never die.'

Pride & Prejudice

 An opera in two acts (2007)

Duration: 2 hours 19 minutes

Cast & Orchestra: 4S, 2Mz, A, T, 2Bar, B-Bar, B; one silent role; optional chorus

2222/2210/timp.perc/hp/str

Libretto in English by Kirke Mechem, based on the novel by Jane Austen

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synopsis

A wealthy and single young man from London, Richard Bingley, has just moved into the Netherfield estate. At a ball he gives for his neighbors, Mrs. Bennet is overjoyed to see that Bingley is attracted to her eldest daughter, Jane. But her second daughter, the witty and independent Elizabeth, is slighted by Bingley's even wealthier friend, the proud and aristocratic Darcy. The spirited courtship between Darcy and Elizabeth – who at first cannot abide one another – is the main story of the opera. They not only misjudge each other, but are both victims of their own pride and prejudices. Only after much sparring and indignant misunderstandings do they come to recognize their own faults and true feelings, and can forgive themselves and each other.

The Rivals

 A comic opera in two acts (2002)

Duration: 1 hour 55 minutes

Premiere: September 16, 2011, Skylight Opera; Milwaukee, WI

Cast & Orchestration:

2S, 2Mz, 2T, Bar, B-bar, B; optional chorus

2121/2110/perc/hp/str

Libretto in English by Kirke Mechem, loosely based on Sheridan's play of the same name, now set in Newport, RI circa 1900.

synopsis

Rich and dashing Jack has fallen in love with the heiress Lydia, who actually wants to elope with some penniless artist and live in "charming poverty." Jack masquerades as a poor composer named Waverley and wins her heart, but Lydia's aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, will not hear of it. She and Jack's father, both unaware that "Waverley" is Jack, decide that Lydia should marry the real Jack. Jack struggles with his two identities, but Lydia eventually learns the truth and rejects him. Meanwhile, Baron von Hakenbock has been carrying on a secret correspondence with "Celia," whom he believes to be Lydia but who is really Mrs. Malaprop. All mismatching lovers lead to a head on the dueling field, but true love averts the duels, clears up the misunderstandings, and unites the proper pairs.

Tartuffe

 An opera in three acts (1980)

Duration: 2 hours 10 minutes

Premiere: May 1980, San Francisco Opera

Cas & Orchestration: 2S, 2Mz, T, 2Bar, B; one silent role; optional chorus

2(pic).2.2(bcl).2+cbn/2.1[in C].1.0/timp(perc).perc/hp/str

alt.: 1111/1110/perc/hp/str (min 1.1.1.1.1)

Libretto in English by Kirke Mechem,

Based on the play by Moliere, German translation by Thomas Martin

synopsis

Tartuffe, a religious hypocrite, insinuates his way into Orgon's house and tries to marry his daughter. Orgon's wife, Elmire, sees through Tartuffe and plots to trick him into seducing her in order to open Orgon's eyes. Tartuffe, however, takes control of the house and wants to get the owner arrested, members of the family disguise themselves as officials of the crown and drive Tartuffe away.