

THE RIGHTEOUS

MUSIC BY GREGORY SPEARS

LIBRETTO BY TRACY K. SMITH

BROADCAST DATE AUGUST 12, 2024

Conductor Jordan de Souza*

Director Kevin Newbury

Cast

David Michael Mayes+*

Sheila Elena Villalón

Michele Jennifer Johnson Cano*

Jonathan Anthony Roth Costanzo

Paul Greer Grimsley

CM Brenton Ryan

Marilyn Wendy Bryn Harmer*

Jacob Nicholas Newton+

Eli Andrew Turner=

Shannon Jazmine Saunders=*

Deirdre Natasha Isabella Gesto=*

Woman 1/Jenny Isobel Anthony=*

Woman 2/Event Planner Ashlyn Brown=*

Woman 3/Woman/Ruth Tessa Fackelmann=

Deacon 1 Cole Bellamy=*

Deacon 2/Joe/Representative Luke Harnish=

Deacon 3/Young Aide Matthew Goodheart=*

The Santa Fe Opera Orchestra and Chorus

Music Director Harry Bicket; **Chorus Master** Susanne Sheston

*Santa Fe Opera debut, +Former Santa Fe Opera Apprentice, =Current Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Singer

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Setting: 1979, the American Southwest

Paul, an oil magnate with political aspirations, is out for a day of turkey hunting with his friend CM, his son Jonathan, and his son's best friend, David. David, a preacher, tells Jonathan he feels that God is telling him to marry Jonathan's sister, Michele. Jonathan cannot hide that he wishes David could be more than a brother-in-law to him. Back at Paul's ranch, David indeed proposes to Michele and she accepts.

Two new characters are introduced. Eli is an army serviceman, and tells his wife Sheila he will be going overseas. She protests on behalf of herself and their daughter, Shannon.

During a sermon, David preaches on the importance of loving thy neighbor. A few weeks later, David asks Sheila, a parishioner in his church, to lead a women's group.

Now married, David and Michele read a flattering article about his church. There have been whispers that he might emerge as a write-in candidate for governor, but Paul and CM are concerned that David's charismatic personality is a threat to Paul's own campaign. Michele asks David to make a public statement that he has no intention of running against her father, Paul.

Setting: 1986. seven years later

Paul's son Jonathan challenges David about his stance on the current Aids epidemic. In David's words, "love is terrifying." to which Jonathon responds, "isn't it?"

Sheila is still leading the church women's group. All members admit their need to be calmed and soothed in the midst of family issues. Sheila confesses that she is a survivor of abuse, but a believer in the all-knowing love of God, "terrible and wonderful."

David and the deacons are planning to expand the church's sanctuary. Michele misses the old David, the one she thought she knew. Noticing that Sheila is still in the church, David goes back in to offer his prayerful support....leading to a kiss.

ACT II

Setting: Paul's Ranch, after the Governor Election

The first lady, Marilyn, is planning a dinner. Her daughter Michele confesses that her relationship with David has fizzled. Marilyn assures her that she and Paul will always take care of her, no matter the state of her marriage.

Michele then sees a vision of David and Sheila's affair.

Paul has a heart attack and dies, pulling the family into painful grief. At the wake, Paul's old friend and consultant CM makes an appearance, and announces there will be a special election to replace Paul as governor. He asks David to run.

Setting: Three Months Later

David has won the special election. When he returns to his church to say goodbye, Michele offers a curious prayer about forgiveness for husbands who betray their wives.

Setting: 1990

David and Sheila, now married, host a reception at the Governor's mansion. Among the guests is a young black preacher named Jacob, who complains that his struggling urban community is misunderstood. David however is adamant in his belief that cracking down on crack... and on the communities it affects... is the best policy.

Later, Sheila discusses God's compassion, then privately but severely criticizes David. She has seen a change in his heart and his views. Sheila, deeply troubled, feigns a headache, and retires for the evening.

Sheila and Eli's daughter, Shannon, has brought her friend Deirdre home from university. During dinner conversation the energy soon becomes tense. Shannon and her stepfather David have conflicting philosophies, and the girls take their meal upstairs. The next day Shannon offers encouragement to her mother.

Sheila makes a generous gift to the women's shelter. She travels to the shelter to offer her services as a group leader and sees Michele... David's ex-wife... who is there providing legal counsel. Although their troubles are unspoken, the two seem comforted to see each other.

Jonathan visits David at his office, interrupting a meeting on a new piece of "quiet" legislation. Jonathan is departing for a place where he can be himself, leading David to reflect on friendship and time gone by, asking God, "what did I mistake for you?"

Epilogue:

The cast sings a final hymn, echoing David's final words: "O Lord, what did I mistake for you? Life is long and wisdom slow."