



Canada's Home to New Opera
Wayne Strongman, CM | Managing Artistic Director

Media Release
For immediate release
July 25, 2010

Tapestry continues to build the next generation of opera creators with two announcements: the participants for the 2010 Composer-Librettist Laboratory and librettist Marjorie Chan as the company's 2010-2011 Writer in Residence

Just like the fabled runner's high, all of us started picking up steam, the harder and faster we were working – sparks were flying everywhere. Some of the music I wrote for LibLab is among the best I've ever written –Stephen Taylor, LibLab Composer in 2007 and 2009

TORONTO, ON – Tapestry is pleased to announce the composers and librettists participating in the 2010 Composer-Librettist Laboratory, which will run from August 23rd to September 2nd at Toronto's Rosedale United Church. The writers chosen for the 2010 Composer-Librettist Laboratory (affectionately called the LibLab) are **Hannah Moscovitch, Anusree Roy, Michael Pollard, and Maja Ardal**. Joining them will be composers **Norbert Palej, Anna Höstman, Iman Habibi, and Gareth Williams**. Also joining Tapestry in 2010-2011 is multi-talented theatre and opera artist Marjorie Chan, as the company's new Writer in Residence, a role most recently assumed by Governor General's Award Winner Colleen Murphy. Marjorie is a graduate of the LibLab (2003 and 2009) and librettist for the Dora Award-winning new opera *Sanctuary Song* which premiered with Tapestry and Theatre Direct for the 2008 Luminato Festival.

There are few places where I can develop and continue to hone my craft as a librettist. I can think of no better place than Tapestry, where I first discovered my love of the form in the 2003 Composer-Librettist Laboratory. Since then, I have not been far from company, with Opera to Go, Sanctuary Song, and last year's International Composer-Librettist Laboratory keeping me busy. I expect to be quite busy indeed over the next year, as I work on a new full-length libretto, charting and researching others. The year-long residency allows for in-depth immersion into the form and a deepening of my artistic practice. I am humbled and am very grateful to Tapestry, the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for making this possible. - Marjorie Chan

Marjorie is a writer based in Toronto. Her works have been performed in Canada, the U.S., Hong Kong and Russia. Marjorie's playwriting debut, *China Doll* was nominated for a Dora (Outstanding New Play), as well as the Governor General's Literary Award. Her other full-length plays include *a nanking winter* and *The Madness of the Square* as well as the adaptation of the Japanese modern classic, *in the garden, two suns* with Damien Atkins. Her writing has also supported dance pieces, sound theatre, radio drama and 'cell phone' plays. As a librettist, Marjorie's work includes *Mother Everest*, as well as *Sanctuary Song*, the latter which was recognized with a Dora Award for Outstanding New Opera. Other awards include a Dora (Outstanding Performance for TYA), as well as the K.M. Hunter Artist Award. She has been in residence with Cahoots Theatre Projects, Theatre Direct Canada, SUNY (Geneseo, New York) and most recently with Theatre du Pif (Hong Kong). Current writing includes a new opera libretto, *M'Dea Undone*, and a new play with music, *Hello Cello, Goodbye Heart*. www.marjoriechan.com

ABOUT THE COMPOSER-LIBRETTIST LABORATORY

The creation of new opera is a specialized art. In this growing field, writers and composers are looking for a place to discover a creative partnership and hone their collaborative skills. Effective composer/librettist skills are critical for the ability of opera companies to create a



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successful product when venturing into the world of new opera. Since 1995, Tapestry New Opera has been developing solutions to this need with its annual Composer-Librettist Laboratory, the beginning of the company's creative development program and a launching point for operatic projects in Canada and beyond. It is also the model for the English National Opera Studio's All In Opera, as well as Pacific Opera Victoria's Composer-Librettist Workshop.

Here's how it works: 4 composers and 4 writers are brought together for a 10-day period of collaborative discovery through the creation of sixteen 5-minute scenes, each of which are written, composed and performed within a 48 hour cycle that is repeated four times, enabling each writer to work with each composer. Guiding the composers and librettists throughout the process are **dramaturg Michael Albano** and **musical dramaturg Wayne Strongman** (Tapestry's Managing Artistic Director). At the disposal of the creative teams will be some of Canada's most respected performers, including soprano **Carla Huhtanen**, mezzo soprano **Kimberly Barber**, tenor **Keith Klassen**, baritone **Peter McGillivray**, as well collaborative pianist **Christopher Foley**.

Out of this seminal laboratory, nearly 100 artists have graduated with 43 teams emerging to create new works for the stage, either for Tapestry or for other companies nationally and internationally. Some of the operas that have arisen out of relationships begun at the LibLab:

- *Iron Road* (Mark Brownell and Chan Ka Nin) at the Elgin Theatre in 2001, nominated for 9 Dora Mavor Moore Awards, winner of Best New Musical/Opera
- *Facing South* (Don Hannah and Linda Catlin Smith) as part of the World Stage Festival in 2003
- *Elijah's Kite* (Camyar Chai and James Rolfe) in partnership with the Manhattan School of Music in 2006, toured in New York City and Ontario.
- *Get Stuffed* (Alexis Diamond and Richard Payne) in schools across Ontario from 2008-10
- *Sanctuary Song* (Marjorie Chan and Abigail Richardson) at the Luminato Festival in 2008, winner of Best New Musical/Opera at the 2009 Dora-Mavor Moore Awards
- *The Perfect Match* (Krista Dalby and Anthony Young) a short film produced by Bravo!Fact in 2008, screened at the St. Louis, Santa Barbara, and Miami Short Film Festival, where it was nominated for Best Experimental Film.
- *The Shadow* (Alex Poch-Goldin and Omar Daniel) at the Berkeley Street Theatre, Downstairs in 2009
- *Dark Star Requiem* (Jill Batson and Andrew Staniland), which opened the 2010 Luminato Festival (which was also a production partner) in the Royal Conservatory's Koerner Hall to widespread critical acclaim.
- 26 one-act operas presented in *Opera to Go* programs from 2002-2010

RELEVANT LINKS ON THE TAPESTRY WEBSITE

About Tapestry: <http://www.tapestrynewopera.com/about-us/who-we-are/>

Production History: <http://www.tapestrynewopera.com/about-us/production-history/>

About the LibLab: <http://www.tapestrynewopera.com/artist-development/liblab/>

LibLab participants 1995-2009: <http://www.tapestrynewopera.com/artist-development/liblab-participants/>



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LibLab Testimonials: <http://www.tapestrynewopera.com/artist-development/liblab-testimonials/>

When we showed up for each rehearsal and performance session, we sight-read what the writers and composers had just written (most often overnight), rehearsed each scene for only an hour, and then performed each scene for the group. Following seat-of-our-pants performances, Michael Albano and Wayne Strongman would talk about their initial perceptions of text and music, the drawing of characters, the suitability of musical style, and dramatic trajectory. This was one of the most rewarding moments of the discussion, and we could perceive in the resulting dialogue which writer/composer pairings just might be willing to take the next step and work toward the eventual commissioning of a larger operatic work, either through Tapestry or another company. –Christopher Foley, pianist/repetiteur and Leadership Legacy Intern

ABOUT THE LIBRETTISTS

Maja Ardal is a playwright, performer and Artistic Director of Contrary Company. She was the recipient of the 2002 George Luscombe Award for Mentorship in the Theatre. She wrote and performs *You Fancy Yourself*, (published by Playwrights Canada Press). She received the 2009 Dora Award for outstanding performance. YFY toured in 2009 to the UK. Her most recent play *The Cure for Everything* will be produced by Theatre Passe Muraille in the fall of 2010. Maja's first play, *Midnight Sun*, was produced in Iceland and the U.S. During the 90s. Maja was Artistic Director of Young People's Theatre (Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People). An Icelandic- Canadian, Maja was schooled in Scotland. She has directed across Canada, notably for The Shaw Festival, The Grand Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects and Great Canadian Theatre Company. For ATP she directed *Stones in His Pockets* (Betty Mitchell Award nomination for Outstanding Direction). At present she is adapting and developing *The Prisoner of Tehran* by Marina Nemat. Maja teaches playwriting and physical theatre.

Hannah Moscovitch's past writing for the stage includes *Essay*, *The Russian Play*, *East of Berlin*, *The Children's Republic*, and *In This World* (for young audiences). Hannah's plays have been produced across the country, including at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto where she is currently playwright-in-residence, the Factory Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects and the Magnetic North Theatre Festival. Hannah's work has been nominated for multiple Dora Awards, the Governor General's Award, the Carol Bolt Award and the international Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Upcoming, she is writing plays for The Banff Centre, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Volcano Theatre, and the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York among others. Hannah is also a writer on CBC's hit radio series *Afghanada*. Hannah is a graduate of The National Theatre School of Canada and she attended the University of Toronto.

Anusree Roy's theatre credits include: Amal in *9 Parts of Desire* (2010 Dora Mavor Moore Nomination – Outstanding performance in an ensemble); playwright and performer of Dora Mavor Moore Award-nominated (Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Performer) *Letters to my Grandma* (TPM, Magnetic North, and Vancouver East Cultural Centre) and *Pyaasa* (TPM, UNO festival, Magnetic North, The Grand Theatre, Factory Theatre and Vancouver East Cultural Centre) for which she won two Dora Mavor Moore Awards (Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Performance). In the last two seasons Roy has been a playwright-in-



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residence at The Canadian Stage Company and TPM. For the 2010-2011 season, she will be a playwright in Residence at the Blyth Festival. She can be seen in her new multi-character plays *Roshni* and *Brothel # 9* being produced by Theatre Passe Muraille and Factory Theatre respectively in their 2010-2011 seasons. Roy holds an M.A from the University of Toronto. In October '09 Roy was honoured with the RBC Emerging Artist Award in Toronto. She is the Co-Artistic Director of Theatre Jones Roy.

Michael Pollard may be the best music teacher students never had. But that's what happens when you follow your passion. He was studying music at Queen's University when an introduction to the drama department sparked a new direction. From there he would become a triple threat—an actor, writer and musician. His three loves have taken him to stages and screens large and small, roles that transcend gender and generation, and to unique collaborations with fellow artists. His selected work includes: *The King The Musical* at the Toronto Fringe Festival, *Harriet Tubman* for Playbill Theatre and *Mr. Oblivious* for Mikeyway Productions. Michael's favourite roles include: Peachum in *Three Penny Opera*, Major General Stanley in *Pirates of Penzance*, Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of being Earnest* and Officer Rooney in *Language Of The Heart*.

It is hard to express the delight I felt at writing my first librettos and having them lifted off the page just a few days later, my words brought to life by such talented composers, repetiteurs and singers. It was an incredible awakening for me, and as you so wisely put it, I did indeed discover rooms in my own house that I didn't know I had. –Krista Dalby, librettist in 2006

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS

Originally from Cracow, Poland, **Norbert Palej** has been increasingly recognized for his "first-rate and genuinely original work" (American Composers Orchestra), and a musical language that generates "visceral excitement" (The Boston Globe). An Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Toronto since 2008, he also serves as the director of the University of Toronto gamUT chamber orchestra, and as coordinator of the annual New Music Festival. He holds composition degrees from Cornell University (D.M.A.), The Juilliard School (M.M.), and the New England Conservatory (B.M.). His music has been heard in Canada, USA, Poland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Great Britain, and Costa Rica.

Anna Höstman's recent premieres include the ensemble work *Ghosts of Swallows*, performed by both Esprit Orchestra and Continuum Ensemble (2010), the collaboration *Moment Forum* (with Dylan Robinson and David Cecchetto), a three-hour interactive performance installation that explored ideas of the musical moment which was presented in Canada and England (2009); the flute concerto *Trace the Gold Sun* (2008), written for Mark McGregor and the Victoria Symphony; and the orchestra piece *Snow Variations*, performed at the Victoria New Currents Festival 2009. From 2005-8, she was the resident composer of the Victoria Symphony Orchestra during which time her opera *What Time is it Now?* with libretto by PK Page was performed and broadcast by CBC Radio Two. Trumpetress Amy Horvey commissioned Anna for a solo piece about the female trumpet legend Edna White (1891-1992); this piece entitled *Interview* was subsequently performed throughout Canada and Europe, and is featured on Amy's album entitled *Interview* (Malasartes Musique). In 2009, *Exquisite Corpse* (a collaboration with composers Marci Rabe and Kristi Farkas), was performed in Toronto by Contact Contemporary Ensemble; *Divertissement*, for spatialized flute choir, was performed at both the Sinclair Centre Atrium and Christchurch Cathedral in



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Vancouver by the Redshift Ensemble; *What her Friend Said*, on text by Kollan Arrici/Anna Höstman, was commissioned by Cathy Fern Lewis for the Voice +++ Festival. Anna is currently pursuing doctoral studies in the composition program at the University of Toronto. She has studied with Christopher Butterfield, John Celona, Gary Kulesha, Gordon Mumma and James Rolfe.

Iman Habibi is an award-winning composer and pianist. As a composer, his music has been performed by a number of noted ensembles and performers such as Musica Intima, The Vancouver Bach Choir, The Prince George Symphony Orchestra, DaCapo Chamber Choir, soprano Simone Osborne, pianists Carrie-Ann Matheson and Liz Upchurch, and has been workshopped by The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, The Aventa and Drosera ensembles. Iman Habibi's music and performances have been heard across North America, in cities such as New York, Toronto, Ottawa, and Vancouver and has been programmed by prestigious concert organizations such as The Marilyn Horne Foundation (New York), The Canadian Opera Company (Toronto), and the BCScene Festival (Ottawa). He has received numerous awards including the second prize at The 2008 Vancouver Bach Choir's national Competition for Large Choir Works for his work *Erroneous Kudos*, and first prize for his work *Black Riders* at the 2009 Guelph Chamber Choir's national competition. His music and interviews are broadcast regularly on radios across North America, such as CBC Radio 2, and WQXR, New York. He has received numerous commissions including a commission to compose his first piano concerto for The Prince George Symphony Orchestra (PGSO). In Feb. 2010, Mr. Habibi appeared as the piano soloist to premiere this concerto with the PGSO. He is currently finishing the final year of his masters degree in music composition at the University of British Columbia under the instruction of Dorothy Chang.

Born in Ireland, **Gareth Williams** moved to Glasgow after studying music at Queen's University, Belfast. He completed his Masters in Composition in 2000 at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and his Postgraduate Certificate in Education in 2002. In 2008 he completed his PhD in Composition at the RSAMD, studying with Gordon McPherson. His works have been performed by groups such as the Hebrides Ensemble, the Paragon Ensemble, the Ceoil Quartet, Symposia, the Black Hair Ensemble, and the London Sinfonietta. He was the winner of the British Conservatoire Composers Forum 2000, and in 2004 he won the Dinah Wolff prize for composition. His work has been featured in the Edinburgh Festival, the St. Magnus Festival, the York Late Music Festival, and Scottish Opera's 5:15 Festival. Gareth was a participant in Tapestry's 2009 LibLab, and his music was featured in last September's Opera Briefs at the Ernest Balmer Studio, later to be remounted in Russia in March 2010.

I recently sat on a panel for Opera America and we reviewed all applications for new work development. Our American colleagues were blown away by the Canadian submissions – our work is edgier, more experimental and more interesting from conceptual and design points of view – and of course, Tapestry leads the field in North America. –Tom Diamond, Resident Director

-30-

For further media information, artist interviews, or an invitation to the LibLab's final reading recital, please contact **Kim Blackwell, Blackwell Communications** at 416-346-4709 or blackwellcommunications@gmail.com