



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

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October 10, 2011

“...an inventive production with excellent music.” stv

**“It’s opera, for sure, but not as we usually know it...
a tremendous operatic adventure...”** The Herald, Scotland

Canadian premiere of Pub Operas serves up stories from famous Glasgow Pub in the Ernest Balmer Studio

“Our futures are more than our past...” Pub Operas’ libretto

TORONTO, ON... Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director, is pleased to announce Tapestry New Opera’s premiere production of *Pub Operas*. Written by **David Brock** and composed by **Gareth Williams**, *Pub Operas* celebrates the history of Glasgow’s oldest pub - Sloans. **David** and **Gareth** first met in 2009 as participants in LibLab – Tapestry’s composer/librettist incubator – and *Pub Operas* was born out of this annual meeting ground. The *Pub Operas* will be directed by **Sue Miner**, music directed by **Wayne Strongman** and performed by soprano **Xin Wang**, mezzo soprano **Heather Jewson**, tenor **James McLean** and baritone **Benjamin Covey** and a 6-piece bar band.

“One of the many wonderful collaborations born of our partnership with Scottish Opera - Irish composer Gareth Williams (now resident composer at Scottish Opera in Glasgow) and Canadian writer David Brock - have chosen the storied history of Glasgow’s famous 18th century Sloans Public House to create short operas for a marvellous evening. After its premiere for the Merchant City Festival, Glasgow, Scotland Tapestry’s production will magically transport our audience to witness first-hand the fabled stories of fantastic events at Sloans over the centuries.”

...Wayne Strongman

Pub Operas tells five stories from inside Sloans, including a raucous wedding reception; the time when Chopin drank there; one last celebratory drink for a deceased buddy; and a newly engaged couple toasting to their future. This final story is a common Glasgow tradition as Sloans Pub is attached to the Argyll Arcade, Glasgow’s largest diamond selling area.

The Argyll Arcade offers the largest selection of diamond rings, diamond jewellery, wedding rings and watches in a single location in Scotland. The Argyll Arcade hosts more than 30 jewellers and diamond merchants all under one roof.

Taking its inspiration from Sloans long history (the pub was built in 1797 and claims to be the oldest in the city) this really is a peoples opera, drawing as it does on punters reminiscences and anecdotes surrounding the place down the years.

Sloans started life as a coffee house in Morrisons Court, named after prominent Glasgow man Baillie John Morrison, in 1797. Twice a week, a stagecoach would leave Morrisons Court bound for Edinburgh. The journey lasted five hours and, for a fare of 9s, each passenger was allowed to take one canvas travelling bag. The courtyard was the scene of many famous cock-fighting contests, the sport of the day.



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Once called the Arcade Café, David Sloan bought the Café at the turn of the 20th Century transforming the renamed Sloans Arcade Café into an opulent venue containing a lounge bar, several dining rooms, a cocktail bar and even an aquarium. The Grand Ballroom was the jewel in Sloans' crown featuring a magnificent vaulted ceiling, period marble fireplace and intricate stained-glass windows.

Many original features remain to this day including the ceramic tiled entrance, grand mahogany staircase, rich woodwork, rare acid-etched glass and ceilings heavily decorated with plaster mouldings, which have been newly-restored complete with gilt-edging and detail. Traditionally, couples would choose their engagement rings in the adjacent Argyll Arcade before celebrating in Sloans, often holding their engagement party and wedding reception in the Grand Ballroom.

Pub Operas consists of five scenes:

Scene One: Mad With It

A young couple purchases an engagement ring in the nearby Argyll Arcade and enters the bar to have a celebratory drink. Their celebration is cut short when a drunken old man curses young love, claiming that it never lasts. After he stumbles out of the bar, the couple sees that he left his ex-wife's engagement ring in an empty glass. The couple takes the ring for themselves, unaware that it could lead to them to the same fate as its previous owners.

Scene Two: Chopin's Ghosts

One night, composer Frederic Chopin enters Sloans with an entourage of women adorned in pearls, and he plays a single song that changes the lives of the bar's manager and her husband, the resident piano player. Combining multiple legends from Sloans' Pub, *Chopin's Ghosts* is told from the perspective of the bar manageress who stole money from the register to pay for her resulting obsession with pearls. However, she now must pay for her crimes in an infinite and torturous purgatory: listening to her husband play piano. All that she wants is to hear Chopin again.

Scene Three: Country Song

Past closing time, two men bring the body of a their friend into the bar on the night before his funeral. They plan to give him a proper goodbye, knowing his funeral will be an impersonal affair. The men drink and celebrate his life, playing their favourite songs on the jukebox.

Scene Four: Charm

Two men have a drink together at the bar. One man is a serial killer, the other is the father of his last victim, a teenage girl. The killer does not know whom he is drinking with, but the father has come to avenge his daughter's death. Based loosely on Scottish serial killer Peter Manuel, *Charm* explores the moral questions of vigilante justice.

Scene Five: Young Love

We return to the happy couple from the first scene on the day of their wedding. Everything is perfect until the old man from the first scene shows up, this time with his wife. And she wants her ring back.

Tapestry is an international home to new opera for creators, developers and performers: all collaborators in telling stories that surprise, thrill and move audiences.



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Pub Operas Details

November 10, 11 & 12, 2011 at 8pm

Composer Gareth Williams

Writer David Brock

Music Director Wayne Strongman

Stage Director Sue Miner

Assistant Director Michael Mori

Singers Xin Wang, soprano; Heather Jewson, mezzo soprano; James McLean, tenor; Benjamin Covey, baritone

Répétiteur James Bourne

Stage Manager Isolde Pleasants Faulkner

SM Apprentice Ann Bisch

6-piece Band

Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry
55 Mill Street, Bldg #58 Studio 315
Toronto, ON M5A 3C4

Box Office 416-537-6066 ext. 243, www.tapestrynewopera.com

Admission \$30

Originally commissioned and premiered by NOISE as the Sloans Project at Sloans Bar, Glasgow, July 2011

Studio Passes

Save now with a Studio Pass with 15% off two or more events in the season.

To purchase a Studio Pass, please call (416) 537-6066 x 222 or e-mail your request to studiopass@tapestrynewopera.com. Further details and information are available at www.tapestrynewopera.com

BIOGRAPHIES

Gareth Williams, Composer

Originally from Armagh, Gareth moved to Glasgow after studying music at Queen's University, Ireland. In 2008 he was awarded his doctorate from St. Andrews' University. He now teaches composition at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and works as a freelance composer. His work has been featured in the Edinburgh Festival, St. Magnus Festival, 5:15 (Scottish Opera, Glasgow), Tete a Tete Opera Festival (London), Opera Briefs (Toronto, Canada), and the York Late Music Festival. Prizes include the Dinah Wolf Prize for Composition, and his piece *Search Engines* was winner of the 2000 Great British Conservatoire Composers Forum.

Since 2006, Gareth has written many short operas, at the RSAMD opera studio, at Scottish Opera, and two in collaboration with Irish writer Bernard MacLavery. Three short operas, premiered by Tapestry New Opera in Canada in 2009, were performed in Russia in at the War and Peace conference in 2010. In the autumn of 2009, Gareth was Composer in Residence in the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris.

In July 2011, Noise Opera premiered the Sloans Project. The project, created in collaboration with Canadian librettist, David Brock was described in the Herald as "a tremendous operatic adventure that mixes the promenade fun of a site-



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specific event with morsels of local history and vignettes of Glasgow life: all set to a thoughtfully unstuffy, thoroughly engaging score.”

Gareth has recently been appointed Composer in Residence at Scottish Opera and over the next two years will create a range of new pieces. Projects include an opera set and performed in a Scottish lighthouse, and an opera based on the true story of the Elephant at Belfast Zoo during WWII.

David Brock, Librettist

David is the winner of the 2011 Herman Voaden National Playwriting Competition. He is a past member of the Canadian Stage New Play Creation Group, the BASH! artistic development program, and the Tapestry New Opera Composer-Librettist Laboratory. He has won a Theatre BC National Playwriting award and four Vancouver Island One Act Play awards. Recently, he penned the libretto *The Sloans Project* for NOISE Opera (composer: Gareth Williams), which premiered at Glasgow’s 2011 Merchant City Festival and will be part of Tapestry New Opera’s 2011/2012 season (Toronto). Upcoming projects include *Pretty Boy Floyd* (composer: Jack Perla) for the Paul Drescher Ensemble (San Francisco) and *Sewing the Earthworm* (composer: Brian Harman) for Canadian Opera Company’s 2012 Concert Series (Toronto). He has also written two chapbooks of poetry: *Gasmask Summer* (Emergency Response Unit, 2009) and *Black Metal Melody* (Ferno House, 2011). David received his MFA from the University of Guelph and teaches at Humber College in Toronto. Follow him on Twitter (@davidjamesbrock).

Sue Miner, Director

Versed in both classical and new works Sue is a freelance director and co-artistic director of Pea Green Theatre Group with her husband Mark Brownell. Her work with Pea Green includes the musical *The Barbeque King*, *Conservatives in Love*, *Medici Slot Machine*, *Monsieur d'Eon is a Woman*, *Playballs*, *The Blue Wall* and *Orchidelerium*. Other recent credits include *Say Ginger Ale* (Summerworks/ Marcia Johnson Productions) *The Love List* (Sudbury Theatre Centre) *Orpheus and the Golden Harp* (Jeunesses Musicales/ Theatre Cotton Robes) *The Fantasticks* (Red Barn Theatre) *The Tempest* (Canadian Stage) *I Love You Forever and More Munsch* (Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People) and *Sexy Laundry* (Theatre Aquarius). Other notable productions include *Women Beware Women* (Theatre Erindale), *Sunday in the Park with George* (George Brown/Equity Showcase), *Le Chevalier St. Georges* (Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra), *Titus Andronicus* and *Measure for Measure* (both for Shakespeare in the Rough).

Sue has garnered several Dora nominations, been thrice nominated for the Pauline McGibbon Award for body of work in directing and has been twice touted as one of Toronto’s Top-10 theatre artists by NOW Magazine. She along with Mark Brownell were recently given a Harold Award for “Outstanding Contribution to the Toronto Performing Arts Scene.” Her production of *Love You Forever and More Munsch* for Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People, which she also co-adapted, garnered a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding TYA Production. She has participated in the Tapestry New Opera Works Director’s Lab, the Director’s Masterclass at the World Stage Festival. and is a graduate of the National Theatre School’s acting section. Sue also teaches at Sheridan College’s Music Theatre Dept. and at George Brown Theatre School.

Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director/Music Director

One of Canada’s most distinguished music directors, Wayne Strongman is a champion of Canadian writers and composers. As Managing Artistic Director of Tapestry new opera works, he has commissioned and premiered over 30 new Canadian operas. Music Director/Dramaturge of Tapestry’s Composer-Librettist Laboratory, Mr. Strongman has created a truly collaborative environment for an international roster of composers and writers. In 2007 he established the Tapestry New Work Studio Company as a performing resource for the new work creation process which has become Tapestry’s unique calling. In 2009-2010, he was named one of 50 Canadian Ambassadors for New Music by the



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Canadian Music Centre and made a member of the Order of Canada, for his innovative leadership of Tapestry and his dedication to the children of Regent Park.

Benjamin Covey, Baritone

Baritone Benjamin Covey is one of Canada's most dynamic young singers, recognized by the Metropolitan Opera Competition in 2007 with an Encouragement Award.

A graduate of the University of Toronto and an alumni of Calgary Opera's Emerging Artist Development Program, Mr. Covey debuted as Morales/Dancaire (*Carmen*) with Manitoba Opera, and was the only Canadian singer invited to San Francisco's prestigious Merola Opera Program in 2010, where he sang Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore*.

On the concert stage, Benjamin was a guest artist with Chorus Niagara for Orff's rollicking *Carmina Burana*, and has sung *Messiah* with Regina Symphony and Victoria Symphony Orchestra. In 2011, Benjamin debuts with Toronto's Pax Christi Chorale in Salieri's *Mass in D Minor* and Mozart's *Regina Coeli*.

Recent operatic roles in Canada include Schaunard with Edmonton Opera (*La Boheme*), Baron Dauphol in Vancouver Opera's May 2011 production of *La Traviata*, and Escamillo to Julie Nesrallah's "*Carmen Unbound*" in Ottawa. This season, Benjamin joins Julie Nesrallah in a duo recital for Brockville Centre for the Arts, and premieres several new works with Tapestry New Opera in *Opera Briefs*. In January, the National Arts Centre Orchestra will feature Mr. Covey as Papageno in the family concert "*The Mozart Experience*". Benjamin looks forward to portraying Captain Gardiner in Calgary Opera's Canadian premiere of Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick*.

Heather Jewson – Mezzo-Soprano

International mezzo soprano Heather Jewson continues a successful career on the concert and opera stages of North America and Europe. The 2009-10 season saw Ms. Jewson return to the Aspen Summer Music Festival to sing the title role in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, with acclaimed conductor Jane Glover. She also made her debut with both the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada and Pacific Opera Victoria in the roles of Nicklausse (*Tales of Hoffmann*), and Flora (*La Traviata*). Heather ended the season on tour to Nunavik, playing the role of Tisbe in the Canadian Opera Company Studio's production of *Cinderella*.

In 2011 Heather will join Maestro Alexander Platt and the Wisconsin Philharmonic for their Season Opening concert with Elgar's *Sea Pictures*. Other season highlights include the US premier of Robert LePage's production of *The Nightengale and other short fables* (Stravinsky) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Durufle's Requiem (Toronto), a workshop of New Opera's with award winning Toronto company Tapestry, and Madame Flora in *The Medium* (Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavillion).

Ms. Jewson's operatic repertoire includes; Tisby in Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (Aspen Summer Music Festival), Jessica in John Estacio's *Frobisher* (premier at the Banff Centre Centre for the Performing Arts); Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* (J. Strauss), Frau Reich in *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (O Nicolai), Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (W.A. Mozart), Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* (Sheffield Symphony Orchestra, UK), and the Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* (Preston Opera, UK).

Heather is also quite active on the concert stage in both Oratorio and recital. Highlights include Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Stratford Concert Choir, Handel's *Messiah* with the Pax Christi Choral and The Mississauga Choral society and Bach's *Cantata 137* and *Cantata 110* at the Toronto International Bach Festival under the baton of Maestro Helmuth Rilling. She has also appeared as a recitalist with the Aldeburgh Connection and The Stratford Chamber Music Society.



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James McLean, Tenor

Toronto native James McLean began his solo career with the Toronto Symphony, under the baton of Sir Andrew Davis, the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir and the Canadian Opera Company. In Germany, he established himself as a lyric tenor, specializing in the repertoire of Mozart. He has performed the roles of Tamino, Belmonte and Ferrando, in Nürnberg with Christian Thielemann, in München at the Gärtnerplatz Theater, and in Düsseldorf at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein.

In recent years his repertoire has expanded to include such varied roles as; Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* (Theater und Philharmonie Essen), Alfredo in *La Traviata* (Niedersächsische Staatstheater Hannover and Städtische Bühne Heidelberg), Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress* (Landestheater Coburg), Steva in *Jenufa* (Opéra Toulon Provence Méditerranée and Opéra Royal de Wallonie, Liège) and the Prince in *Rusalka* (Städtische Bühnen Münster). James recently premiered the role of Alexander Herzog in *Ganna* by Kraus-Hübner at Stadttheater Fürth.

Appearances on concert stages throughout Europe and Israel include works ranging from Bach's *Evangelist* roles to McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio* and include Haydn's *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and *Petite Messe Solennelle* as well as Dvorak's *Stabat Mater* and Verdi's *Requiem*.

James McLean, now based in Toronto, returned to Canada for Mendelssohn's *Symphony No.2 (Lobgesang)* with Kitchener-Waterloo's Grand Philharmonic Choir, *Evangelist (St. Matthew Passion)* with Guelph Chamber Choir, and *Evangelist, (St. John Passion)* with Chorus Niagara. In July 2009 James was a featured soloist at Westben's "Night at the Opera". James begins the 2010/11 season with his debut with Ottawa's Opera Lyra as Pang in *Turandot*, followed by concerts with Aldeburgh Connection and Montreal's Choeur St-Laurent (Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*) and *Messiah* with Kingston Symphony Orchestra. Further engagements include Mozart's *Mass in C Minor* and Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with Toronto's Amadeus Choir and in May 2012, James debuts with L'Opera de Rouens as Steva in Janacek's *Jenufa*

Xin Wang, Soprano

Xin Wang has distinguished herself as a dynamic and captivating performer of contemporary music, having sung works by Canadian and international composers Alice Ping Yee Ho, Petar Klanac, Fu Hong Shi, Jose Evangelista, James Rolfe, Ana Sokolovic, Jurg Wyttenbach and many more. Ms. Wang's has performed with many of Ontario's best known venues for contemporary music, including the Queen of Puddings Music Theatre, Tapestry Opera New Works, New Music Concert and Soundstreams Canada, which presented "Pimootewin," the first Cree opera. Composed by Melissa Hui with libretto by Thompson Highway, Xin premiered and toured this production to Northern Ontario. Xin performed Abigail Richardson's "Sanctuary Song," which won the 2009 Dora Award for Best New Musical/Opera. Her performance of Aaron Gervais' "Sensational Revolution in Medicine" at the SHIFT Festival 2009 won Mr. Gervais the SOCAN AWARDS' first prize in the vocal category.

Ms. Wang just performed in the Montreal Contemporary Music Festival in February 2011: re-creating her role in a concert version of "Beauty Dissolves in a Brief Hour" which won rave reviews with its world premiere in July 2010, presented by Queen of Puddings featuring music by Petar Klanac, Fu Hong Shi and John Rea. In May 2011, Xin will perform in "Façade" with the Talisker Players Chamber Series at Trinity St. Paul's. She will also perform, with her new ensemble, Trio Trillium, at The Music Gallery. The trio is comprised of Ms. Wang, harpist Sanya Eng, and flutist Anne Thompson. Trio Trillium will present the world premiere of Alice Ping Yee Ho's new chamber song cycle *Small Arguments*.



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2011/2012 SEASON AT A GLANCE

Tapestry is in a development season. Studio Passes and Single Tickets are available for events at Tapestry:

The Tapestry Songbook

January 28, 2012

Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry

New Opera Showcase

March 2012

Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry

The Enslavement & Liberation of Oksana G. Workshop

June 2012

Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry

Written by Colleen Murphy & Composed by Aaron Gervais

(Creative Match made in the 2007 LibLab)

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Tapestry New Opera is an international home for creators, developers and performers of new opera: all collaborators in telling stories that surprise, thrill and move audiences. The Tapestry process begins at the annual Composer-Librettist Laboratory where writers and composers are introduced to collaborative creation. Successful partnerships move on to create short operas, ranging in length from 15 – 45 minutes, before full length works are accepted into the Creative Development Programme and on to full production. The INside Opera Education Programme gives students the opportunity to discover their own stories and engage in the creation of new opera. Our children's operas, *Elijah's Kite* by Camyar Chai & James Rolfe and *Get Stuffed* by Alexis Diamond & Richard Payne have toured to over 30,000 students across Ontario and have been produced by other companies in Canada and abroad. Tapestry productions which have premiered to critical and popular acclaim include *Dark Star Requiem* by Jill Battson & Andrew Staniland (with the Gryphon Trio and Elmer Iseler Singers) and the Dora-Award winning *Sanctuary Song* by Abigail Richardson & Marjorie Chan (with Theatre Direct), both for Luminato, *The Shadow* by Alex Poch-Goldin & Omar Daniel, *Nigredo Hotel* by Ann-Marie MacDonald & Nic Gotham, *Elsewhereless* by Atom Egoyan & Rodney Sharman, *Still the Night* by Theresa Tova, *Facing South* by Don Hannah & Linda C. Smith and the Dora Award-winning *Iron Road* by Chan Ka Nin & Mark Brownell.

We have simplified our name to Tapestry New Opera. Please refer to our domain name www.tapestrynewopera.com in case of confusion.

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For further media information and artist interviews please contact Kim Blackwell at
416-346-4709, 416-686-0982 or blackwellcommunications@gmail.com