



Krisztina Szabó and Keith Klassen in *The Colony*, an opera by Kevin Morse and Lisa Codrington, part of Tapestry New Opera Works's "Opera to Go 2010." Photo by Brian Mosoff, 2010.

"A VISION OF WHAT CAN BE POSSIBLE."

"We have in the city of Toronto a number of organizations that were birthed 25 to 30 years ago," says Wayne Strongman, who three decades ago launched the organization that was to become **Tapestry New Opera Works**. "There must have been something extraordinary in the water. Looking back, it was such an optimistic time in terms of arts councils and rebirth. But at the time, it just seemed like something we needed to do." The company began as an eight-singer ensemble that performed a variety of music in town halls across Canada. "I remember once we performed above a bowling alley, and a delicious Ives song ended with an exquisite pianissimo, followed by a 10-pin strike."

"I have been concerned about succession for the past 10 years," says Strongman, who now oversees a wide array of artist development and work development activity. "We're a \$1.2M organization, which is quite large for a new works company. We have moved from the edge to the center." When a long-time supporter indicated a desire to honor the company's 30th anniversary with a substantial gift, Strongman conceived the Leadership Legacy Programme. Supported by the anonymous donor's \$250,000 contribution, the initiative will, over the next three years, provide six mid-career arts professionals with a three-month residency at Tapestry as associate managing artistic director. From this cohort, Strongman hopes to identify a permanent staff member to eventually take on the day-to-day responsibilities of managing artistic director, freeing him to concentrate on the company's growing portfolio of international collaborations.

"For me, this is not a job but a calling," says Strongman. "It has been at the center of my life for 30 years. My sense is that generally, today, arts professionals have a much better balance in their lives, and they're probably healthier as a result. I'm not looking to clone myself, but to find someone who has a vision of what can be possible, someone who can help design an infrastructure that will support our strengths and buffet our weaknesses. It sounds very airy-fairy, but it has always been the way we have worked at Tapestry. We have uncovered a process for listening to artists and learning what they need. My interest in human resource management is an extension of the deep and trusting relationships I have built with musicians and singers." 🌀