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October 6, 2009

## Let the cake cutting begin – Tapestry to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a party hosted by the 3 Divas!!!

**TORONTO, ON...**Tapestry new opera works Founding and Managing Artistic Director Wayne Strongman today proudly announced the company's 30th Anniversary celebration. The Anniversary event will take place on Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Fermenting Cellar in the historic Distillery District and will be hosted by Tapestry's famed **3 Divas, Patricia O'Callaghan, Jean Stilwell and Theresa Tova**, who will also be performing. **The Divas** will be joined onstage by celebrated Canadian musical luminaries to celebrate **Tapestry new opera works'** stunning 30-year history. The evening will be a wonderful mix of world class performances and reflections on the history of Canada's preeminent developer of new opera and its founding Artistic Director **Wayne Strongman**.

*"At every stage of our history Tapestry has been truly blessed with extraordinary artists. At Tapestry we are extremely fortunate to have so much to look forward to – never have we had such a burgeoning number of works in preparation for the stage. So as we celebrate our past, we are creating our future at the same time."*

*...Wayne Strongman*

### Company Evolution

**Founded as an eight-voice ensemble in 1979, the Tapestry Singers toured extensively** and presented an annual series of staged contemporary vaudevilles. With Leon Major as Resident Director, the young vocal ensemble premiered works by leading Canadian composers including R. Murray Schafer (*Felix's Girls, Princess of the Stars*); Howard Cable (*Disneyland*); Harry Freedman (*Three Songs and an Egg*) and David Passmore (*Toronto Island Suite*).

**The performing company transformed into Tapestry Music Theatre in 1986**, marking the end of the resident ensemble and reflecting a growing emphasis on new work development under the banner of The Great Canadian Music Theatre Project. Meanwhile, Tapestry maintained an active production stream with Alan Lund as Resident Director. Tapestry toured extensively with *Something's Rockin' in Denmark* (Cliff Jones) and the World War I commemorative, *Legend of the Dumbbells* (Opening of Wintergarden Theatre). In 1989 the company mounted a commercial production of the newly revised *Anne of Green Gables* (Elgin Theatre).

In 1992, Tapestry produced the world premiere *Nigredo Hotel* (Ann-Marie MacDonald & Nic Gotham) with Tarragon Theatre. Directed by Banuta Rubess, *Nigredo Hotel* became an award-winning signature work for Tapestry, with tours to festivals in the UK, BC and Ontario and remounted in Toronto as part of the World Stage series, and again in 2005 to celebrate the company's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Between 1995 and 1999, with directors, Tom Diamond, Atom Egoyan and Billie Bridgman, Tapestry produced: the world premieres of *Still the Night* (Theresa Tova) with Theatre Passe Muraille in Toronto and with Alberta Theatre Projects for a national tour and *Elsewhereless* (Atom Egoyan & Rodney Sharman) at World Stage with Vancouver New Music Society, the NAC and in Vancouver for the Opera America Conference; the Canadian premiere of *Passion* (Stephen Sondheim) with the Canadian Stage Company; and the Toronto premiere of *No No Miya* (Rudolph Komorous) for Today's Japan Festival at Harbourfront Centre.

**In 1999, in its 20th anniversary season, acknowledging the art form that most consumed our creative artists and the innovative nature of the company, Tapestry evolved further to Tapestry new opera works.** With directors Tom Diamond, Joanna McIntyre, Lynda Hill and Banuta Rubess, Tapestry premiered *Iron Road* (Mark Brownell & Chan Ka Nin); *Facing South* (Don Hannah & Linda Catlin Smith) for World Stage; *Sanctuary Song* (Marjorie Chan & Abigail Richardson) with Theatre Direct & Luminato, *The Shadow* (Alex Poch-Goldin & Omar Daniel) and almost 30 short works for *Opera to Go* beginning in 2002 for the Opera America Conference in Toronto. With directors Michael Clipperton and Emma Tibaldo, Tapestry has premiered two one act operas for children: *Elijah's Kite* (Camyar Chai & James Rolfe) developed with the Manhattan School of Music and *Get Stuffed* (Alexis Diamond & Richard Payne) developed with the Canadian Diabetes Association and Words in Motion.



Since 1995, Tapestry has been home to the annual **Composer-Librettist Laboratory** which is the creative hotbed at the heart of the company's creation-based mandate. Four composers and four writers are brought together for a 10 day period of collaborative discovery through the creation of 5 minute scenes which are written, composed and performed within a 48 hour cycle that is repeated four times, enabling each writer to work with each composer. Out of this seminal laboratory, 94 artists have graduated with 43 teams emerging to create new works for the stage, either for Tapestry or for other companies nationally and internationally.

In 2003, the company moved to its first permanent home, with offices adjacent to the **New Work Studio at the Distillery Historic District**. The Ernest Balmer Studio was named for past Vice-President and lead individual donor. **The New Work Studio Company was introduced in 2007** as a resource to develop new work and to interpret the new vocabulary that is contemporary opera to Tapestry's audiences.

Over the past 30 years Tapestry has been nominated for **31 Dora Mavor Moore Awards, winning 9**. **Collaboration is a keystone of the company's history with development and producing relationships with like minded companies** including Luminato, World Stage, Theatre Direct, Canadian Stage, The Gryphon Trio, Ex Machina, The Banff Centre, National Arts Centre, Tarragon Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Manhattan School of Music, American Opera Projects, New Music Concerts Toronto, Vancouver New Music Society, The Music Gallery and Bravo!FACT. Tapestry has consistently engaged emerging and established artists: Jean Stilwell, Teresa Tova, Patricia O'Callaghan, Judith Forst, John Fanning, Sally Dibblee, Keith Klassen, Carla Huhtanen, Theodore Baerg, Peter McGillivray, Scott Belluz, Louise Pitre, Gordon Pinsent, Barbara Hamilton, Tom McCamus and Mary Ann MacDonald, to name a few.

#### **Accolades & Accomplishments**

- Dora Mavor Moore awards for *Nigredo Hotel*, *Anne of Green Gables*, *Iron Road*, *Still the Night* and *Sanctuary Song*
- *Nigredo Hotel* is the most-produced Canadian opera in history
- *Elijah's Kite* is the only Canadian opera to have two simultaneous productions
- 97 creative artists have graduated from the internationally recognized Composer-Librettist Laboratory and 43 teams have gone on to create new works for the stage
- Received the largest Canada Council Millennium funding award (250K) for *Iron Road*

#### **DETAILS**

##### **30th Anniversary Celebration**

December 2, 2009 at 8pm

Fermenting Cellar, Distillery Historic District, 55 Mill St. Bldg. #6 & 7

TICKETS: **\$130**

*Tax receipt for the maximum amount allowable.*

Call 416.537.6066 x243 or visit [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com)

ONE PERFORMANCE ONLY! LIMITED TICKETS AVAILABLE

#### **ARTISTIC BIOS**

**Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic 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 including the Cantonese-English *Iron Road* in 2001 (Brownell/Chan), *Facing South* (Hannah/Smith) and *Nigredo Hotel* (MacDonald/Gotham) which is the most frequently produced opera in Canadian history. In 2006 he premiered *Elijah's Kite* (Chai/Rolfe) in New York City in collaboration with the Manhattan School of Music. 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. His commitment to a contemporary practice within the operatic art form has made



Strongman a mentor to many Canadian singers. 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 2007-08, in addition to the 7 new short operas for *Opera to Go* as part of Harbourfront Centre's World Stage he conducted the premiere of the Dora-Award winning *Sanctuary Song* (Chan/Richardson) for Toronto's Luminato Festival. In 2008-09 he premiered *Opera to Go* 2009, *Get Stuffed* (Diamond/Payne) and *The Shadow* (Poch-Goldin/Daniel). Mr. Strongman sits on the Ontario Region and National Council of the Canadian Music Centre and also volunteers as choral conductor for the Regent Park School of Music. For Tapestry's 30th Anniversary 2009-10 season he conducts an *Opera to Go* revival of past short works, and premieres *Dark Star Requiem*.

**Tom Diamond, Resident Studio Company Director** - Tom Diamond is completing his third season as Tapestry's Studio Company Director/Dramaturg. Past Tapestry productions include the Dora Award winning *Iron Road*, the national tour of *Still the Night* and three versions of *Opera to Go*. His first short film, "The Perfect Match," premiered to unanimous critical raves as part of *Opera to Go* in 2008 and has toured the festival circuit garnering a nomination for Best Experimental Film at Miami's 7th Annual Short Film Festival. Highlights of his productions include the world premiere of Timothy Sullivan's *Florence and the Lady With the Lamp* for the Elora Festival (Chalmers Award), five productions for Pacific Opera Victoria and ten operas for the Canadian Opera Company, most recently an acclaimed resurrection of the obscure *Don Giovanni* by Guiseppe Gazzaniga (the inspiration for Mozart's masterpiece). His production of *Squonk* was an off-Broadway hit and transferred to Broadway where it won the American Theatre Wing's Hewes Award. Mr. Diamond is perhaps most often recognized for his participation in both seasons of the Gemini Award-winning television series "Bathroom Divas." Recently, Mr. Diamond directed his first *Magic Flute* for Opera Lyra Ottawa at the National Arts Centre which marked the operatic conducting debut of Pinchas Zukerman.

#### **Patricia O'Callaghan, soprano, 3 Divas**

Patricia O'Callaghan was born and raised in Northern Ontario, Canada. At seventeen she lived in Mexico for a year as an exchange student. It was there that she had an epiphany one day and decided she should become an opera singer. Up until that time she could not decide whether to become a rock star or a nun and she thought opera was the perfect melding of the two: all the discipline and undebauched life of a nun, but she would still get to sing.

She trained at the University of Toronto and the Banff Centre for the Arts. In 1996 she got a Chalmer's Grant which allowed her to stop waitressing and devote herself to music fulltime. Pulling in favours from friends and family, she made her first CD, "Youkali." It featured cabaret songs by Weill, Satie and Poulenc - not quite opera, but close. She was signed to Marquis/EMI shortly thereafter. Following the release of her second CD, "Slow Fox," her worldwide distribution outside of Canada was snatched up by Teldec/Warner. So her third CD, "Real Emotional Girl," was released internationally, and she ended up touring her cabaret show around Europe and North America. Her fourth CD, "Naked Beauty," is receiving critical and popular praise.

Patricia does actually sing opera at times, mostly contemporary stuff. Recent highlights include opening the 2007 season in Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* with Toronto's Souleppper Theatre Company and touring the Juno-winning opera *Constantinople* by Christos Hatzis to Covent Garden's Royal Opera House. She recently appeared on jazz clarinetist Don Byron's CD, "A Fine Line," and has been touring with him as well. She's also had the good fortune to appear in television shows, including the Ken Finkelman series "Foolish Heart," her own Bravo! special, and the CBC/Rhombus special "Youkali Hotel." Patricia makes her home in Toronto and feels pretty lucky to be able to travel all over the world, singing great tunes.

#### **Jean Stilwell, mezzo soprano, 3 Divas**

Jean Stilwell, hailed on three continents for her complex portrayal of Carmen, is at the forefront of her generation's mezzo-sopranos. Since first assuming the role in Vancouver, Bizet's fascinating gypsy has opened many doors for Ms. Stilwell and she has appeared with the Buxton Festival, New York City Opera, Welsh National Opera, English National Opera, Opera Zuid of Holland, Connecticut Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and all the opera companies of Canada. Ms Stilwell has welcomed the opportunities to expand her repertoire and she has appeared for Vancouver Opera as Amneris in *AIDA*, Marie in *Wozzeck* for Pacific Opera Victoria and the premiere of *Facing South* with Tapestry New Opera Works. For the Festival of the Sound, she sang Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*



and was Genevieve in *Pelléas et Mélisande* for Festival Vancouver. Recent seasons have also included Katisha in *The Mikado* (Arizona Opera), the Beggar Woman in *Sweeney Todd* (Calgary Opera), Jenny in *The Threepenny Opera* (Vancouver Opera) and Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Manitoba Opera).

An engaging personality both on and offstage, Ms. Stilwell can be heard daily on Classical 96.3 FM's Good Day GTA with co-host Mike Duncan and she was seen on TV as part of the selection panel for the hit show "Bathroom Divas." Of particular note both last season and currently are her performances in Eric Idle's *Not the Messiah*.

She appeared in the premiere of this show in 2007 for the Luminato Festival in Toronto and at the Caramoor Festival and toured to Houston, Wolf Trap, and the Hollywood Bowl during the summer of 2008. She also appeared in the world premiere of *Transit of Venus* by Victor Davies for Manitoba Opera and sang the role of Peronskaya in Prokofiev's *War and Peace* with the Canadian Opera Company. She looks forward to *Casanova's Homecoming* for Minnesota Opera, Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance* for Toronto Operetta Theatre and her cabaret, *Carmen UnZipped* was heard in Huntsville, at the Richmond Hill Centre and Haliburton.

### **Theresa Tova, contralto, 3 Divas**

Sultry, sassy, witty, funny, enormously talented, graced with a velvet contralto, Theresa Tova, without a doubt one of the most versatile performers in Canada is equally at home in any venue. After a successful career as an award-winning actor/writer in both stage (*Still the Night* - four Dora Awards and Governor General Award nomination for excellence in Dramatic Literature) and television ("ENG" - Gemini nomination Best supporting actor). Tova followed her heart in a new direction by using her theatrical talents to present emotional interpretations in musical concerts.

Stage fright? She's never heard of it. It would deter her from the enjoyment she gets by being on stage and sharing her artistry with her audiences who automatically become her friends in what critics call her spontaneous house party style. Concert Halls, Cabarets and Supper-Clubs, Gala Celebrations and International Festivals,

### **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season Details:**

#### ***Opera to Go***

March 24, 25, 26, 2010

Fermenting Cellar, Distillery Historic District, 55 Mill St

Writers: TBC

Composers: TBC

Director: Tom Diamond

Music Director: Wayne Strongman

Cast: Xin Wang (soprano), Keith Klassen (tenor), Peter McGillivray (baritone), mezzo TBC

*The best of the best! Join us for an Opera to Go revival of some of our favourite short works from the past eight years.*

**Single Tickets on sale in 2010, visit [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com) for details**

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#### ***Dark Star Requiem***

June 2010

Dates & Venue TBC

Written by Jill Battson & composed by Andrew Staniland

Director: Tom Diamond

Music Director: Wayne Strongman

Cast: TBC

Featuring the Elmer Iseler Singers

An operatic oratorio on the history of HIV-AIDS featuring an exceptional cast and the Elmer Iseler Singers.

**Single tickets on sale in 2010, visit [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com) for details**



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### **NON-SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMMING:**

#### **I. *Get Stuffed*** (Written by Alexis Diamond & Composed by Richard Payne)

Produced by Tapestry and Words in Motion, and developed with the Canadian Diabetes Association *Get Stuffed* is a children's opera focusing on making healthy food choices. After a successful premiere tour in 2009, Tapestry will tour *Get Stuffed* to schools and community centres in northern Ontario in spring 2010. *Get Stuffed* is supported with multi-year funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and is sponsored by the Ministry of Health Promotion and the Healthy Eating Program at Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc.

Director: Emma Tibaldo

Music Director: Wayne Strongman

**For booking and other inquiries please call 416.537.6066 x224 or email [education@tapestrynewopera.com](mailto:education@tapestrynewopera.com)**

#### **II. *INside Opera Education Programme***

Tapestry continues partnerships with the Regent Park School of Music and City Hope in St. Jamestown with programme sponsorship from BMO Financial Group. With funding from the TELUS Community Investment Board, Tapestry conducted a summer INside Opera programme with City Hope entitled the "Real Time Project". Several youth participants collaborated with professional videographer Juan Baquero to document their peers during the INside Opera creation and performance process. Mr. Baquero is a Toronto based filmmaker who, for the past year, has been working on Listen to This, a Bravo/TVO documentary that explores the influence of music as a creative outlet for kids living in the inner city. A trailer for the documentary can be found on [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com) or [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

*"The TELUS Toronto Community Board is excited to support the INside Opera Education Programme, opening the door to an artistic education that at-risk youth in our communities may not otherwise have," said Johnnie-Mike Irving, acting chair of the TELUS Toronto Community Board. "This program brings youth together with professionals in the field, connecting minds through creativity and building healthier communities in the process."*

**For more information on INside Opera please call 416.537.6066 x224 or email [education@tapestrynewopera.com](mailto:education@tapestrynewopera.com)**

### **ABOUT THE COMPANY**

Tapestry - Tapestry is dedicated to the creation, development and performance of new opera works through its unique and highly collaborative work process. Under the leadership of Managing Artistic Director Wayne Strongman, Tapestry engages the hearts and minds of artists and audiences on subjects relevant to contemporary society. 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 15-minute operas for our annual Opera to Go production and graduate to full-length works. Our INside Opera Education Programme gives students the chance 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 and Richard Payne have already toured to over 30,000 students across Ontario. Tapestry productions which have premiered to critical and popular acclaim include the Dora-Award winning *Sanctuary Song* by Abigail Richardson & Marjorie Chan (with Theatre Direct and Luminato), *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 composer Chan Ka Nin & librettist Mark Brownell. [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com)

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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](mailto:blackwellcommunications@gmail.com)