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September 8, 2009

Tapestry announces first International Composer-Librettist Laboratory & Opera Briefs

TORONTO, ON... Tapestry new opera works is pleased to announce that the its 30th Anniversary season will open with the ninth installment of *Opera Briefs*, scenes resulting from its first **International Composer-Librettist Laboratory** (LibLab). With support from the [INCUBATE](#) program at the Toronto Arts Council, Tapestry has partnered with [Scottish Opera](#) to pair three UK artists (composers John Harris and Gareth Williams and writer Bernard MacLaverly) with three returning LibLab alumni: composer Stephen Andrew Taylor (*Opera to Go: My Mother's Ring*) and writers Anna Chatterton (*Opera to Go: See Saw; Swoon* for Canadian Opera Company) and Marjorie Chan (*Opera to Go: Mother Everest and Sanctuary Song*).

For most composers and writers the artistic process is a solitary one. Producers around the world agree that forming workable artistic partnerships between composers and playwrights is the single greatest challenge facing the development of new opera and music theatre. The **Composer-Librettist Laboratory** is Tapestry's response to this challenge. Initiated in 1995, the laboratory is an intensive one-week workshop for composers and writers to explore the collaborative process. Currently, the program attracts participants from Canada, the United States, Germany and England. 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.

Tapestry's annual **Composer-Librettist Laboratory** provides artists with the opportunity to work with several partners in a short period of time, thereby developing techniques for effective collaboration. Throughout the week-long program, writers and composers are partnered with one another for one day each. With input from music and stage directors, each pair writes a short piece of music theatre and investigates the collaborative process. Their work is performed at the end of each day by a resident ensemble of singers and repeatteurs and then constructively critiqued by the group.

Since 1995, Tapestry has nurtured over 90 creative artists through this unique program. Previous LibLabs have yielded 43 creative teams many who currently have projects in development in the Ernest Balmer Studio, including: Juliet Palmer and Julie Salverson, Rose Bolton and Jill Battson, Andrew Staniland and Jill Battson and Aaron Gervais and Colleen Murphy.

Composer Chan Ka Nin and librettist Mark Brownell met at the inaugural 1995 LibLab. Their opera *Iron Road* had its world premiere in April 2001 at the Elgin Theatre in Toronto. Linda Catlin Smith and Don Hannah also met at the 1995 LibLab and their Arctic drama, *Facing South*, premiered as part of the World Stage Festival in April of 2003. Abigail Richardson and Marjorie Chan also met in the 2003 LibLab and won a 2009 Dora Mavor Moore Award for *Sanctuary Song* which premiered as part of the Luminato Festival. Omar Daniel and Alex Poch-Goldin met in the 2001 LibLab and in May 2009 Tapestry premiered *The Shadow*, one of the best reviewed new works last season.

"We have wanted to find a way to engage with many of these artists in a "Graduate LIBLAB", where the energy of a 10-day intensive working period for these experienced artists would deepen our understanding of the collaborative process which is at the core of Tapestry's work, and hopefully spawn partnerships and ideas for full length works for the future.

We have also wanted to work with like-minded companies from around the world, where we share a similar aesthetic around the creation of new work, and a commitment to being a nurturing home for artists drawn to the operatic stage.



For both Michael Albano and myself, the joy of working with artists already experienced in the art form was palpable from the first day. The level of conversation reflected the maturity of the artists involved, and the assurance that only experience can bring. It was a marvellous engagement of all parties, truly a group of colleagues who had so much in common, that we were able to jump right into the challenges at hand."

...Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director

The 5-minute scenes produced in this year's Lab will be presented at Tapestry's annual season opener ***Opera Briefs, September 25 & 26 at 8pm and September 27 at 4pm 2009*** in the intimacy of The Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry.

Opera Briefs PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

September 25, 26 at 8pm and September 27 at 4pm, 2008
Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry, 55 Mill Street, Building 58, The Cannery, Studio 315

Writers: Anna Chatteron, Marjorie Chan, Benard MacLavery
Composers: John Harris, Stephen Andrew Taylor, Gareth Williams
Director: Michael Albano
Music Directors: Christopher Foley & Jennifer Tung
Cast: Carla Huhtanen (soprano), Lauren Phillips (mezzo soprano), Keith Klassen (tenor), Peter McGillivray (baritone),

Single Tickets: \$25 / \$10 students & arts workers by calling **416.537.6066 x243** or online at www.totix.ca

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions series are now on sale for the 09/10 Season: ***Opera Briefs, Opera to Go, Dark Star Requiem***
Season Subscription: **\$99**
Student / Arts Worker Season Subscription: **\$49**

Call 416.537.6066 x243 or email subscription@tapestrynewopera.com for subscription inquires.

2009/2010 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: Keith Klassen (tenor), Peter McGillivray (baritone), soprano TBC, 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 for details



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 for details

NON-SUBSCRIPTION PROGRAMMING:

I. *30th Anniversary Celebration Event*

December 2, 2009

Fermenting Cellar, Distillery Historic District, 55 Mill St.

Early bird price (by October 1, 2009): **\$110**

Regular price (after October 1, 2009): **\$130**

Tax receipt for the maximum amount allowable.

Call 416.537.6066 x243 or email subscription@tapestrynewopera.com

II. *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

III. *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 will lead a summer INside Opera programme with City Hope entitled the "Real Time Project". Several youth participants will collaborate with professional videographer Juan Baquero, 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.

"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



ARTISTIC BIOS

Michael Albano, director

Michael Patrick Albano is the resident stage director of the Opera training programme at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, where he has staged over twenty-five operas including the Canadian premières of Debussy's *L'Enfant Prodigue*, Paisiello's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Benjamin Britten's *Paul Bunyan* and the Toronto premiere of Offenbach's *Barbe-Bleu*.

Mr. Albano's guest directorial credits include *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* for the New York City Opera and *Wolf Trap, La Bohème* for the Canadian Opera Company, *Le Comte Ory* for the Manhattan School of Music, *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Yale School of Music, a new dialogue version of *Die Fledermaus* for Opera Kentucky, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* for Opera Hamilton, *Hansel and Gretel* for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, *La Fille du Régiment* for L'Opéra de Montréal and Verdi's *La Traviata* for the Opera Festival of New Jersey.

Mr. Albano has written three original children's opera librettos; *The Very Last Green Thing* and *The Thunder of Horses* - the latter based upon Blackfoot Indian legends. Both operas, although originally commissioned by the *Opera Theatre of St. Louis*, have had many successful mountings throughout North America. In 2004, Mr. Albano was commissioned by the Washington Opera to write and direct a new children's opera, *The Enchantment of Dreams*, which was premiered at the Kennedy Centre. In December of 2005, Mr. Albano was commissioned by Canadian Opera Children's Chorus to furnish an original libretto based upon Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The result was *A Dickens of a Christmas*, presented at the Harbourfront theatre in December of 2005 and revived this past December.

Additional libretto commissions include *Gianni* (based on the life of the baroque composer, Giovanni Pergolesi), for Opera Lyra, *The Last Duel* (with music by Gary Kulesha) for *MusicCanada 2000* and *Loss of Eden*, (based on the lives of Charles and Ann Lindbergh) which was premiered in June of 2002 by the *Opera Theatre of St. Louis* and subsequently repeated in Minneapolis. Mr. Albano's interest in the development of original opera librettos has led to his involvement for the past ten seasons as resident dramaturge for the *Tapestry New Opera Works* annual composer/librettist laboratory.

Last season, Mr. Albano directed the premiere of *Swoon*, commissioned by the Canadian Opera Company with music by James Rolfe and an original libretto by Anna Chatterton. He will return to the COC in April of 2008 to direct *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts.

Marjorie Chan, librettist

Marjorie is an award-winning theatre artist based in Toronto. Trained as an actor at George Brown Theatre School, Marjorie garnered a nomination for the Dora Mavor Prize in her first appearance onstage. She is the recipient of a Dora Mavor Moore Award in performance as well as the prestigious K.M. Hunter Artists' Award. As a playwright, her acclaimed drama *China Doll* was nominated for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production Doras as well as the Governor General's Literary Award. *China Doll* was also performed overseas as a part of Festival Canada Hong Kong. Her second full-length play, *a nanking winter* focuses on the 1937 invasion of Nanjing and was recently published by Playwrights Canada Press. It will receive its American premiere in December 2009. Along with playwright Damien Atkins, she adapted Hisashi Inoue's celebrated play about Hiroshima, *in the garden, two suns* which was commissioned and performed to coincide with 60th Anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs. As a librettist, Marjorie wrote the opera *Mother Everest* as well as *Sanctuary Song*, both with composer Abigail Richardson. The pair were recently recognized with a Dora for Outstanding New Opera for *Sanctuary Song*. She has also provided text for the multidisciplinary dance piece *Nanking Monologue*. Invitations to festivals and retreats include: Playwrights' Colony (Banff), Cahoots Playwriting Retreat @ Shaw, CrossCurrents Festival (Factory), Groundswell Festival (Nightwood Theatre), International Festival of Authors (Harbourfront), Dim Sum Festival (fu-Gen Theatre), Seedling Festival (Theatre Direct Canada), Hysteria Festival (Buddies in Bad Times), RED Festival, and the inaugural Stratford Festival Writers' Retreat. Marjorie has also been Playwright-in-Residence for Theatre Direct Canada and Cahoots Theatre Projects as well as Associate Artistic Director for Cahoots Theatre



Projects from 2006 – 2009. She currently runs Crossing Gibraltar, a theatre-training program for refugee and newcomer youth, now in its fourth season. Upcoming residencies: NYSU (Geneseo, New York) and Theatre du Pif (Hong Kong, China.) www.marjoriechan.com

Anna Chatterton, librettist

Anna is a performer, playwright and librettist. Past work includes *Stitch* (World Stage/Theatre Centre/urbanvessel, Dora Nomination), *See Saw* (Opera to Go), *Swoon* (Canadian Opera Company) and *Clean Irene & Dirty Maxine* (Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Independent Auntie). Upcoming; *Voice-Box* (Harbourfront/urbanvessel, Fresh Grounds program), *Breakfast* (Buddies, Independent Auntie) and *Donna* (Canadian Opera Company). Anna was Playwright in Residence at Tapestry New Opera Works and was part of the Artist Residency program at the Theatre Centre with companies Independent Auntie and urbanvessel. She is currently in Tarragon Theatre's Playwright's Unit and has been in units at The Canadian Stage Company and Factory Theatre. Anna is director of Youth Initiatives at Nightwood Theatre.

Bernard MacLaverty, librettist

Bernard MacLaverty was born in Belfast but now lives in Glasgow. He has published five collections of short stories and four novels, one of which, *Grace Notes* was shortlisted for the Booker Prize. He has written versions of his fiction for other media - radio plays, television plays, screenplays and now libretti.

John Harris, composer

Opera composition includes *Death of a Scientist* (Scottish Opera 5:15 series). Theatre credits include *The Last Witch* (Traverse Theatre / Edinburgh International Festival), *Monacellio* (Tron / Naples International Theatre Festival), *Nobody Will Ever Forgive Us*, *Nasty Brutish and Short*, *The Dogstone*, *Julie*, *Marie Queen of Scots*, *Gobbo* (all National Theatre of Scotland); *Lucky Box*, *The Nest*, *Knives in Hens*, *Anna Weiss*, *Family*, *Perfect Days*, *Greta*, *Sharp Shorts*, *Kill the Old Torture Their Young* (All Traverse Edinburgh), *Mother Courage*, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Dundee Rep), *Jerusalem* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Midwinter*, *Solstice* (Royal Shakespeare Company). Film and TV include *The Fingertrap* (BAFTA Scotland Emerging Talent Award 2009), *Saltmark* (Blindside), *The Emperor*, *The Green Man of Knowledge* (Red Kite). John also writes concert music and directs the Red Note Ensemble. He was for several years assistant organist at St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, and took his Masters degree in composition at the RSAMD in Glasgow.

Stephen Andrew Taylor, composer

Stephen Andrew Taylor composes music that explores boundaries between art and science. His first orchestra commission, *Unapproachable Light*—inspired by images from the Hubble Space Telescope and the New Testament—was premiered by the American Composers Orchestra in 1996 in Carnegie Hall. Other works include the chamber quartet *Quark Shadows*, commissioned by the Chicago Symphony; and *Seven Memorials*, a half-hour cycle for piano inspired by the work of Maya Lin and featured at Tanglewood in 2006. Excerpts from a new opera based on a novella by Ursula K. Le Guin have been performed recently by the New York City Opera and American Opera Projects. Highlights in 2008-09 include performances in New York, Miami, Washington DC, Amsterdam, Belgrade, Toronto, Mexico City, and the Bali Arts Festival. His music has won awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Debussy Trio, the Howard Foundation, the College Band Directors National Association, Conservatoire Américain de Fontainebleau, the New York State Federation of Music Clubs, the Illinois Arts Council, the American Music Center, and ASCAP. Born in 1965, Taylor studied at Northwestern and Cornell Universities, and California Institute of the Arts. He teaches at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he conducts the New Music Ensemble, and lives with his wife and two children.

Gareth Williams, composer

Originally from County Armagh, Gareth moved to Glasgow after studying music at Queen's University, Belfast. He completed his Masters in Composition in 2000 at the RSAMD, and a Postgraduate Certificate in Education in 2002. In 2008 he completed his PhD in Composition at the Academy, studying with Gordon McPherson, and now teaches in the composition department. Over the last few years Gareth has been active as a composer at the RSAMD, producing work for groups such as the Hebrides Ensemble, Scottish Opera, 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 Tete a Tete Opera Festival, and the York Late Music Festival.

In December 2004 Gareth was one of six composers who launched the Ken exhibition in Glasgow, organizing a weekend festival of contemporary music and art, whilst composing, producing, and performing an hour-long piece of music theatre. The piece, *Dead Duck*, was an exploration of nostalgia and contained images, objects and music that dated back to his childhood. The use of personal and popular material is a strong characteristic of his work and he performs regularly as a singer/songwriter and piano player. His first opera, *Love in the Blue Corner*, was premiered at the Plug Festival in May 2006 and received five stars in the Glasgow Herald. In 2008 Gareth worked with Irish writer Bernard MacLaverty to create *The King's Conjecture* for Scottish Opera which led Scottish Opera to recommission the composer for their 2009 season to create another work - *White* was premiered in February in Glasgow and Edinburgh. *Soft Rains*, for solo soprano, six part choir, organ and taiko drums, was commissioned to commemorate the building of the Clyde Tunnel in Glasgow, and was performed in March 2009 at Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum. Other performances this year included the premiere of 'Not Waving, Not Drowning' for double bass and ensemble, commissioned by the RSAMD for the 2009 Stringfest, and 'How' for the Illuminati Wind Quartet.

Later in 2009, Gareth has been invited to take a residency at the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris, where he will be writing a large-scale piece of music theatre. Gareth is represented by the Irish Contemporary Music Centre and is a member of the board at the Scottish Music Information Centre.

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

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For further media information and artist interviews please contact Kim Blackwell at
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