

Tapestry and Theatre Direct present, in partnership with **Luminato**, the world premiere of
Sanctuary Song

A new opera/theatre production for all ages

Composed by Abigail Richardson

Written by Marjorie Chan

Music Director: Wayne Strongman

Director: Lynda Hill

Cast: Xin Wang (soprano), Alvin Crawford (bass) with Sharmila Dey & Frank Cox O'Connell

Orchestra: Michael Schulte (violin), Lizzie Lavado (piano), Ryan Scott (percussion)

Original Set & Costume Design by Kelly Wolf

Original Lighting Design by Andrea Lundy

Original Video Design by Luisa Quintavalle

Choreography by Viv Moore

Stage Manager: Kathryn Westoll

TORONTO, ON...Tapestry and Theatre Direct present the world premiere of ***Sanctuary Song*** in partnership with **Luminato, Toronto's Festival of Arts & Creativity**. ***Sanctuary Song*** will have its world premiere June 7, 2008 at 1 p.m. at The Berkeley Street Theatre Downstairs, running until June 14th.

Sometimes the most beautiful friendships come in unusual sizes...

A remarkable 22-year friendship between man and creature culminates in a promise of freedom fulfilled and a joyful reunion when, after decades in captivity; an Asian elephant is brought to sanctuary.

Along the journey, her memories of childhood in the jungle, circus life and her solitary days in the zoo come to alive through the emotional power of opera, evocative dance and stunning design.

"No more circuses. No more zoos.... You will be free!"

Playwright **Marjorie Chan** (*China Doll, A Nanking Winter*) and composer **Abigail Richardson** (affiliate composer TSO, International Rostrum Prize, France), come together to tell a story from the point of view of a most unusual protagonist in what promises to be an unforgettable opera for all ages.

Under Tapestry and Theatre Direct's artistic leaders **Wayne Strongman** (music director) and **Lynda Hill** (director), a stellar cast and multiple Dora award-winning creative team has been assembled to realize ***Sanctuary Song***. Set & Costume Designer **Kelly Wolf** (*The Wars, The Last Five Years*) choreographer **Viv Moore** (*Body Geometry*), New York based video artist **Luisa Quintavalle** and acclaimed lighting designer **Andrea Lundy** (*insomnia, Possible Worlds*).

Bringing the moving friendship between an Asian elephant and her African American keeper to life are singers **Xin Wang** (soprano) and **Alvin Crawford** (bass) whose work has been seen on the international opera and Broadway stages. Filling out the cast in multiple roles that blend dance and drama are Toronto based theatre artists **Sharmila Dey** and **Frank Cox-O'Connell**.

Commissioned by Theatre Direct while Chan was Playwright in Residence in 2004, ***Sanctuary Song*** had its genesis in a partnership between the writing team sparked in Tapestry's Composer-Librettist Laboratory in 2003. This world premiere marks the second operatic project together since *Mother Everest* in 2004.

Sanctuary Song is the result of a dynamic collaboration between two award-winning Toronto companies committed to experimentation and risk-taking in their respective art forms, this new opera is an exciting intersection of the companies' mandates, which focus on the development of new work.

This will be the first time that **Tapestry, Theatre Direct** and **Luminato** have collaborated on a project and as **Tapestry** Managing Artistic Director Wayne Strongman explains, "We are thrilled to partner with **Theatre Direct** and **Luminato** for the world premiere of ***Sanctuary Song***. Marjorie Chan and Abigail Richardson have woven a magical story with exquisite music that will sing and dance into your heart. Our stellar international cast and design team will take you on a journey of a lifetime and open up new vistas on the meaning of friendship in our time."

Artistic Director Lynda Hill goes on to explain, "At **Theatre Direct** our work is motivated and inspired by young people. ***Sanctuary Song*** is testament to what is possible when we reach across the boundaries of our disciplines to honour the immensity of young people's imaginations and their capacity to embrace sophisticated performance. This beautiful story is a gift to young people as well and those who remember being so! "

A unique website created especially for the project is available for everyone, with resources for students and educators. www.sanctuarysong.ca

Story

Framed by the reluctant goodbye between Sydney and James, her African American keeper of 22 years, Sydney recounts in a scene that moves from song to a luscious dance section the destruction of her idyllic life in the jungles of Indonesia. When poachers abduct her she is wrenched from her dearest friend, Penny, who for Sydney is “like a baby sister”.

Her years performing in a circus come to a dramatic end when Sydney is injured in a fire on a boat off Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. After being sold to the Louisiana Purchase Zoo, Sydney resigns herself to solitary life until she meets James, with whom she develops a wonderful trust and communication that lasts for decades.

In a deeply moving final scene, Sydney is released into sanctuary and soon encounters another elephant. Tension and fear among the human witnesses is replaced by astonishment and joy when the two elephants embrace and Sydney is reunited with her childhood friend, Penny. As they wander off together into the “hills of grass” she had dreamt of for so long, James looks on and ahead vowing to remember his many years of friendship with Sydney.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

PREVIEW: June 6 at 7 p.m. (Public Preview)

DATES OF RUN:

Public Performances:

June 7 at 1 p.m. (World Premiere with Post-Show Reception)

June 8 at 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

June 11, 12 and 13 at 7 p.m.

June 14 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

School Performances:

June 10, 11 and 12 at 12:30 p.m.

TICKET PRICES:

Public Performances: \$25 adults; \$15 children & students; \$15 arts & cultural workers; \$70 family pack (4 people/must include one young person under the age of 14)

School Performances: \$12 for all tickets

***Gala (June 7 at 1 p.m. w/ post-show reception):** \$150 Gala family pack (4 people/must include one young person under the age of 14) *
performance-only tickets also available for June 7 premiere

VENUE: The Berkeley Street Theatre, Downstairs. 26 Berkeley St., Toronto, ON.

BOX OFFICE: 416-368-3110 / www.canstage.com or in person at The Berkeley Street Theatre, 26 Berkeley Street. Also available through Ticketmaster at www.ticketmaster.ca / 416-872-1111.

WEB PAGE: www.sanctuarysong.ca

Sanctuary Song was commissioned by **Theatre Direct**, with support from the Laidlaw Foundation and developed in partnership with **Tapestry new opera works** with support from the Canadian Opera Creation Program at Opera.ca.

About The Companies

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 biennial *Opera to Go* production and many to create 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 new children’s opera, *Elijah’s Kite* by Camyar Chai & James Rolfe has already toured to over 10,000 students across Ontario. Tapestry productions which have premiered to critical and popular acclaim include *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

Theatre Direct

For over 30 years, **Theatre Direct** has engaged young people through compelling, inventive and uncompromising professional theatre for young audiences. The company has produced and toured over 85 productions reaching more than two million young people across the country. In recognition of its outstanding work, Theatre Direct Canada has been the recipient of 22 Dora Mavor Moore Award nominations, five Dora Awards, 10 Chalmers Canadian Play Awards and the Canada Council Theatre for Young Audiences Prize. Their focus on the balance of artistic and education excellence has made them recognized leaders in the field of theatre for young people. In the Fall of 2008, the company will launch community and

education programming in its new studio theatre space at the Green Arts Barns at St. Clair and Christie in the heart of the St. Clair West Village.
www.theatredirect.ca

Luminato – learn more about Luminato at www.luminato.com

Cast

Xin Wang (soprano) - Sydney – A native of Mainland China, Canadian Soprano Xin Wang is an active performer of contemporary music. She has participated in workshops and performed lead roles in Canadian contemporary operas and chamber pieces produced by such companies as Tapestry, Soundstreams Canada, Queen Of Puddings Music Theatre and Continuum.

Xin has had the privilege of working with Canadian and International Composers including Melissa Hui, Christopher Butterfield, Jacques Bank, Karin Rehnqvist, Chan Ka Nin, James Rolfe, Ana Sokolovic and Steve Reich, among others.

Ms Wang’s 2007-2008 highlights include the performance of *Puksanger* by Karin Rehnqvist, *Daniel Variation* by Steve Reich, John Clare’s *Invitation to Eternity* set by Jacques Bank, Jacques Prevert’s *Contes pour enfants pas sages* set by Christopher Butterfield and the first Cree opera *The Journey* by Melissa Hui. She is thrilled to be part of the world premiere of *Sanctuary Song*.

Alvin Crawford (bass) – James – Alvin Crawford hails from Toronto, Canada and is thrilled to be performing at home!

Operatic roles include Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna Volksoper), Der Lauschprecher in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, James Conlon conductor (New World Symphony, Los Angeles Symphony, Spoleto Music Festival, Italy), Alvisse in *La Gioconda*, Il Grande Inquisitor in *Don Carlos* (Staatstheater Kassel), Pistola in *Fastaff*, Sourin in *Pique Dame* (Canadian Opera Company), The Ghost in *Hamlet* (Opera Theatre of St. Louis).

On Broadway, he has performed as Sam Cooke in the *Buddy Holly Story*, John in *Miss Saigon*, The Lion in *Candide* and Mufasa in *The Lion King*. Mr. Crawford has been seen on Canadian and American television and was in MGM feature film *It Runs in the Family* starring Michael and Kirk Douglas. Alvin Crawford is a graduate of the Juilliard Opera Center.

Sharmila Dey (actor) – Penny / Girl - Sharmila is extremely happy to be a part of *Sanctuary Song*. Most recently she toured a production of *Wrecked* with Roseneath Theatre through the U.S. and across Ontario. Other theatre credits include *Danny King of the Basement* (Roseneath Theatre), *Beneath The Banyan Tree* (Sampradaya Dance Creations/Theatre Direct), *Beggar Boy* (Montreal Youtheatre), *Much Ado About Nothing* (Shakespeare in the Rough) and *The Tempest* (Resurgence Theatre). She also appears in film and television. Sharmila is a graduate of the George Brown Theatre Program and was born, raised and resides in Toronto.

Frank Cox-O’Connell (actor) – Hunter, Ringmaster, Worker – Frank Cox-O’Connell is an actor, musician and theatre maker living in Toronto. As a founding member of One Reed Theatre he created and performed *Nor The Cavaliers Who Come With Us* (Spotlight Award for performance, SummerWorks 2006) and is creating *(Never Underestimate) The Power* with director Paul Thompson for SummerWorks 2008. He has performed regularly with Small Wooden Shoe with whom he is developing *Dedicated To The Revolution for Buddies in Bad Times’ 08/09* season. Other acting credits include *The Drawer Boy* (Theatre Passe Muraille), *Bach at Leipzig* (Theatre Athena) and *The Demonstartion* (Theatre Direct). Frank is a graduate of The National Theatre School of Canada.

The Creative Team

Abigail Richardson (Composer) – Abigail Richardson was born in Oxford, England and moved to Canada as a child. Ironically, she was diagnosed completely and incurably deaf at the age of five. Upon moving to Canada, her hearing was fully intact within months. She received her Bachelor of Music from the University of Calgary and her Masters and Doctorate degrees from the University of Toronto. Her music has been played at the Festival Présences of Paris, Winnipeg New Music Festival, Newfoundland Sound Symposium, Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Festival of the Sound, among others. Abigail won the first Karen Kieser Prize for Canadian music and the Canadian Music Centre Prairie Region Award. Most significantly, she was awarded the top prize for composers under 30 at the prestigious International Rostrum of Composers in Paris. Her music has been broadcast in 35 countries. She has been commissioned by such groups as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Victoria Symphony, Radio France, Tapestry, New Music Concerts (for her husband, violinist Michael Schulte), Theatre Direct, Southern Ontario Chamber Music Institute, Talisker Players, Festival Winds, among others. Abigail is the affiliate composer with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

Marjorie Chan (Librettist) – Marjorie’s debut as a playwright was the acclaimed drama *China Doll* (Nightwood Theatre) which was nominated for several Dora Mavor Moore Awards, including Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production and was also nominated for a Governor General’s Literary Award. It was also performed in Hong Kong as a part of Festival Canada Hong Kong. Marjorie wrote the libretto for the short opera *Mother Everest for Opera To Go* (Tapestry New Opera Works) which was recorded and aired on CBC Radio. For the 60th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Marjorie, along with award-winning playwright Damien Atkins, adapted Hisashi Inoue’s celebrated play *In*

the garden, two suns from Roger Pulvers' translation. It was performed at the Japan Foundation, York University, and the University of Toronto as well as at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

Wayne Strongman (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 including the Cantonese-English *Iron Road* in 2001 (Brownell/Chan), *Facing South* (Hannah/Smith), *The Shadow* (Poch-Goldin/Daniel) 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 2008, in addition to the seven new short operas for *Opera to Go* which is part of Harbourfront Centre's World Stage he will premiere *Sanctuary Song* (Chan/Richardson) for Toronto's Luminato Festival. 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.

Lynda Hill (Director) – Lynda is in her seventh season as the Artistic Director of Theatre Direct. Over her time at the company she has directed *Beneath the Banyan Tree* by Emil Sher, *Alphonse* by Wajdi Mouawad, *The Phoenix Rides a Skateboard* by Kate Rigg, *Andrew's Tree* by Martha Brooks, and *I Met a Bully on the Hill* by Martha Brooks and Maureen Hunter. She has guided the commissioning and development of all new work at Theatre Direct since 2002 including the Dora Award-winning inter-disciplinary work *And, By The Way Miss....* created by the Urge Collective, *The Demonstration* (The Democracy Project), and *The Babysitter* by Eric Woolfe. As an arts educator, Lynda has taught young people and youth for over 15 years and has led the summer opera program for children at the Canadian Opera Company for the past six years. Before her appointment to Theatre Direct, Lynda worked extensively as a director and dramaturge and conceived and led new approaches to new play development at Cahoots Theatre Projects and Nightwood Theatre where she was the co-Artistic Director and Associate Artistic Director, respectively. In 1995, Lynda was awarded a fellowship at the respected Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart where she created a number of inter-disciplinary works including, *NO Place Like Home* with Cary Gayler, which traveled to Podewil in Berlin; and *Dark Forest* presented at the Music Gallery, Toronto.

Viv Moore (Choreographer) – Viv Moore has been choreographing and performing (dancing and acting) both collaboratively and as a solo artist, in dance, theatre, film and video in England, Sweden, Australia and Canada since 1979. Viv has also choreographed musicals and films and has taught movement for many years. Currently she teaches dance and movement at Humber College (Film & TV Programme). Viv co-founded Remote Control with Dave Wilson in 1979 and The Illuminations with Wilson and Pam Johnson in 1990 (Toronto). Viv has danced in works by Dave Wilson, Pam Johnson, Allen Kaeja, Holly Small, Darcey Callison and Denise Fujiwara. Her solo work is an eclectic mix of influences of theatre, dance, English Music Hall and Butoh. She received a Harold (1998-99) and the Paula Citron fFIDA Award (1999) for choreography and performance of *Bogie Woman*, and was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for *Body Geometry, the 7th Angel* (2002).

Kelly Wolf (Original Set & Costume Designer) – Kelly has designed sets and costumes for many Canadian theatre companies and her work spans a variety of styles and periods. For Theatre Direct Canada, Kelly has designed *I Met a Bully on the Hill* (2003) and *Andrew's Tree* (2002), both of which were nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding Production in the Theatre for Young Audiences category. Notable productions include *The Last Five Years* (CanStage), *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Stratford Festival), *Edwin Drood*, *John Bull's Other Island*, *The Apple Cart*, *S.S. Tenacity* (Shaw Festival), *Tons of Money*, *Fiddler on the Roof* (Drayton Entertainment) *Blithe Spirit* (Theatre Aquarius), and *The Domino Heart* (Tarragon Theatre). She has also designed and taught at several theatre schools - Ryerson, Humber and Brock as well as for the Mountview Theatre School in London, England. Kelly is a graduate of York University, Toronto and Central Saint Martin's College in England.

Andrea Lundy (Original Lighting Designer) – Andrea is a Toronto-based award-winning lighting designer. She has been nominated for 17 Dora Mavor Moore Awards, winning six times for *Stories from the Rains of Love and Death*, *Russell Hill*, *The Attic*, *The Pearls and Three Fine Girls*, *Possible Worlds*, *insomnia*, and *Oedipus*. She has spent four seasons at the Shaw Festival and has worked extensively with Tarragon Theatre, LKTYP, Soulpepper Theatre, CanStage Necessary Angel Theatre Company, Factory Theatre, Theatre Passe Muraille, Neptune Theatre and many other Canadian companies. She is the Production Designer and Production Manager for the Dora Awards as well as the Tour and Production Manager for the Necessary Angel Theatre Company.

Luisa Quintavalle (Original Video Design) – Luisa is a former fellow of the respected Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany and is now based in New York. This current collaboration emerged from Theatre Direct's recent project with Solitude entitled *The Carpet*. Her award-winning video and film installations have brought her international recognition.

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