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September 3, 2009

Let the cake cutting begin – Tapestry new opera works announces its 30th Anniversary Season!

TORONTO, ON... Tapestry new opera works Founding and Managing Artistic Director Wayne Strongman today proudly announced the programming for the company's celebratory 30th Anniversary season. It will be an exciting mix of stunning world premiere new operas and a commemorative look at shows from the past 30 years.

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 25th 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 *Elswhereless* (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
- 94 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*

2009-2010 – Tapestry's 30th Anniversary Season

In keeping with this tradition, the 2009/2010 season will begin with Tapestry's first International Composer-Librettist Laboratory. With support from the INCUBATE program at the Toronto Arts Council, Tapestry will partner Scottish Opera to pair 3 UK artists with 3 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, Sanctuary Song*).

The 5-minute scenes produced in the Lab will be presented at Tapestry's annual season opener *Opera Briefs*, September 25, 26, 27, 2009 in the Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry.

March 24, 25, 26, 2010 in the Fermenting Cellar, Distillery District, Tapestry will revive some the critical and audience favourites from past *Opera to Go* productions (5 productions since 2002).

In June 2010, the world premiere of *Dark Star Requiem* – an operatic oratorio on the history of HIV-AIDS – will feature an outstanding cast of soloists and the Elmer Iseler Singers.

In addition, Tapestry will honour its 30th anniversary with a special one-night celebration headlined by the 3 Divas – Patricia O'Callaghan, Jean Stilwell and Theresa Tova – and featuring a number of company alumni, in concert December 2, 2009 at the Fermenting Cellar.

"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



From Studio Company Resident Director Tom Diamond:

"It is wonderfully gratifying to enter Tapestry's 30th Anniversary Year and my 4th season as Resident Director/Dramaturg having experienced so much critical and popular success in our 29th! At this year's Dora Mavor Moore Awards, Tapestry led the Best New Musical/Opera category with Sanctuary Song winning the award and competing against 3 of the works we developed for Opera to Go. After 7 years in development The Shadow proved to be the best reviewed new opera seen in Canada last season. This outstanding community acknowledgment is gratifying and we shall continue striving to make our development wing the finest of it's kind in the world."

...Tom Diamond

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.

PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

Opera Briefs

September 25, 26 at 8pm and September 27 at 3pm, 2008

Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry, 55 Mill Street, Building 58, The Cannery, Studio 315

Writers: Marjorie Chan, Anna Chatteron, Bernard 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), mezzo TBC

Our annual season opener - scenes from our first International LibLab. Presented in the intimacy of The Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry, this is the ninth incarnation of Opera Briefs.

Single Tickets on sale September 7, 2009 at 416.537.6066 x243 or www.totix.ca

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 Gala 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



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 Giuseppe 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." Upcoming productions include his first *Magic Flute* for Opera Lyra Ottawa at the National Arts Centre which will mark the operatic conducting debut of Pinchas Zukerman.

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
416-346-4709, 416-686-0982 or blackwellcommunications@gmail.com