



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

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April 4, 2011

*"...where the future of Canadian opera is being made today."  
John Terauds, Toronto Star*

## Tapestry announces a New Opera Showcase to culminate the 2010-2011 season

**TORONTO, ON...** Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director, is pleased to announce that Tapestry New Opera's 2010/11 season will culminate on June 14 & 15, 2011 with a **New Opera Showcase** of works in development at Tapestry, a presentation of some of the short works being developed for *Opera to Go* and excerpts from several full-length operas:

### ***Waterfall***

(Maja Ardal, librettist) / Norbert Palej, composer)

Creative match made in the 2010 LibLab

*Waterfall* is inspired by Icelandic mythology, a rural tale of forbidden love, with a mystic chorus in the title role (The Waterfall). The haunting first instalment of *Waterfall*, showcased at Tapestry's *Opera Briefs* in September, featured a stunning original performance by mezzo-soprano Kimberly Barber, who will return for the June New Opera Showcase. It is the first opera by this team: Dora award-winning theatre artist Maja Ardal and Toronto-based Polish-Canadian composer Norbert Palej.

### ***M'Dea Undone***

(Marjorie Chan, librettist / John Harris, composer)

Creative match made in the 2009 LibLab.

A contemporary creation inspired by the Greek classic, this mainstage work by award-winning playwright and actor Marjorie Chan – Tapestry's Writer in Residence, and Edinburgh-based English composer John Harris is being developed in partnership with Scottish Opera. Scottish Opera's Alex Reedjik describes the companies' similar taste, style and pedagogy which facilitate "a truly creative and symbiotic partnership – all heading toward the building of opera muscles for new / young composers and writers. AND most importantly with public performances at the end of it all which is really the point of opera writing. I think that given we live in hugely modern times, it's terrific that we can share in this close cultural collaboration with emerging artists from both countries leading to work that is so much more than the sum of the parts."

### ***"Scenes from an Old Glasgow Pub"***

(David Brock, librettist / Gareth Williams, composer)

Creative match made in the 2010 LibLab

A presentation of the developing *Sloans Project* from Noise Opera, new opera vignettes based on real-life love stories in Glasgow's historic Sloans Bar and Restaurant, to be produced in July for the 2011 Merchant City Festival. Noise Opera calls the Sloans Project "an innovative example of music theatre which fuses the line between audience as spectator and participant." Glasgow-based Irish composer Gareth Williams has participated twice in Tapestry's Composer-Librettist Laboratory (LibLab), describing the Tapestry experience as "the best working environment that I've ever come across - I felt safe and felt that I could make the music I believed in making - and it's very rare to encounter an ethos like that." He and Toronto-based librettist David Brock have chosen to return to Tapestry to workshop *Scenes from an Old Glasgow Pub*, prior to their world premiere in Scotland as the *Sloans Project*.



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### **Ruth**

(Michael Lewis MacLennan, librettist / Jeffrey Ryan, composer)

Creative team behind *The Laurels*, part of *Opera to Go 2002* and *2010*

The history of Canada is made up of countless immigrant stories. The challenge of leaving home, adapting to a new land and customs, and raising a family under trying circumstances runs through our collective memories. In this new opera for soloists and choir, playwright-screenwriter-producer Michael Lewis MacLennan and Juno-nominated composer Jeffrey Ryan take the basic story from the smallest book in the Old Testament and apply the "moral" to contemporary Canadian society and our immigrant experiences: "For your people shall be my people."

"We are very excited about these new works in development. The teams represented are some of the finest creators from both sides of 'the pond'. Working with their experience and maturity, and with our Scottish Opera colleagues, has been exhilarating for the performers as well as the staff, and it is time now to share this progression with our audience. We think you will be 'wowed'!"

**Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director**

The 2010-2011 season firmly establishes Tapestry as an international home to new opera for creators, developers and performers, all collaborators in telling stories that need to be told. This season is presented in the intimacy of Tapestry's home, the Ernest Balmer Studio, in the Distillery Historic District.

### **TICKETS**

\$25 Regular / \$20 Student & Arts Worker

**Box Office**

416.537.6066 / [tapestrynewopera.com](http://tapestrynewopera.com)

### **PERFORMANCE DETAILS:**

**June 14, 2011 at 7:30pm**

**June 15, 2011 at 6:30pm**

### **The Ernest Balmer Studio at Tapestry**

55 Mill St. Bldg. 58. Studio 315. Distillery Historic District, Toronto ON.

**Director/Dramaturge:** Tom Diamond

**Music Director/Dramaturge:** Wayne Strongman

### **Singers:**

Neema Bickersteth, soprano

Xin Wang, soprano

Kimberly Barber, mezzo-soprano

Heather Jewson, mezzo-soprano

Keith Klassen, tenor

Christopher Mayell, tenor

Peter McGillivray, baritone

Curtis Sullivan, baritone

### **BIOS**

#### **Maja Ardal, librettist**

Maja Ardal is a playwright, performer and Artistic Director of Contrary Company. She was the recipient of the 2002 George Luscombe Award for Mentorship in the Theatre. She wrote and performs *You Fancy Yourself*, (published by Playwrights Canada Press). She received the 2009 Dora Award for outstanding performance. YFY toured in 2009 to



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the UK. Her most recent play *The Cure for Everything* will be produced by Theatre Passe Muraille in the fall of 2010. Maja's first play, *Midnight Sun*, was produced in Iceland and the U.S. During the 90s, Maja was Artistic Director of Young People's Theatre (Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People). An Icelandic- Canadian, Maja was schooled in Scotland. She has directed across Canada, notably for The Shaw Festival, The Grand Theatre, Alberta Theatre Projects and Great Canadian Theatre Company. For ATP she directed *Stones in His Pockets* (Betty Mitchell Award nomination for Outstanding Direction). At present she is adapting and developing *The Prisoner of Tehran* by Marina Nemat. Maja teaches playwriting and physical theatre.

### **Norbert Palej, composer**

Originally from Cracow, Poland, Norbert Palej has been increasingly recognized for his "first-rate and genuinely original work" (American Composers Orchestra), and a musical language that generates "visceral excitement" (The Boston Globe).

Norbert Palej has been Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Toronto since 2008. He also serves as the director of the University of Toronto gamUT chamber orchestra, and as coordinator of the annual New Music Festival. He holds composition degrees from Cornell University (D.M.A.), The Juilliard School (M.M.), and the New England Conservatory (B.M.). He studied conducting at the Academy of Music in Cracow (Poland) and at The Juilliard School in New York. Palej is also an active concert pianist and conductor.

Recent commissions include a percussion concerto for Evelyn Glennie, and a choral work for Soundstreams, featuring the Elmer Iseler Singers, the Polish Chamber Choir, and the Toronto Children's Chorus. His music has been heard in Canada, USA, Poland, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Great Britain, and Costa Rica.

He is a recipient of the Toru Takemitsu Award from the Japan Society in Boston, the ASCAP Morton Gould Young Composer Award, the Robbins Family Prize in Music Composition, the Benjamin Britten Memorial Fellowship, and the Susan and Ford Schumann Fellowship. He participated in the Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute, the American Composers Orchestra Underwood New Music Readings, the Academy for New Music and Audio-Art in Tyrol, Austria, the International Workshops for Contemporary Music Krakow/Stuttgart, as well as the Tanglewood, Aspen, Caramoor, and Budapest music festivals.

### **Marjorie Chan, librettist**

Marjorie is a multi-disciplinary theatre artist based in Toronto. A four-time nominee, Marjorie was the recipient of two Toronto Dora Awards, one each for acting (Outstanding Performance) and writing (Outstanding New Opera). In 2005, she was named the K.M. Hunter Theatre Artist, an Ontario-wide award for mid-career artists. Marjorie was previously Associate Artistic Director of *Cahoots Theatre Company* as well as Writer-in-Residence at *Cahoots, Theatre Direct Canada*, and *SUNY* (Geneseo, New York.)

As a playwright and librettist, Marjorie's works have been performed in the USA, Hong Kong, and Russia as well as having their premieres in Canada. Marjorie is most well-known for her dramas focusing on Chinese history. Her first play, *China Doll* explored the seeds of feminism in China, with the metaphor of the bound foot. *China Doll* was nominated for Outstanding New Play and Outstanding Production as well as the Governor General's Award. *China Doll* was also performed overseas as a part of *Festival Canada Hong Kong*. Her second full-length play, *a nanking winter* focused on the 1937 invasion of Nanjing, delving into contemporary and historical ramifications. It received its American premiere in December 2009. Her most recent full-length play is *The Madness of the Square*, set during the heady days leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. The play premiered in Toronto in April 2009, and was excerpted for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial in Nathan Phillips Square.

As a librettist working with composer Abigail Richardson, Marjorie wrote *Mother Everest (Opera to Go, Tapestry)*, about an ambitious mountain climber, as well as *Sanctuary Song (Tapestry/Theatre Direct/Luminato)*, a new opera for families centred around a captive elephant named Sydney. Marjorie and Abigail were awarded a Dora for Outstanding New Opera in 2009 for *Sanctuary Song*. Marjorie is currently working on *M'dea Undone*, a new contemporary adaptation of Medea, with Edinburgh-based composer John Harris. Her other operatic collaborations have been with composers Wende Bartley, Stephen Andrew Taylor, and Gareth Williams.



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Open to diverse and interesting forms, Marjorie's writing has also supported dance pieces, sound theatre, radio drama and 'cell phone' plays. Invitations to festivals and retreats include: Playwrights' Colony (*Banff Centre*), Cahoots Playwriting Retreat (*Cahoots/Shaw Festival*), CrossCurrents Festival (*Factory*), Groundswell Festival (*Nightwood Theatre*), International Festival of Authors (*Harbourfront*), Dim Sum Festival (*fu-Gen Theatre/Harbourfront*), Seedling Festival (*Theatre Direct Canada*), Hysteria Festival (*Buddies in Bad Times*), RED Festival, and the inaugural *Stratford Festival Writers' Retreat*.

Trained at *George Brown Theatre School* as a performer, Marjorie was awarded the John Bannerman Bursary upon graduation. In her first production outside of school, Marjorie garnered a nomination for the Dora Mavor Prize (Outstanding Performance in a Professional Debut.) She then proceeded to perform across the country from New Brunswick to British Columbia with numerous award-winning companies, including *Nightwood Theatre*, *Cahoots Theatre Company*, *Theatre Passe Muraille*, *Factory Theatre*, *Vancouver Playhouse*, *Persephone Theatre*, *Carousel Players*, *Lorraine Kimsa Theatre for Young People*, *Shakespeare-in-the Rough*, *Canadian Stage*, *Factory Theatre*, *Grand Theatre*, *Actors' Repertory Company* and *da da kamera*. As well, Marjorie has an active career in film, television and voice.

In addition to her professional activities, Marjorie is a passionate and outspoken advocate for arts access and education. She serves on the *Theatre Ontario* Youth Training Theatre Program Committee, the *George Brown* Artistic Advisory Board, and is a frequent adjudicator for the *Sears Drama Festival*. Marjorie currently runs *Crossing Gibraltar*, a theatre-training and performance program for young refugees and newcomers, created in 2006. Taking place in diverse neighbourhoods across Toronto, *Crossing Gibraltar's* next program is *Crossing Gibraltar, Crossing Generations*, an opportunity for newcomer youth and seniors to create a new piece of theatre. Marjorie also teaches playwriting workshops in community and school settings from the elementary to the university level. Most recently, Marjorie was Artist-in-Residence with *Theatre du Pif* (Hong Kong) where she directed the Asian premiere of *Knives in Hens*, and explored text adaptation in a collaborative context. Upcoming: Writer-in-Residence (*Tapestry New Opera*), and Director - Play Creation Unit (*Carlos Bulosan Theatre*.) [www.marjoriechan.com](http://www.marjoriechan.com)

### **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.

### **David Brock, librettist**

David is a past member of the Canadian Stage New Play Creation Group, the BASH! artistic development program, and the 2008 and 2010 Tapestry New Opera Composer-Librettist Laboratory. He has won a Theatre BC National Playwriting award, four Vancouver Island One Act Play awards, and the Gordon and Shirley Wagner Award for playwriting. Most recently, he released a chapbook of poetry, *Gasmask Summer* (Emergency Response Unit), and his play *Wet* premiered at the 2010 Toronto Fringe Festival. He is currently writing a black metal opera and has penned the libretto for an upcoming song cycle with composer Jack Perla, which will debut in San Francisco as part of the Paul Drescher Ensemble's 2010/2011 season. He has his MFA from the University of Guelph and currently teaches at Humber College

### **Gareth Williams, composer**

Born in Ireland, Gareth Williams moved to Glasgow after studying music at Queen's University, Belfast. He completed his Masters in Composition in 2000 at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, and his Postgraduate Certificate in Education in 2002. In 2008 he completed his PhD in Composition at the RSAMD, studying with Gordon McPherson. His works have been performed by groups such as the Hebrides Ensemble, 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 York Late Music Festival, and Scottish Opera's 5:15 Festival. Gareth was a participant in Tapestry's 2009 LibLab, and his music was featured in last September's Opera



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Briefs at the Ernest Balmer Studio, later to be remounted in Russia in March 2010. Gareth was able to attend the LibLab in 2010 with the financial support of Creative Scotland.

### **Michael Lewis MacLennan, librettist**

Born in Vancouver, Michael Lewis MacLennan now divides his time between Toronto, Vancouver and Los Angeles, working as a playwright, screenwriter and TV producer. With six published plays, he is a two-time finalist for Canada's prestigious Governor General's Award and the only playwright to win the Herman Voaden National Playwriting Award twice. His first play *Beat The Sunset* garnered Vancouver's Jessie Richardson Award for outstanding emerging playwright and the Theatrum National Playwriting Competition. *Grace* won the Theatre BC National Playwriting Competition and has been produced across Canada and internationally. His next two plays *The Shooting Stage* and *Last Romantics* both won the Voaden Prize and were Governor General's Award nominees. Other plays include *Leaning Over Railings*, *The Fabulous Life*, (commissioned by The Vancouver Playhouse) and *Life After God* (commissioned by Touchstone Theatre and adapted from the short story by Douglas Coupland (Generation X)). His most recent play *The Good Egg* premiered in 2009 and was published the same year. Current stage projects include the opera libretto for *Ruth*.

### **Jeffrey Ryan, composer**

Praised for his "strong and unique voice" (Winnipeg Free Press), "masterful command of instrumental colour" (Georgia Straight), and "superb attention to rhythm" (Audio Ideas Guide), Jeffrey Ryan has emerged as one of Canada's leading composers. His music has been commissioned, performed and broadcast by major orchestras, ensembles and soloists across Canada and internationally, has inspired new works by choreographers Barbara Bourget and Rob Kitsos, and served as the soundtrack to the dance film *Fata Morgana*.

Twice nominated for Classical Composition of the Year Juno awards (*Quantum Mechanics* in 2008 and *Pangaea* in 2005, the latter recorded by the Thunder Bay Symphony), his growing discography includes recordings by the Bowling Green Philharmonia, the Hannaford Street Silver Band, and the Penderecki String Quartet. 2010 added recordings by *musica intima*, the Canadian Chamber Choir, and pianist Rachel Kiyoo Iwaasa, with a release by the Vancouver Symphony upcoming. Based in Vancouver, Ryan is Composer Advisor for Music Toronto, and was the Vancouver Symphony's Composer Laureate for the 2008/09 season, after serving as the VSO's Composer-in-Residence from 2002 to 2007.

Jeffrey Ryan holds degrees from Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Toronto and The Cleveland Institute of Music.

### **Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director & Music Director/Dramaturge**

One of Canada's most distinguished music directors, Wayne Strongman is a champion of Canadian writers and composers. As founding Managing Artistic Director of Tapestry New Opera, now in its 31st season of innovative creation for the stage, 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), *Sanctuary Song* (Chan/Richardson) and *Dark Star Requiem* (Battson/Staniiland) –both for Luminato – 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. Of the over 100 creative artists who have been nurtured through this programme, over 40 have successfully brought original operas to stages across Canada and the USA, including at Tapestry. 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



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new work creation process which has become Tapestry's unique calling. Mr. Strongman has brokered partnerships with several international companies to bring Canadian artists to a wider public, notably English National Opera (London) Scottish Opera (Glasgow), and American Opera Projects (New York). For fourteen seasons, Mr. Strongman was the celebrated Artistic Director of the Bach Elgar Choir, performing an annual concert series at Hamilton Place in addition to feature events like the unveiling of the Bombardier Global Express Jet (with the Toronto Symphony) and the Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill in the presence of HM Queen Elizabeth II. A noted choral specialist, he has also conducted and commissioned numerous Canadian premieres for the CBC: Harry Somers' *Chura-Churum*, Maryan Mozetich's *Death and the Morningstar*, Harry Freedman's *Fanfares*, and Christos Hatzis' *Kyrie and In memoriam Elmer Iseler*.

Mr. Strongman volunteers as the choral conductor for the Regent Park School of Music and has presided over the choir's remarkable rise to fame, performing for the Governor General's Arts Awards at the NAC, Prime Minister Jean Chretien's farewell at the Air Canada Centre and the opening of the Blue Jays Season at the Rogers Centre. They have performed with many outstanding Canadian artists including Jackie Richardson and the Barenaked Ladies. Under his tutelage, the school now boasts its first graduate to pursue university education in operatic studies with full academic scholarship.

Mr. Strongman has led a number of festivals across the province as Artistic Director, including the Quinte Summer Music Festival and the Algoma Fall Festival.

Mr. Strongman has served on both the Ontario Region and National Council of the Canadian Music Centre and was honoured in 2009 as one of 50 CMC Ambassadors for his dedication to the performance of music by Canadian composers. On December 30, 2009 Her Excellency The Honourable Michaëlle Jean, Governor General of Canada, appointed Mr. Strongman as a Member of the Order of Canada.

### **Tom Diamond, Director/Dramaturge**

Tom Diamond is in his fifth season as Tapestry's Studio Company Director / Dramaturg. Past Tapestry productions include critically acclaimed premieres of *Dark Star Requiem*, *The Shadow*, the Dora Award winning *Iron Road*, the national tour of *Still the Night* and four previous versions of *Opera to Go*. Other career highlights 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. His production of *Squonk* was an off Broadway hit and transferred to Broadway where it won the American Theatre Wing's Hewes Award. Last season he staged his first *Magic Flute* for Opera Lyra Ottawa at the National Arts Centre which marked the operatic conducting debut of Pinchas Zukerman. Recent projects include his third production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, this time in Sulmona, Italy and a new production of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* for Pacific Opera Victoria. Mr Diamond is perhaps most often recognized for his participation in both seasons of the Gemini Award-winning television series *Bathroom Divas*.

### **ABOUT THE COMPANY**

Tapestry New Opera is an international home for new work creation, development and performance through its unique and highly collaborative work process. Under the leadership of Managing Artistic Director Wayne Strongman, CM, Tapestry engages the hearts and minds of artists and audiences, using opera to tell the stories that need to be told. 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 regular *Opera to Go* productions 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 *Dark Star Requiem* by Jill Battson & Andrew Staniland (with the Gryphon Trio and Elmer Iseler



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Singers) and the Dora-Award winning *Sanctuary Song* by Abigail Richardson & Marjorie Chan (with Theatre Direct), both for *Luminato*, *The Shadow* by Alex Poch-Goldin & Omar Daniel, *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.

**We have simplified our name to Tapestry New Opera. Please refer to our domain name [www.tapestrynewopera.com](http://www.tapestrynewopera.com) in case of confusion.**

### **2010-2011 SEASON AT A GLANCE**

Tapestry is in a development season. Tickets are available for all events in the Ernest Balmer Studio. February – June 2011 will feature **workshop performances** of the new operas in development at Tapestry.

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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)