



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

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February 2, 2011

***"...the best executions of new music you can find
anywhere in the world."*** John Terauds, Toronto Star

Tapestry announces workshop presentations of *The Enslavement and Liberation of Oksana G.*

TORONTO, ON... Wayne Strongman, Managing Artistic Director, is pleased to announce that on March 9 & 10, 2011 Tapestry New Opera will be holding the first public showcase of **Colleen Murphy** and **Aaron Gervais'** *The Enslavement and Liberation of Oksana G.*, in advance of its world premiere in a future season. Oksana, a young girl in Ukraine, is lured into the world of sex trafficking by Konstantin, a Russian recruiter, who unexpectedly falls in love with her. Oksana escapes his grip and finds her way to a refugee shelter in Brindisi, Italy, run by Father Alexander, a Canadian priest. Recovering from her ordeal, she finds herself drawn to the priest. Meanwhile, Konstantin waits for his chance to pounce.

The opera is sung in three different languages: Ukrainian, Russian and English.

Tapestry commissioned the full length opera after our audience was riveted by a 15 minute scene from *Oksana*, produced at the Young Centre for the Performing Arts as part of Tapestry's *Opera to Go* 2006. By the 2009-10 season, we were ready to workshop the dramatic and musically complex human auction scene at the Banff Centre for the Arts and subsequently in Toronto, with the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble and full Orchestra. This development work was made possible through a grant from Opera.ca's Creative Connections.

Oksana G. will be a two-act opera with prologue and epilogue, featuring twelve singing roles (five principals) supported by large chorus and orchestra. The libretto is written in a *vérité* style, which provides the composer with an opportunity to explore approaches that fall outside of the traditional opera format. In addition, non-operatic music from various cultures is used to enhance the composed score and drama. To meet the needs of today's audience, the global perspective of *Oksana* will be reflected through musical quotations and stylistic collage in the music, including multi-media, creating an innovative, engrossing, and topical production, while building upon a story that is, in its essence, purely operatic. The tragic *ménage à trois* is a topic as ancient as Greek drama, but in *Oksana G.* it takes on a life as immediate as today's headlines, yet honours the ingredients common to all great operas: universality, timelessness and high emotion.

For **Tapestry's Managing Artistic Director, Wayne Strongman** the poignancy of this story, and the truth behind it, will allow its audience to brave some harrowing moments: "CBC Newsworld recently broadcast the Emmy Award-winning investigative documentary *Sex Slaves*, and it was horrifying to realize how rampant and close to home human trafficking is in the 21st century. Consequently, the subject matter of *Oksana G.*, although incredibly disturbing, is nonetheless, timely. And opera, because of its high emotional plane as an entry point, seems the only logical art form to absorb such a story."

These workshop presentations of *Oksana G.* feature 16 singers, many in multiple roles: **Catharin Carew, Jesse Clark, Claire de Sévigné, Lisa diMaria, Keith Klassen, Cory Knight, Andrea Ludwig, Chris**



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Mayell, James McLennan, Shantelle Przybylo, Charlene Santoni, Curtis Sullivan, Krisztina Szabó, Gerrit Theule, Michael York, and Monica Zerbe.

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

Oksana G. PERFORMANCE DETAILS:

Director/Dramaturge: Tom Diamond

Music Director/Dramaturge: Wayne Strongman

Repetiteur: Christopher Foley

Synthesizer: Susan Suchard

Stage Manager: Bill Jamieson

March 9 & 10, 2011, 7:30 pm

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

OKSANA G. BIOS

Colleen Murphy, Librettist

Colleen Murphy was born in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec but grew up in a small town north of Lake Superior. She studied acting at Ryerson University and at the Strasberg Institute in New York. Her radio drama *Fire Engine Red* won third prize in the CBC Literary Competition in 1985, and that same year she was invited to join the Playwrights Unit at Tarragon Theatre under the direction of the late Urjo Kareda. In 1987 Tarragon produced her first play *All Other Destinations Are Cancelled*, directed by Martha Henry. Murphy subsequently left theatre to concentrate on her baby son and to pursue film, but remained part of the Tarragon Playwrights Unit until 1989.

In 1990, her radio drama *Pumpkin Eaters* won second prize in the CBC Literary Competition, and that year her screenplay *Termini Station* was nominated for a Genie for Best Original Screenplay. Murphy directed her first short film *Putty Worm* which premiered at the 1993 Int'l Toronto Film Festival. Inspired by a trip she made to Auschwitz, the violence in the film outraged many viewers. As a 1994 director resident at the Canadian Film Centre, she completed her second short *The Feeler* which played at film festivals around the world, won a Golden Sheaf Award for Best Performance (Randy Hughson) at the 1996 Yorkton Film Festival and was nominated for a Genie for Best Short Film in 1996. In 1994 she also co-directed a workshop production of her second play *Down in Adoration Falling* at Theatre Passe Muraille.

In 1995 she directed her first feature film, *Shoemaker*, for The Feature Film Project. It played in film festivals from Shanghai to New Mexico to India. The film premiered at the 1996 Toronto Int'l Film Festival, where it won the Audience Prize. It shared the Ecumenical Jury Prize at the 1997 Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg, and it was nominated for three Genie Awards in 1998.

In 1996 Richard Rose, the Artistic Director of Necessary Angel Theatre, invited Murphy to become one of three Playwrights-in-Residence (along with Jason Sherman and David Young). In 1998 Richard directed her third play, *Beating Heart Cadaver*. The play was nominated for both a Chalmers Award and a 1999 Governor General's Literary Award for Drama. It was published by Playwrights Canada Press.



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

In 1999 Murphy shot her second feature *Desire*, a co-production with her company Subjective Eye (Toronto), Buffalo Gal Pictures (Winnipeg), and Bioskop Film (The Tin Drum) in Munich. Although Murphy felt that the film needed a longer editing process, a version premiered at the 2000 Toronto Int'l Film Festival and was the opening film at the 2000 Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg in Germany. In 2002, *Desire* was nominated for two Genie Awards — Best Leading Actress and Best Leading Actor. Her short film *War Holes* premiered at the 2001 Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg in Germany, the Commonwealth Film Festival in Manchester, U.K, Festival Tres Courts in France, and at the 2002 Festival des Films Monde in Montreal.

In 2002 her fourth play *The Piper* was produced by Necessary Angel Theatre and also directed by Richard Rose. It was published in 2003 by Playwrights Canada Press.

Following *The Piper*, Murphy left the theatre for two years. In that time she produced her fourth short film *Girl with Dog*, which premiered at the 2006 Festival des Films Monde in Montreal and had its European premiere at Internationales Filmfestival Mannheim-Heidelberg. In January 2007 it was exhibited at Int'l Film Festival Rotterdam and also at FIPA - Int'l Festival of Audiovisual Programs in Biarritz, France.

Murphy began writing a libretto for Edmonton-born composer Aaron Gervais entitled *The Enslavement and Liberation of Oksana G*. A short scene from the opera was performed in March 2006 as part of Tapestry New Opera Works acclaimed series Opera to Go.

She returned to the theatre with a new play *The December Man (L'homme de décembre)* which won the 2006 Enbridge playRites Award. The play premiered at Alberta Theatre Projects at the Enbridge playrites Festival of New Canadian Plays in February 2007 under the direction of Bob White. It was nominated for a Betty Mitchell Award for Outstanding New Play and won the 2007 Governor General's Literary Award for English Language Drama.

Murphy has been accepted into the McDowell Colony, and she has attended the Banff playrites Colony several times. She has worked as a story editor and she has been the recipient of numerous grants from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, Telefilm Canada and Astral's Harold Greenburg Fund. Murphy has served on many juries for theatre (The Carol Bolt Award and the Alberta Writers Guild and the Toronto Arts Council) and film (The Canadian Film Centre, the Genie Awards, Telefilm Canada).

In 2007, Murphy was the first Playwright-in-Residence at the University of Regina. She was the Playwright Facilitator at Sage Hill Writing Experience in 2006 and 2007 and will return to Sage Hill again in 2008. Currently, Murphy is Playwright-in-Residence at Tapestry New Opera Works in Toronto. She is also President of the Board of Playwrights Canada Press and an advisor to the Board of Directors of the Alliance of Canadian New Music Projects. She is a member of the Writer's Guild of Canada, the Writers Union of Canada, the Playwrights Guild of Canada, Playwrights' Workshop Montreal, and the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television.

Aaron Gervais, Composer

Aaron Gervais was born in Edmonton, Alberta and received a Bachelor of Music with Honours from the University of Toronto (2005) and a Master's degree from the University of California at San Diego (2007). He has also pursued studies at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in the Hague, Netherlands. His teachers have included Chan Ka Nin, Chinary Ung, Philippe Manoury, and Martijn Padding, among others. In addition, he has participated in master classes with composers such as Gilles Tremblay, Mario Davidovsky, Denys Bouliane, François Paris, and Helmut Lachenmann. Prior to studying composition, he studied jazz drumming and Cuban folkloric percussion, which took him to Havana for a summer of private study in 2002.



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

Aaron has performed with and been commissioned by ensembles in several countries, including the Nieuw Ensemble, the Ensemble Contemporain de Montreal, the Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, the University of Alberta's Academy String Orchestra, Tapestry New Opera Works, Toca Loca, Continuum, the Knights Orchestra, and the Arditti Quartet. His music has been performed in Canada, the USA, Cuba, the UK, Germany, and the Netherlands. Radio broadcasts include CBC Radio 2, Radio-Canada's Espace musique, and Toronto's CIUT.

His music has been presented in festivals such as Amsterdam's Gaudeamus Music Week (his piece Culture no.1 was selected for their 2006 competition), Toronto's New Wave, soundaXis, and SHIFT festivals; Aberdeen's Sound Festival; and New York's MATA Festival. He was additionally selected as a representative for Canada in the 2008 World Music Days in Lithuania. One of Aaron's solo pieces, Flüsse-Einflüsse, was chosen as a required exam piece for the graduating accordion students at the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik – Trossingen in 2006. He has also received various awards and grants, including four prizes in Canada's SOCAN Awards for Young Composers (2004, 2004, 2006, 2008), a SOCAN residency grant, two graduating scholarships from U of T, as well as commissioning, travel, project and study grants from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

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/Staniand) –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 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.



NEW OPERA Wayne Strongman | Managing Artistic Director

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 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 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