

Opera Theatre of the Rockies

Martile Rowland, Founder/Artistic Director

Christopher Wilkins, Music Advisor

P.O. Box 8110 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933 • 719-570-1950 • www.operatheatreoftherockies.org

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Dec. 4, 2008

Contact: David Sckolnik
à la carte productions; 719-633-9373; alacarteproductions@msn.com

STREET SCENE

Opera Theatre of the Rockies' 11th Season capped off by Kurt Weill's
Tony Award® winning "Broadway Opera"



Street Scene: Mercer Street by Don Van Horn

All the parts are in place for the "most daring" production yet mounted by **Opera Theatre of the Rockies** in their 11-year history. On Sat., Feb. 28 at 7:30 pm and Sun., March 1 at 3 pm, Kurt Weill's most successful combination of opera and musical theatre, *Street Scene*, will be performed in the Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts at 190 S. Cascade Ave. in Colorado Springs. The show, which Weill referred to as both a "Broadway Opera" and an "American Opera" will offer the full grand opera experience: professional orchestra and cast along with period dance, costumes and sets and elaborate lighting design.

-MORE-

“We’ve always looked toward challenging the boundaries of our art form,” said Martile Rowland, the Founder and Artistic Director of Opera Theatre who will produce the opera. “Even still, *Street Scene* is the most daring production we’ve ever undertaken. It has a huge cast, a biting score and will cause us to journey into the domains of musical theatre and jazz. Thankfully, we’ve assembled an ideal artistic staff and cast to bring this great piece of Americana to life.”

Opera Theatre welcomes the return of Christopher Wilkins, a longtime mainstay of the life of classical orchestral music in the Pikes Peak region and the company’s Music Advisor, as Conductor; Thomas Lindblade, from the Colorado College theatre faculty will be Stage Director; Zetta Alderman, Founder and Artistic Director of Indigo Dance Colorado, will be Choreographer; Daniel S. Brink continues his role as Music Director for all Opera Theatre productions.

“It’s an extraordinary creative team,” said Rowland. “*Street Scene* combines so many theatrical and musical elements and requires excellence in them all. We’ve got to be at the top of our game to bring this great piece to life.”

Street Scene is based upon the 1929 Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Elmer Rice who also penned the book for the show. Harlem Renaissance poet, novelist, playwright, short story writer, and columnist Langston Hughes wrote the lyrics for Weill who had been urging Rice to allow him to set his play to music for ten years before the project went ahead. Weill, who mirrored his great success in Germany of the late 1920s and early 1930s on Broadway in the 1940s, received the first *Tony Award*® for original score in 1947, for this show.

Street Scene opened on Broadway at the Adelphi Theater on January 9, 1947 licensing agreement offers an approved synopsis:

The hopes, anxieties and shattered dreams of the inhabitants of a New York City tenement are evoked to poignant results in this ambitious musical work which is virtually a contemporary opera. Rose is a frustrated young woman who can give herself to neither the smooth talking sharpie who pursues her nor the earnest neighbor who loves her. Anna is her mother, whose loveless marriage to a drunken bully drives her to an affair that ends in tragedy. The honesty and power of this stark fable, set during one sweltering summer's day during the Great Depression, at once celebrates and mourns those who struggle to beat a humane existence out of the squalor of a callous urban environment.

“I can think of no better time in the United States to produce this work,” said Lindblade. “After the tumultuous events of the past year, it's a good idea to let art do its work, showing the mirror up to nature and forcing us to reflect, in a pleasant evening in the theatre, on the deeper themes embedded in *Street Scene*: community, acceptance, aspiration, hope, and yes, diversity.”

Conductor Wilkins has an intimate connection to the show: he became great friends with Maurice Abravanel who actually led the premiere of *Street Scene*. “By the time I arrived in Salt Lake in the fall of 1986 (where he served as Associate Conductor of the Utah Symphony), Abravanel had been retired for more than a decade. Suddenly, I had daily access to Kurt Weill’s favorite conductor, and to a musician who had conducted in many of the world’s great opera houses. Abravanel had plenty of time on his hands, had no trouble finding words on any subject, and loved taking long drives into the canyons outside of Salt Lake, stopping for long lunches along the way. To me, his counsel was like learning from history itself.”

-MORE-

In accordance with the mission of Opera Theatre, the cast employs the finest regional talent available while making no compromises in quality. Three of the four leading roles bring back key performers from the company's 11-year history. Soprano Judeth Shay Burns, last seen as Gretel in the 2007 production of *Hänsel and Gretel* performs the role of Rose Maurant. Tenor Daniel Fosha, last seen in 2004's *A Night at the Opera* with the **Colorado Springs Philharmonic**, will portray Sam Kaplan, the young Jewish law student desperately in love with Rose. Soprano Stacey Canterbury, Tosca in 2006's *Puccini Spectacular*, portrays Anna Maurant. Rowland found Bass-Baritone Jason McKinney, an award-winning performer based in North Carolina, to bring Anna's husband Frank to the stage.

"Jason has done extensive work with two of my favorite creative partners – Steve LaCosse and James Allbritten," she said. "Like so many of our roster of artists, he is on the verge of becoming a major star in the opera world."

Ultimately, *Street Scene's* success depends on quality performances from everyone in its very large cast (the list of principals and their roles appears at the conclusion of this release). It features performers familiar to both Springs audiences and Colorado opera fans including Jennifer DeDominici, Bradley Thompson, Robert Tiffany, Gina Razon, Michelle Diggs, James Baumgardner Steven Walz, Arthur Van Dyck, and Erik Bryan. The musical theatre component of the show has afforded an opportunity for two young and highly promising home-grown talents to make their Opera Theatre debuts - Nisa Ari and Jeffrey Patrick Mills.

"It's going to be very exciting for the community to see Nisa and Jeffrey light up the stage," said Rowland. "So many organizations in our arts community contributed to their reaching this point in their creative lives."

There are numerous events and promotions scheduled to promote the two Pikes Peak Center performances of *Street Scene*. First and foremost in the *Street Scene Selection* – a series of seven presentations, performances and events that are tied to the show including a concert by principal artists, film screenings, play readings and previews. A press release detailing all activities will be issued at a later date. *Street Scene* also has its own painting- *Street Scene: Mercer Street* (viewable at the top of this release) created by Colorado Springs-based Don Van Horn and its own candy assortment: *The Street Scene Sampler* – a collectible tin of classic chocolates and confectionaries produced by the legendary Colorado Springs candy maker **Patsy's Candies**.

Tickets for the Pikes Peak Center performances of *Street Scene* are currently on sale at all TicketsWest outlets including Pikes Peak Center Box Office (no fees), by calling 520-SHOW or (866) 464-2626 or online at www.ticketswest.com. For information on group sales discounts for the Pikes Peak Center performances of *Street Scene* or to make reservations or purchase tickets for any of the *Street Scene Selection* presentations call (719) 633-9373 or alacarteproductions@msn.com. More information is available at www.operatheatreoftherockies.com.

-MORE-

-PRINCIPAL CAST MEMBERS-

Anna Maurant
Frank Maurant
Rose Maurant
Sam Kaplan
Abraham Kaplan
George Jones
Emma Jones
Carl Olsen
Olga Olsen
Lippo Fiorentino
Greta Fiorentino
Harry Easter
Daniel Buchanan
Henry Davis
Mae Jones
Dick McGann

Stacey Canterbury
Jason McKinney
Judeth Shay Burns
Daniel Fosha
Robert Tiffany
Bradley Thompson
Jennifer DeDominici
Arthur Van Dyck
Gina Razon
Steven Walz
Michelle Diggs
Erik Bryan
James Baumgardner
Malcolm Ulbrick
Nisa Ari
Jeffrey Patrick Mills

CALENDAR

Who: **Opera Theatre of the Rockies – Christopher Wilkins**, Conductor; **Thomas Lindblade**, Stage Director; **Zetta Alderman**, Choreographer; **Daniel S. Brink**, Music Director; and Martile Rowland, Producer

What: **Street Scene- Tony Award®** winning “Broadway Opera”: Music by **Kurt Weill**, Book by **Elmer Rice**, Lyrics by **Langston Hughes**

When: Saturday, Feb. 28, 2009 at 7:30 pm
And
Sunday, March 1, 2009 at 3:00 pm

Pre-Performance Presentation by Maestro Wilkins one hour before each show in the mezzanine lobby of the Pikes Peak Center

Location: Pikes Peak Center for the Performing Arts, 190 South Cascade Avenue: Colorado Springs, Colorado

Tickets: **\$15-\$80.** Included are *Patron Club* seats; senior citizen, military, handicapped and student discounts. Discounted group tickets are also available for purchases of 10 or more seats.

Tickets are available at Pikes Peak Center Box Office (no service charges), all TicketsWest outlets; by calling 520-SHOW (7469) or 866- 464-2626 (toll free); or online at www.ticketswest.com. Group Discount inquiries can be made at 719-633-9373 or alacarteproductions@msn.com

#####