

**Edrie Means** has sung in the world premieres of works by Philip Glass, Dominick Argento, and Jacob Druckman, as well as in *Kaballah* by Stewart Wallace, in which the role of Binah was written for her (recording by Koch Records). Ms. Means also sang the NPR broadcast of Dominick Argento's *The Dream of Valentino*, in which she created the role of Jean Aker and in the PBS broadcast of Philip Glass' *The Making of The Representative of Planet 8*, in which she created the role of Klin. She has appeared in leading roles with the Houston Grand Opera, Washington Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Cleveland Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Mid-Michigan, Opera Grand Rapids, Pittsburgh Playhouse, and the State Opera of Cairo, Egypt.

A native of Boston, pianist and coach **Robert Mollicone** joined the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program for the production of *The Marriage of Figaro* in spring 2010. His previous credits include engagements with the Cantata Singers, Huntington Theatre Company, Boston Opera Collaborative, Longy School of Music, and Boston Lyric Opera. Mr. Mollicone was a vocal coach, ensemble pianist, and opera scenes director for two summers at Boston University's Tanglewood Institute. A student of Sheila Kibbe, he holds a M.M. from Boston University where he was active as a chamber musician, orchestral pianist, and performer of art song. This season he returned to New England for Boston Lyric Opera's production of *Tosca* and will later serve as a pianist for Washington National Opera's mainstage production of *Don Pasquale*, and will assist Marin Alsop in the Baltimore Symphony's performances of *The Magic Flute*.

Tenor **Rolando Sanz** has performed in a number of opera premieres, including Peter Doyle in *Miss Lonelyhearts*, and Stiva (cover) in *Anna Karenina*. Most recently, he made his Carnegie Hall debut singing the role of Kostik in the world premiere of Prokofiev's lost opera *Dalëkie Morja (Distant Seas)*. Mr. Sanz recently debuted with Palm Beach Opera as Rodolfo in *La bohème* and Flavio in *Norma*. Later in 2011 he will make debuts with Syracuse Opera, Baltimore Opera and Opera Costa Rica. Mr. Sanz will also make his debut at The Music Center at Strathmore performing the Tenor Soloist in *Les Noces*. Other recent engagements include Nathaniel in *The Tales of Hoffmann* at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Alfredo in *La traviata*, and L'Aumônier in *Dialogues des Carmélites* with the Aspen Music Festival.

Baritone **Ethan Watermeier** recently performed the principal role of Darby in The New Old American Company's historic and highly praised revival of the

popular 1783 comic opera, *The Poor Soldier*, by William Shield and John O'Keeffe. He recently sang Fred/Petruchio (cover performance) and the role of Ralph in *Kiss Me, Kate* at Glimmerglass Opera. Mr. Watermeier's other credits include: Javert and Factory Foreman/Combeferre (*Les Misérables*), Broadway National Tour; The Geographer/Hunter/Baobab (*The Little Prince*, World Premiere), and the premiere workshop readings of Mark Adamo's *Lysistrata* (Leonidas) and Jake Heggie's *End of the Affair* (Henry), Houston Grand Opera; Baron Douphol (*La Traviata*), Santa Fe Opera; Masetto (*Don Giovanni*), Théâtre Municipal, Castres, France; Joe Harland in *Later the Same Evening*, by John Musto and Mark Campbell (World Premiere); and Ralph Follet (NY Premiere and Premiere Recording on Albany Records, *A Death in the Family*).

Music Director **Robert Wood** founded UrbanArias in 2009. Primarily an opera conductor, he made his debut with the San Francisco Opera in 2004. He was appointed Conductor in Residence at the Minnesota Opera, leading productions of *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *La donna del lago*, *Rusalka*, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Mr. Wood has also conducted *L'italiana in Algeri* at Vancouver Opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for Hawaii Opera Theater, *The Love for Three Oranges* at Indiana University Opera Theater, *La cenerentola* at New Jersey Opera Theater, *Lakmé* at Minnesota Opera, and *The Nutcracker* for San Francisco Ballet. Mr. Wood's collaborations with the Wolf Trap Opera Company include *Le Comte Ory* and *Die Zauberflöte*. Mr. Wood will return to the San Francisco Opera in the summer of 2011 to conduct the Merola Opera Program's concert of extended scenes.

## About the Composers

Composer **Seymour Barab** was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1921. Barab's proclivity for musical theater has made his operas consistently performed, especially his comic one-acts and those for young audiences. According to Central Opera Service, during the 88-89 season, he was the most performed composer of opera in America. His *Little Red Riding Hood* was the first American opera performed in China in its post-isolationist period. His highly praised full-length Civil War opera Philip Marshall, which uses Dostoyevsky's THE IDIOT as its point of departure, was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. *The Toy Shop*, commissioned by the New York City Opera, was performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and in 1998, scenes from *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* were also performed there, where he was presented with a Lifetime

Achievement Award by the National Opera Association. Seymour's *Cosmos Cantata* was set to a text by the novelist Kurt Vonnegut and commissioned and performed by the Manhattan Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Richard Aldon Clark.

**Jake Heggie** is the American composer of the operas *Moby-Dick* (libretto: Gene Scheer), *Dead Man Walking* (libretto: Terrence McNally), *Three Decembers* (libretto: Scheer), *The End of the Affair* (libretto: Heather McDonald), *To Hell and Back* (libretto: Scheer), and the stage works *For a Look or a Touch* (libretto: Scheer) and *At the Statue of Venus* (libretto: McNally). He has also composed more than 200 art songs, as well as orchestral, choral and chamber music. Heggie is the 2010-11 guest artist-in-residence at the University of North Texas at Denton, where he will compose his first symphony, based on several Ahab monologues from the novel *Moby-Dick*. The "Ahab" Symphony will receive its premiere in 2012 with tenor Richard Croft as soloist. Other current projects include song commissions from Carnegie Hall (for Joyce DiDonato), San Francisco Performances (for DiDonato and the Alexander String Quartet), The Dallas Opera (for baritone Nathan Gunn), and Houston Grand Opera (to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks); as well as a one-act opera for chorus for the John Alexander Singers and the Pacific Chorale, and a new version of *For a Look or a Touch* that features the 200-voice Seattle Men's Chorus.

**Lori Laitman** is one of America's most prolific and widely performed composers of vocal music. She has composed two operas, an oratorio and over 200 songs. Laitman's full-length opera, *The Scarlet Letter*, to a new libretto of the Hawthorne classic by decorated poet David Mason, was commissioned and performed by the University of Central Arkansas in 2008. Excerpts from the opera were showcased at the Opera America Salon Series in New York in September 2010. Laitman's one-act opera, *Come to Me in Dreams*, was premiered by Cleveland Opera in 2004, and her oratorio, *Vedem*, a commission by Music of Remembrance, saw its world premiere in May of 2010 in Seattle. Naxos will release a CD of *Vedem* in May 2011. In February 2010, Laitman was the Featured Composer on Thomas Hampson's new online resource, Song of America. Many of Laitman's songs have entered the standard repertoire, including her settings of Abraham Sutzkever's poems from the Vilna ghetto, *The Seed of Dream* (2004). In 2009, acclaimed Austrian baritone Wolfgang Holzmair performed the cycle in his native Austria and subsequently commissioned German and English settings of Paul Celan's *Todesfuge*.

## CAMERA OBSCURA

*Camera Obscura* is based on a short play by Robert Patrick about the difficulties of communicating with a 5-second delay on a videophone. Prescient for its time (the play was written in the mid-60s, the opera in 1979), UrbanArias re-imagines it as a Skype or webcam conversation gone wrong. Although our most recent technology largely manages to avoid five-second delays, even contemporary web communications are not without problems. And the dial-up era is not such a distant memory.

## About the Artists

**Matthew Gardiner** (Director/Choreographer) is the Resident Director of Signature Theatre, Arlington, VA. Directing credits at Signature Theatre include *[title of show]* and *See What I Wanna See*. Mr. Gardiner was the Co-Director/Choreographer for Studio Theatre 2ndStage's acclaimed productions of *Jerry Springer The Opera* and *Reefer Madness* (2008 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Direction of a Musical). Other Directing credits include *Snow White, Rose Red & Fred* (Kennedy Center), *Greenwood Tree* (NYMF and Kennedy Center's Page-to-Stage with Folger Theatre and Signature Theatre), *tick, tick, BOOM!* (MetroStage), *Let Me Sing & I'm Happy* (Everyman Theatre), *La Bohème, Candide* (Catholic University of America.) Choreography credits include *Sweeney Todd* and *Dirty Blonde* (Signature Theatre), *Grey Gardens* and *Adding Machine* (Studio Theatre). Mr. Gardiner is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, BFA. Upcoming projects include *Art* and *Side By Side By Sondheim* at Signature Theatre.

Praised for her "bell-like clarity and fine control" and "radiant full-bodied voice" by *The Washington Post*, soprano **Meghan McCall** is establishing herself as a young artist to watch. She most recently made her Carnegie Hall Stern Auditorium debut where she created the role of Mary Magdalene in the world premiere of Marcos Galvany's opera *Oh My Son*. Miss McCall was recently invited to join the Opera Lafayette Young Artist Program which specializes in 17th and 18th century French repertoire. She made her Kennedy Center debut in May of 2010 with Opera Lafayette as Juliette and La Bergère in Philidor's *Sancho Panza*. She also made her debut recording with *Sancho Panza* on NAXOS, which will be released in 2011. Miss McCall earned her BA in Music Literature from Northeastern University and her MM from The University of Maryland Opera Studio.

hard to believe that *I Love Lucy* is almost 60 years old (it debuted in 1951). From our vantage point, it's obvious that much has changed. Or has it?

#### *TRUST ME, GALLANTRY AND MATERNAL INSTINCT*

Seymour Barab, master of short-form opera, recently completed a very daring set of mini-operas called *In Questionable Taste*. They are all based on jokes, most well-known, many dirty. These three operas are all from that cycle. *Gallantry* received its debut last fall in New York; UrbanArias is honored to have permission to perform the world premieres of *Trust Me* and *Maternal Instinct* this evening. Mr. Barab anticipates a premiere of the entire hour-long cycle within the next year.

#### *THE ACT*

"The Sorel Organization of NY commissioned this work for New Triad for Collaborative Arts to premiere at SongFest 2010 in Malibu, CA, as part of their retrospective concert of my music. When I first read the poem in 2005, I wanted to set it to music. I was intrigued by its clever structure, humor and depth. The poem really requires one to think deeply about the circumstances and relationship of the characters. The title itself can be understood on many levels. And, I particularly loved the humor of these lines: *The circus posters say I've never missed./But one could say I've always missed.*

With Harvey Hix's permission, I changed the structure of the original poem, alternating the viewpoints of husband and wife. This juxtaposition created more drama, so much so that I view this song as a miniature opera. Ideally, the work should be staged. Regarding the end, there can be multiple valid interpretations. Musically, the piano sets the scene with its opening figuration, representing the throwing of the knives. The recognizable I-V oom-pah-pah accompaniment is tinged with dissonance, creating an off-kilter circus-like atmosphere. The wife's music has a sweeter quality than that of the husband. The music builds to a very dramatic close, with both singers at the tops of their ranges (high Cs). At least one of the singers will be "dead" by the end of the song." —LORI LAITMAN, SEPTEMBER 2010.

Composer and pianist **Jack Perla** writes orchestra, chamber music and dramatic works for stage and voice. His opera *Courtside* will receive its premiere from HGOco in Houston this February. Recent performances include an all Jack Perla program for the Noe Valley Chamber Music Series in San Francisco with tenor Thomas Glenn, and featured performer/composer at the White Pines Festival in Minnesota. Mr. Perla has received awards and fellowships from the American Composers Forum, the James Irvine Foundation, the Argosy Fund for New Music, the American Music Center, Meet the Composer, the Chicago Symphony, Yaddo, and the MacDowell Colony. *On a Train Heading South*, commissioned by ODC Dance, toured the U.S. in 2005 – 2006 to extensive critical praise, culminating in performances at the Joyce Theater in New York City. The James Irvine Foundation commissioned Jack in 2002 to compose *Pixels at an Exhibition*, premiered by Patrick Summers conducting the Oakland Symphony, which also commissioned Jack in 1999 to create *Trane of Thought*. The Louisiana and Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestras, Oakland Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Absolute Ensemble (New York City), New Music Chicago, Music at the Anthology (New York), Yerba Buena Arts Center (San Francisco), Merkin Concert Hall (New York) and the British Music Information Center (London) have performed and/or presented Mr. Perla's music.

Composer and conductor **Jonathan Sheffer** has, for the last ten years, turned his attention to the question of what constitutes a concert of "classical" music in the contemporary world. He founded the Eos Orchestra in New York in 1995 as a laboratory of new programming ideas, and in 2001, he was invited by a group of musicians and arts donors from Cleveland to lead a new organization with a similar mission. The result: Red {an orchestra}. Mr. Sheffer began studying conducting after working for nearly a decade as a composer and conductor of Hollywood film scores. He made his conducting debut with the San Diego Symphony in 1991. In addition to Eos and Red, he has conducted opera, dance and at various festivals, including the New York City Opera, The Spoleto Festival (Italy), and the Ravinia Festival. In 2000, he led the Sapporo Symphony at the Pacific Music Festival in Japan, the New World Symphony in Miami, and the United World Philharmonic Youth Orchestra in Bonn. A prolific composer, Mr. Sheffer's range of works comprises television and feature film scores, works for orchestra, solo piano, concertos, musicals, and short operas. His opera, *Blood on the Dining Room Floor*, received the Richard Rodgers Production Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and was produced off-Broadway in 2000.

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UrbanArias wishes to thank its donors for their generous support.

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**The Act**

Music by Lori Laitman, Text by H.L. Hix

The wife ..... Meghan McCall  
The husband ..... Rolando Sanz

**Camera Obscura**

Music by Jonathan Sheffer, Text by Robert Patrick

He ..... Rolando Sanz  
She ..... Meghan McCall  
Man ..... Ethan Watermeier  
Woman ..... Edrie Means

Stage Director ..... Matthew Gardiner  
Musical Director ..... Robert Wood  
Pianist ..... Robert Mollicone

**Program Notes**

*BETTY BOX OFFICE*

Jack Perla's *Betty Box Office* was created for Tapestry New Opera, a company devoted to new works in Toronto. Not unlike UrbanArias, Tapestry cultivates the development of shorter works in their "Opera to Go" series. We changed some of the words to reflect our upcoming performances of Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus and Euridice*, which will feature Elizabeth Futral. Wayne Strongman is Tapestry's Artistic Director.

*AGAIN*

The relationships in sitcoms are often fraught, and those on *I Love Lucy* are no exception. Jake Heggie and David Patrick Stearns view a modern subject, domestic abuse, through the prism of our beloved television friends. It's

## SEVEN MINI-OPERAS

### Betty Box Office

Music by Jack Perla, Text by Ken Gass

Betty ..... Meghan McCall  
Wayne Strongman ..... Ethan Watermeier  
Hank ..... Rolando Sanz

### Again

Music by Jake Heggie, Text by David Patrick Stearns

Lucy ..... Meghan McCall  
Ricky ..... Rolando Sanz  
Ethel ..... Edrie Means  
Fred ..... Ethan Watermeier

### Trust Me

Music and Text by Seymour Barab

Mother ..... Edrie Means

### Maternal Instinct

Music and Text by Seymour Barab

Mrs. Jones ..... Edrie Means  
Mr. Jones ..... Ethan Watermeier  
Doris ..... Meghan McCall

### Gallantry

Music and Text by Seymour Barab

Martin ..... Ethan Watermeier  
Gloria ..... Edrie Means

Tracy Olivera  
Peter and Mary Rousselot  
Kimberley Schraf  
Walter Tejada  
Robin Liten-Tejada

Stephanie Waters  
Tiffany Wharton  
Delores King Williams  
Hannah Willman  
Harry Winter

## About UrbanArias

UrbanArias is a new opera company dedicated to producing short, contemporary operas. Our mission is to expose DC-area audiences to engaging, accessible, entertaining operas, and to provide a friendly venue at which both established and emerging composers can present their shorter works.

Our year is centered around the **UrbanArias Festival**. Our first Festival takes place this spring, from **March 31 to April 10**. We intend to begin commissioning works in the 2012 season, and hope to unveil one brand-new short opera each year.

Robert Wood, Executive and Artistic Director

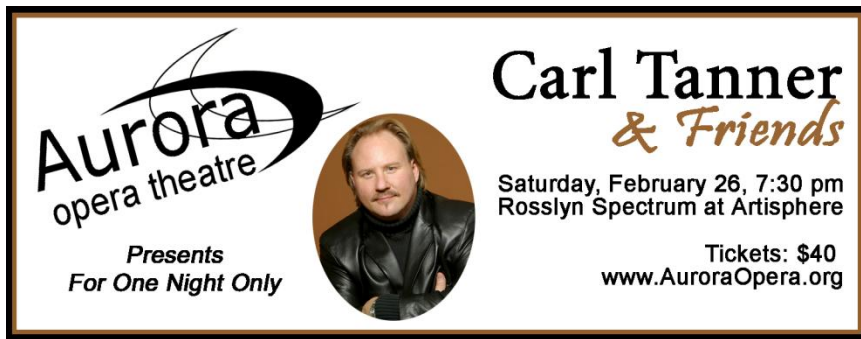
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**SEVEN MINI-OPERAS**

**JANUARY 14, 2011**

**7 AND 9 P.M.**