

New Yorkers offered early listen of first opera by Stephen Schwartz, *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*

**American Opera Projects hosts New York workshop November 21 & 22.
Opera Santa Barbara to present world premiere in 2009.**

NEW YORK, NY, October 16, 2008- **American Opera Projects**, the Brooklyn-based company “known for bringing cutting-edge vocal productions to the masses” (New York Magazine), **presents the final New York workshop of Stephen Schwartz’s new opera *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*** at the end of November in Manhattan and Brooklyn. The Manhattan performance (**The Angel Orensanz Center, 172 Norfolk St.**) will be at 8:00pm on **Friday, November 21, 2008**. The Brooklyn performance (**South Oxford Space, 138 South Oxford Street, Brooklyn, NY**) will be held at 8:00PM on **Saturday, November 22, 2008**. Tickets to each performance are \$50. AOP will honor Mr. Schwartz and the company’s own 20 year history with post-show receptions available to the public with an additional donation.

The two-act opera will be performed by singers Lauren Flanigan, Hila Plitman, Caroline Worra, Jessica Miller, Ory Brown, Michael Zegarski, Daniel Hoy, Madeline Marquis, John Kimberling, and Maeve Hoglund accompanied by Charity Wicks and Chris Cooley, pianists. Valéry Ryvkin will be the Music Director for both performances.

***Séance on a Wet Afternoon* is the first opera by noted Broadway and film composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz** (“Wicked”, “Godspell”, “Enchanted”, etc.). Based on the novel by Mark McShane and the award-winning screen adaptation by Bryan Forbes, *Séance* is a psychological thriller about a medium, Myra Foster, who conspires with her husband to gain fame and fortune by kidnapping a girl and then “finding” her through her séances.

After each performance, audience members who make an additional donation of \$100 dollars will be given the opportunity to attend a reception with the cast and creators of *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*. The reception will be held in honor of AOP’s 20th anniversary of developing and presenting new opera and Mr. Schwartz’s contribution to contemporary theatre music.

Séance on a Wet Afternoon receives its **final New York Workshop** by American Opera Projects on November 21 and 22 as part of the company’s **First Chance** series. First Chance is a seasonal program that allows composers and librettists to hear their work in part or in full for the first time before an audience, with live singers and accompaniment. AOP produced a concert workshop of Act One of the two-act opera in January 2008 at South Oxford Space, Brooklyn and The Rose Studio at Lincoln Center. The opera will have its premiere in 2009 at Opera Santa Barbara in Santa Barbara, CA.

Tickets and more information about the opera are available at the American Opera Projects website, www.operaprojects.org. For additional information about attending the post-show receptions, contact AOP Company Manager Matthew Gray at mgray@operaprojects.org.

Séance on a Wet Afternoon
November 2008 performances

November 21	Orensanz Center	New York, NY
8:00 pm	<i>Séance on a Wet Afternoon</i> Valery Ryvkin, Music Direction; Charity Wicks, Piano	
10:00 pm	<i>Post-show reception with the composer and the cast</i>	
November 22	South Oxford Space	Brooklyn, NY
8:00 pm	<i>Séance on a Wet Afternoon</i> Valery Ryvkin, Music Direction; Charity Wicks, Piano	
10:00 pm	<i>Post-show reception with the composer and the cast</i>	

AMERICAN OPERA PROJECTS, *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Stephen Schwartz, composer/librettist

Stephen Schwartz was born in New York City on March 6, 1948. He studied piano and composition at the Juilliard School of Music while in high school and graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in 1968 with a B.F.A. in Drama. His first major credit was the title song for the play *Butterflies are Free*; the song was eventually used in the movie version as well.

In 1971, he wrote the music and new lyrics for *Godspell*, for which he won several awards including two Grammys. This was followed by the English texts, in collaboration with Leonard Bernstein, for Bernstein's *Mass*, which opened the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The following year, he wrote the music and lyrics for *Pippin* and two years later, *The Magic Show*. At one point, *Godspell*, *Pippin*, and *The Magic Show* were all running on Broadway simultaneously.

Other works as a composer and/or librettist include *The Baker's Wife*, followed by a musical version of Studs Terkel's *Working*, *Captain Louie*, *Personals*, *Rags*, *Children of Eden*. Film works include the Disney animated features *Pocahontas*, for which he received two Academy Awards and another Grammy, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. He also provided songs for DreamWorks' first animated feature, *The Prince of Egypt*, for which he won another Academy Award for the song "When You Believe".

Mr. Schwartz's most recent musical, *Wicked*, opened in the fall of 2003 and is currently running on Broadway.

Valéry Ryvkin, Music Director

In little more than half a decade, conductor Valery Ryvkin has proven himself an Artistic Director on the move, aligning the creative talents of artistic planning, and superb music-making alongside an extraordinary insight into administration, fundraising, and incorporation of an arts institution into the fabric of the community. In other words, Ryvkin has become the Maestro for the next generation! Since becoming Artistic Director of Opera Santa Barbara 6 years ago, Maestro Ryvkin has moved the company from a classy 'mom and pop' effort to a respected and highly cultivated institution with a budget of \$1,200,000 - while also bringing to the company the concept of a Festival Season: a Puccini Festival in 2006 and a Verdi Festival in 2007. His organizational impact was equally felt as the new Artistic Director of the Greensboro Opera, when, during his first season in 2005-06, he was personally instrumental in bringing the company its very first \$1,000,000 donation - a hallmark in the company's 25 year history. Given today's financial environment, an achievement of envious proportions! As a result of his creative leadership, Opera Santa Barbara recently was able to make the extraordinary announcement that composer Stephen Schwartz of Broadway fame - *Wicked*, *Godspell*, *Pippin*, *Pocahontas*, *Prince of Egypt* - has been commissioned to write his very first opera, *Séance on a Wet Afternoon*, for the company, to be conducted by Maestro Ryvkin in a world premiere in the Fall 2009.

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American Opera Projects (AOP) is a driving force behind the revitalization of contemporary opera and music theater in the United States through its exclusive devotion to creating, developing and present new American Opera and music theatre projects. AOP's mission is to champion innovative works of music theater, to expand the art form, and to identify, develop and present new works by emerging and established talent. AOP productions have appeared at the Royal Opera House, London, the Lincoln Center Festival, Skirball Center at NYU, the Guggenheim Museum, Symphony Space, the Annenberg Center in Philadelphia, Berlin's Stükke Theater and Max Kade Auditorium, Aleksander Fredro Teatr in Poland, the Ensemble Theater am Petersplatz in Vienna, TADA! Children's theater, The Center for Jewish History, the Daryl Roth 2 Theatre, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and at many out-of-doors performances sponsored by the City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation. AOP won a 2006 *Encore* Award from the Arts & Business Council of NY for its innovative work and is a member of OPERA America.

TO PURCHASE TICKETS TO *SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON*:

Tickets:

\$50 - General Admission

\$150* - Reserved seating & post-show reception with the composer & cast

*((\$100 of purchase will be registered as a tax-deductible donation to AOP.)

Credit Card for advanced purchase, Cash/check only at box office on day of show

Nov. 21 - Orensanz Center, 172 Norfolk St., NYC.

<http://seancenov21.eventbrite.com/>

Nov. 22 - South Oxford Space, Brooklyn.

<http://seancenov22.eventbrite.com/>
