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May springs to life with the music of rising composer Gregory Spears

NEW YORK, NY, April 2, 2009 – Over the past few years the music of composer **Gregory Spears** has become more prevalent around the new music and dance circuits. The Romantic and minimalist styles that define the Spears sound has hit critical mass this season with music by the young composer featured at Zankel Hall (American Composers Orchestra), Le Poisson Rouge (MATA Festival), Dance Theatre Workshop, and American Opera Projects; the latter will present a concert preview of Mr. Spears's upcoming first opera *Paul's Case*, based on a story by American literary icon Willa Cather.

Paul's Case performs on **Friday, May 29 and Saturday, May 30, 8pm** at South Oxford Space, 138 South Oxford Street in Fort Greene, Brooklyn and **Sunday, May 31, 7pm** in Princeton, NJ. A panel discussion and post-show reception with the composers and the cast will take place after each performance. Singers slated to perform include Marcus DeLoach (New York City Opera) and Chad Johnson (BAM, Glimmerglass Opera) under the musical direction of Jennifer Peterson. Earlier in the month, Mr. Spears's music will also featured at **Dance Theatre Workshop** in *The Golden Legend*, choreographed by Christopher Williams, from May 12-16. On May 14-17, **Lincoln Center** presents **Mark Morris Dance Group** and the **Orchestra of St. Luke's** performing *Romeo and Juliet on Motifs of Shakespeare* featuring new orchestrations by Gregory Spears, in consultation with Simon Morrison.

Paul's Case chronicles the dissolution of a high school dandy living in sooty turn-of-the-century Pittsburgh. Equal parts angry teenager, anti-capitalist, decadent aesthete and cold realist, Paul is also an American symbol of passive dissent in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, and Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. Mr. Spears began development on *Paul's Case* during his 2007-08 tenure with five other composers in the AOP series *Composers & the Voice*, where Steve Koenig (acousticlevitation.org) praised Spears's "clever" use of "the device of repeated phrases and variants to second the ironies and conflicts within and between the characters. Most excellent, perhaps the best of the six."

Based on **Willa Cather's** story of the same name with a libretto by the composer in collaboration with **Kathryn Walat**, *Paul's Case* represents the first opera composition from Mr. Spears whose music has been called "dreamy" (*The New York Times*) and "remarkable" (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*).

Tickets to *Paul's Case* are \$15 and may be reserved by calling 718-398-4024 or by visiting www.operaprojects.org.

ABOUT GREGORY SPEARS

Gregory Spears writes music that combines elements of Early Music and Minimalist structural practices within a Romantic sound world. The New York Times described Eighth Blackbird's performance of his piece Soar-Stop as "scintillating." The Philadelphia Inquirer has called his music "remarkable" and a "glistening sonic soup." Spears has written for groups including So Percussion, the Eighth Blackbird Ensemble, the Traces Percussion Duo, the vocal group Ars Nova, the Zapolsky Quartet and the Synapse Ensemble Chamber Orchestra.

He was awarded a First Music Commission in 1999 to write a piece for the New York Youth Symphony, which was given its premiere in Carnegie Hall in May of 2000. In 2001 the American Composers Orchestra played his orchestral work *Circle Stories* during their annual Whitaker New Music Readings in New York. More recently the ACO has performed his work *Finishing* in Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall in 2008. In 2007 Spears collaborated with musicologist Simon Morrison to realize the original score for Prokofiev's ballet *Romeo and Juliet* for premiere by the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Bard Festival in 2008. Recent commissions have come from The Greater Princeton Youth Orchestra, the Present Music Ensemble in Milwaukee and New York choreographers Christopher Williams and Rebecca Lazier.

Spears has won multiple prizes from both BMI and ASCAP including the Carlos Surinach prize in 1999 as well as grants and honors from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Fulbright Foundation, the Norfolk Chamber Music Festival and Yaddo. Greg studied composition at the Eastman School of Music, the Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen, the Yale School of Music and Princeton University, where he received his Ph.D. In addition to his work as a composer, Spears teaches a Freshman Writing Seminar at Princeton called *Music and Madness*, exploring the popularized link between creativity and mental illness. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

www.princeton.edu/~gspears

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 Stückte 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.

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