



For Immediate Release

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NAT MERRILL PUBLIC MEMORIAL PLANS ANNOUNCED

DENVER, CO—Opera Colorado General Director Greg Carpenter announced today plans for a public memorial tribute to Nathaniel Merrill, founder of Opera Colorado, who passed away on September 9, 2008.

Following the wishes of the family, Opera Colorado will host a public celebration of Merrill's remarkable career on Wednesday, November 12 at 5:00pm at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. The event is free and open to the public. No tickets or RSVPs are required.

The tribute will include distinguished speakers and musical tributes from operas that Merrill produced during his tenure at Opera Colorado. Speakers will include:

- Greg Carpenter, current Opera Colorado General Director,
- Jack Finlaw, Director, Division of Theatres and Arenas, City and County of Denver,
- Ellie Caulkins, Lifetime Honorary Chairman of the Opera Colorado Board of Directors and nationally recognized opera patron,
- Francesca Zambello, internationally known stage director and onetime protégé of Merrill,
- Stephen Seifert, Past Executive Director of Opera Colorado and current director of the Newman Center for the Performing Arts on the DU campus,
- Sheila Bisenius, current Chairman of the Opera Colorado Board of Directors.

Mezzo-soprano Marcia Ragonetti and baritone Stephen West are among the artists who will perform. Additional musical tributes will be offered as well as a performance by current and past members of the Opera Colorado Chorus.

A reception will follow the tribute in the lobby of the opera house.

Brief biography of Nat Merrill

During his illustrious career as an opera stage director and producer, Nat Merrill directed more than one hundred different operas in over two hundred separate productions worldwide. Beginning in the early 60s, Nat began a 28-season association with the Metropolitan Opera where he served as Resident Stage Director under the legendary impresario Sir Rudolf Bing and created some of the most enduring and beloved productions in the Met's repertory. Merrill also directed operas across the U.S. and the world, including many of the great opera houses and festivals of Europe.

Merrill and his then-wife music director Louise Sherman moved to Denver in 1981 to found Opera Colorado. Under Merrill's leadership, Opera Colorado became the first company in the United States to produce "grand opera in the round" at Boettcher Concert Hall. Many opera luminaries appeared with the company in those early days, including Placido Domingo, Eva Marton, James McCracken, Jon Vickers, Sherill Milnes, Catherine Malfitano, Pilar Lorengar, Justino Diaz, Hao Jiang Tian, Yalun Zhang, Samuel Ramey, and many others. Under Merrill's leadership, Verdi's *Otello* was the first full production to be staged at the Buell when it opened in the early 90s. After the death of Louise Sherman in 1998, Mr. Merrill retired from Opera Colorado. He married Pamela Meyers in 2001.

Merrill passed away from complications due to Alzheimer's Disease on September 9, 2008. He was 81.

Opera Colorado will dedicate the performances in the 2008-09 season to Merrill's memory.

Merrill is survived by his wife Pamela Merrill, his daughter Linda Ely, and two sons, Hank and Christopher. The family asked that memorial gifts in Nat's memory be sent to Opera Colorado at 695 South Colorado Boulevard, Suite 20, Denver, Colorado, 80246 or online at www.operacolorado.org/get-involved.

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