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Images: For high resolution images of *The Scarlet Letter*, please visit: operacolorado.org/press-room

Opera Colorado Announces Second Recording Released on Naxos Label

Denver, CO — August 14, 2017 — Opera Colorado proudly announces its release on the Naxos Label of the World Premiere of *The Scarlet Letter* by Composer Lori Laitman and Librettist David Mason, performed at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House in Denver, Colorado in May 2016. Artists featured in the production include Dominic Armstrong (Arthur Dimmesdale), Daniel Belcher (Governor Bellingham), Laura Claycomb (Hester Prynne), Kyle Knapp (John Wilson), Margaret Gawrysiak (Mistress Hibbons) and Malcolm MacKenzie (Roger Chillingworth). Music Director Ari Pelto conducted the Opera Colorado Chorus and Orchestra.

“We are thrilled to once again partner with Naxos to present our second professional recording for commercial release,” said General Director Greg Carpenter. “We take great pride in the extraordinary talent of our artists, orchestra and chorus, and are excited to share our world premiere of Lori Laitman and David Mason’s American opera *The Scarlet Letter* with the world.”

Opera Colorado’s world premiere production of *The Scarlet Letter* received wide critical acclaim. *The Denver Post* wrote that Laitman’s style is to employ the powers of every instrument and every note at her disposal. There’s no hierarchy for string or woodwinds in her approach, each section does its part to build the piece upward... [Laitman’s] composing voice is clear and confident, impassioned and likable.”



Lori Laitman worked closely with librettist David Mason, conductor and music director Ari Pelto, and the cast and creative team at Opera Colorado to make this world premiere of *The Scarlet Letter* a reality. “Under Greg Carpenter’s leadership, Opera Colorado brilliantly brought *The Scarlet Letter* to life in May 2016,” stated Laitman. “A generous grant from The Sorel Organization enabled us to capture the live performance for this CD. Librettist David Mason and I are so grateful to conductor Ari Pelto, chorus master John Baril, the stellar cast and creative team, as well as recording engineers Marlan Barry and Jamey Lamar, for their efforts in producing this exceptional recording.”

GET THE RECORDING

More information about the recording on Naxos.com:

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Lori Laitman | Composer

Described by *Fanfare Magazine* as “one of the most talented and intriguing of living composers,” Lori Laitman has composed multiple operas and choral works, and over 250 songs, setting texts by classical and contemporary poets (including those who perished in the Holocaust). Her music is widely performed, internationally and throughout the U.S., and has generated substantial critical acclaim. *The Journal of Singing* wrote “It is difficult to think of anyone before the public today who equals her exceptional gifts for embracing a poetic text and giving it new and deeper life through music.”

Laitman and David Mason are continuing their collaboration with *Ludlow*, based on Mason’s novel about the 1914 Colorado mining town disaster. *The Three Feathers*, her opera with librettist Dana Gioia, was commissioned and premiered by the Center for The Arts at Virginia Tech, in a production directed by Beth Greenberg. Laitman and librettist Leah Lax are creating



an opera, *Uncovered* (a finalist for the 2018 Pellicciotti Opera Prize), based on Lax's memoir *Uncovered: How I Left Hasidic Life and Finally Came Home*.

Laitman regularly receives commissions from prestigious organizations, such as The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, Music of Remembrance, The Washington Master Chorale and The Eastman School of Music. Her discography includes releases on Naxos, Albany, Channel Classics, Signum and other labels. Laitman was graduated *magna cum laude* from Yale College and received her MM from The Yale School of Music. For more information, please visit www.artsongs.com.

David Mason | Librettist

Born and raised in Bellingham, Washington, David Mason's award-winning collections of poetry include *The Buried Houses* (1991), *The Country I Remember* (1996), *Arrivals* (2004), the verse novel *Ludlow* (2007), and *Sea Salt: Poems of a Decade: 2004 – 2014*. A children's book, *Davey McGravy*, appeared in 2015. He has also published a memoir, two collections of essays, several anthologies and a poetry textbook, *Western Wind*. His work appears in *Best American Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *TLS*, *Poetry*, *The Hudson Review* and many other publications. As a librettist, Mason collaborated with Lori Laitman on her opera *The Scarlet Letter* and on an opera adaptation of *Ludlow*, for which Mason received the 2009 Thatcher Hoffman Smith Creativity in Motion Prize. He wrote the libretto for her oratorio, *Vedem*, and for Tom Cipullo's opera, *After Life*. He has also been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to Greece. Mason served as Colorado poet laureate from 2010 to 2014. He teaches at The Colorado College.

Ari Pelto | Music Director and Conductor

Music Director at Opera Colorado since 2015, Ari Pelto is widely known for performances that have been called poetic, earthy, vigorous and highly individual. At age of 24 Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival and has gone on to conduct on stages worldwide; his international appearances include productions of *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Falstaff* at New National Theatre of Tokyo, and *Faust* at the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador as well as the productions of Oberlin in Italy each summer. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City Opera conducting *La Traviata*, where he also conducted *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème* and *Carmen*.

In 2015, Pelto was named Opera Colorado's first ever Music Director, where he has conducted acclaimed performances of *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Aida* and the world premiere of Lori Laitman's *The Scarlet Letter*. Additionally Pelto lead productions of *La Fanciulla del West*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, as well as *La Bohème*, *Falstaff* and the world premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me* in January 2018.



Recent highlights include *Aida* at Utah Symphony and Opera, about which the Salt Lake Tribune raved “Whether in the grandeur of the triumphal scene or the exquisite beauty of the Nile scene, one couldn't have asked for a more inspiring performance of Verdi's score”; *La Voix Humaine* starring Patricia Racette at Chicago Opera Theater; *A Streetcar named Desire* and *Salome* at Virginia Opera, *The Rake's Progress* at Portland Opera, and *Rigoletto*, *Don Pasquale*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and *Don Giovanni* at Opera Memphis where he serves as Principal Guest Conductor.

Pelto is a gifted pedagogue, and devoted to providing guidance for young singers and aspiring conductors. He regularly works with leading conservatories and young artist programs including The Juilliard School, The Curtis Institute, Manhattan School of Music and Oberlin Conservatory. A masterful collaborator with dancers, Pelto enjoys a longstanding relationship with Atlanta Ballet.

Dominic Armstrong, Arthur Dimmesdale

Hailed for his ‘clarion’ voice, and ‘vibrant sound and crisp diction’ by the New York Times, Dominic Armstrong has quickly established himself as an artist of superb musicality and characterization. He has bowed with such theaters as the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Philadelphia, Wexford Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Castleton Opera Festival, Deutsche Opera Berlin, Opera Regio Torino, Musica Viva Hong Kong, and New York City Opera. A noted concert performer, he has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Boston, Detroit, Kansas City and Cincinnati Symphonies, and the Philadelphia and Russian National Orchestras. He is frequently sought out for new works, and has been featured in workshops or premieres of operas by acclaimed composers such as John Musto, Matthew Aucoin, Missy Mazzoli, Steven Stucky, and Lori Laitman, as well as other contemporary operas by John Corigliano, Dominick Argento, Andre Previn, and Leonard Bernstein. A finalist in the 2008 Metropolitan Opera National Council Finals, Mr. Armstrong has also received prizes from The Sullivan Foundation, The George London Foundation, The Liederkrantz Club, and was a finalist in the inaugural Warner Prize of Carnegie Hall.

Daniel Belcher, Governor Bellingham

Grammy-Award winning baritone Daniel Belcher, has performed in many of the world's music capitals and for Opera Colorado he has performed Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* and Dandini in *La Cenerentola*. With a 70-role repertoire, he has performed roles from the Baroque to those expressly written for him. He came to international attention creating the role of Prior Walter in Peter Eötvös's *Angels in America* for the Théâtre du Châtelet. He received the Grammy for Kaija Saariaho's *L'Amour de Loin* in 2010. Other world premieres include *Little Women* by Mark Adamo (Houston Grand Opera), *Sombre* by Kaija Saariaho, and *Waiting for Miss Monroe* by Robin De Raaff (Dutch National Opera). Upcoming



premieres include Kevin Puts' *Elizabeth Cree* for Opera Philadelphia and Ricky Ian Gordon's *The House Without A Christmas Tree* for Houston Grand Opera.

Laura Claycomb, Hester Prynne

Laura Claycomb is a musician who took her grounded Texan roots, a carefully-wrought and solid vocal technique, a fun and refined sense of style, a deep interest in languages and a love of the theater and spun them all into a unique presence in the very first rank of the world's classical performers, a musical personality loved and known by professional and amateur alike all over the world. She has appeared repeatedly with the Paris Opera, San Francisco Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Théâtre de la Monnaie, the London Symphony Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Le Concert d'Astrée, and the Cleveland Orchestra. Recent roles included Amina in *La sonnambula* at the Bolshoi Theater, *Lucia di Lammermoor* with New Orleans Opera, Tytania in *Midsummer Night's Dream* in China with the Aix-en-Provence Festival, Cunegonde in *Candide* with the Maggio Musicale in Florence, as well as *Ophélie* in Hamlet with the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra among others.

Kyle Knapp, John Wilson

Though he is particularly at home in the florid lyric tenor roles of Mozart, Handel, and the bel canto composers, Kyle's versatility allows for a resume that ranges from the psychological complexity of Britten to the comic baritone roles of Gilbert and Sullivan. He moves between the disciplines of opera, operetta, chamber music, musical theater, dance, contemporary and experimental music, theater, and popular music with ease and boundless enthusiasm. He was Almaviva in Opera Theatre of St. Louis' *The Barber of Seville*. He returned to Hawaii Opera Theatre to sing the role of Flute in Benjamin Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He performed as Jason in a new opera *Jason and the Argonauts* by Greg Spears; presented by Lyric Unlimited a division of Lyric Opera of Chicago. Kyle took on the roles of Doctor/Chuck/Andy Warhol in Kevin Newbeury's *The Perfect American* with Long Beach Opera and Chicago Opera Theater. Kyle made his Hawaii Opera Theatre debut as Tobias in *Sweeney Todd*. This was followed by Alan Kimbrough in Victor Herbert's *The Only Girl* with LOONY in NYC and recorded the opera for Albany Records. He also was tenor soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the New Jersey Festival Orchestra.

Margaret Gawrysiak, Mistress Hibbons

Margaret Gawrysiak, mezzo-soprano, recent engagements include Marcellina in *Nozze di Figaro* with Seattle Opera, Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd* with Fresno Grand Opera, The Marquise in *Daughter of the Regiment* with Arizona Opera, Mrs. De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking* with Dayton Opera, Jezibaba in *Rusalka* with North Carolina Opera, Frugola in *Il Tabarro* with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Mother/Witch in *Hansel and Gretel* with Virginia Opera, and Dame Quickly in *Falstaff* with Wolf Trap Opera Center. She has performed multiple



roles including Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* with Maestro Lorin Maazel at the Castleton Festival. In concert, she has been heard with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Syracuse Symphony, American Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood.

Malcolm MacKenzie, Roger Chillingworth

Known for his “rich vocal range full of inviting nuance,” Malcolm MacKenzie continues to define the dramatic baritone repertoire. *Opera News* recently praised the California native as a “confident, commanding Count di Luna... of robust tone, ardent address, arching phrases and genuine baritonal squillo.” A specialist in the Verdi Repertoire, Mr. MacKenzie's performances include the title roles in *Rigoletto* and *Simon Boccanegra*; Giorgio Germont in *La traviata*; Iago in *Otello*; Renato in *Un ballo in maschera*; and Count di Luna in *Il trovatore*. He has also appeared as Baron Scarpia in *Tosca*; Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*; Jack Rance in *La fanciulla del West*; Enrico in *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Escamillo in *Carmen*; Tonio in *Pagliacci*; the title role in *Don Giovanni*; Zurga in *Les pêcheurs de perles*; Belcore in *L’Elisir d’amore*, and George in *Of Mice and Men*, among many others. Visit malcolmmackenzie.com for more information.

ABOUT OPERA COLORADO

Greg Carpenter, General Director

The fourth General Director in Opera Colorado’s 35-year history, Greg Carpenter guides both the artistic and administrative operations of the company. His role as General Director began in 2007, prior to which he served as Opera Colorado’s Director of Development from 2004 – 2007, overseeing all fundraising and Board of Directors activities. Prior to joining Opera Colorado, he worked for four years for the National Symphony Orchestra at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. His work there included Special Projects Manager for the President of the National Symphony Orchestra from 2000 – 2001 and Manager of Development from 2001 – 2004. Carpenter’s extensive experience working in the arts also includes two years as the Artist and Event Services Manager for the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland and Special Projects Coordinator for the University of Maryland School of Music. From 1986 – 1998, Greg Carpenter performed as a professional opera singer. His work as an opera singer included both lead and supporting roles at Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Opera Theatre of Northern Virginia, Cleveland Opera and Lyric Opera Cleveland. Carpenter has served on the Board of Directors for OPERA America, the national service organization for the opera industry. For the 2008 National Performing Arts Convention held in Denver, he served as Chairman of the Fundraising Committee. In 2009 Carpenter received a Livingston Fellowship Award in Leadership from the



Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. He also regularly serves as a judge for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and has served as a judge for the Fritz and Lavinia Jensen Foundation Competition. Greg Carpenter received a Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance from Wittenberg University, a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from Michigan State University, and he completed post-graduate studies at the University of Maryland School of Music.

About Opera Colorado

Great cities need great art, and for more than three decades, Opera Colorado has brought world-class performing arts to Colorado audiences. Today Opera Colorado serves as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community, bringing grand opera to the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, its Denver home since its opening in 2005. Alongside standard repertoire in the grand opera tradition Opera Colorado presents new works or rarely performed productions each season. The company reaches more than 38,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. During their eight-month residency with the company, Opera Colorado's Young Artists perform in schools and community centers across the state, including an annual tour on the Western Slope. Recognized nationally for its excellence, the Young Artists program provides training for the next generation of American opera singers. The 2017-2018 Season productions at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House will feature Puccini's *La Bohème* in November 2017 and Verdi's *Falstaff* in May 2018, and the World Premiere of Gerald Cohen and Deborah Brevoort's *Steal a Pencil for Me* at the Mizel Arts and Culture Center at the JCC in January 2018. www.operacolorado.org

Music Director Ari Pelto is sponsored by Mike and Julie Bock. Season sponsors for the 2017-2018 Season include the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), Colorado Creative Industries and Rassman Design.

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