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Minnesota Opera announces world premiere of *Doubt*

Composer Douglas J. Cuomo and librettist John Patrick Shanley create
the opera based on the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play

Minneapolis—Minnesota Opera announces its next commission, *Doubt*, which will have its world premiere in 2013 as part of the company's 50th anniversary season. Composed by DOUGLAS J. CUOMO, the opera will have a libretto by JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY, who wrote the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award-winning play and its subsequent Academy Award-nominated screenplay.

"Just weeks away from the world premiere of *Silent Night*, it's a thrill to announce the company's next major commission," said PRESIDENT AND GENERAL DIRECTOR ALLAN NAPLAN. "Minnesota Opera's long, successful commitment to new work is part of what drew me to this company, and I can think of no better tribute to its legacy than to celebrate our 50th anniversary with a world premiere."

The commission is part of MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE, a landmark program designed to invigorate the operatic repertoire with an infusion of contemporary works. This commission, as well as a commission and revival yet to be announced for future seasons, are made possible in part by the generous support of a recent \$750,000 award from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The grant is the second from the Mellon Foundation; the first, for \$500,000 in 2008, helped the company set a trajectory for success for the \$7 million, multi-year campaign. Since fundraising began in March 2008, Minnesota Opera has raised over \$5.9 million to support the Initiative, of which the Mellon Foundation's generous grants comprise a significant part.

"The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's gift to MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE will have a transformative impact on the company's continuing commitment to developing and producing new works," said NAPLAN. "We are tremendously grateful to the Mellon Foundation for their extraordinary support of our efforts."

The opera will receive its first workshop in Cincinnati from November 3 to 13, 2011, as part of OPERA FUSION: NEW WORKS, a groundbreaking new collaboration between Cincinnati

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Opera and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. With generous support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, **OPERA FUSION: NEW WORKS** was created to offer composer/librettist teams the opportunity to workshop new American operas during a ten-day residency; *Doubt* is the first opera to be awarded a workshop through the program.

Workshops are a key component of the commissioning process of **MINNESOTA OPERA'S NEW WORKS INITIATIVE**, and the company is planning additional workshops for *Doubt* in March, June and November 2012. "We're excited that *Doubt's* earliest drafts will receive the valuable feedback that Cincinnati's **OPERA FUSION: NEW WORKS** workshop will provide," said **MINNESOTA OPERA ARTISTIC DIRECTOR DALE JOHNSON**. "The workshop process illuminates what works well dramatically and musically, and what aspects of the piece will require more attention. Most of the premieres recently staged in this country have not had that advantage, but at Minnesota Opera we feel it's critically important to allow the composer and librettist to test their ideas before the work reaches the stage."

About *Doubt*

Based on **JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY's** one-act play, *Doubt: A Parable*, the opera is set at a Catholic school in the Bronx, circa 1964. The charismatic and progressive Father Flynn is trying to loosen the stranglehold of St. Nicholas Church School's strict customs, which are fiercely guarded by its iron-fisted principal, Sister Aloysius Beauvier. The school has just accepted its first black student, Donald Miller. When the innocent Sister James shares with Sister Aloysius her suspicion that Father Flynn may be molesting Donald, Sister Aloysius embarks on a personal crusade to find the truth and ruin the priest. With no proof besides her moral certainty, Sister Aloysius engages in a battle of wills with Father Flynn that threatens to tear the community apart.

Doubt: A Parable was originally staged Off-Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club and starred **CHERRY JONES**, **BRIAN F. O'BYRNE** and **HEATHER GOLDENHERSH**. It transferred to Broadway's Walter Kerr Theatre in 2005, where it enjoyed a 525-performance run. The play won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the Tony Award for Best Play and was adapted for film in 2008. The film, starring **MERYL STREEP**, **PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN** and **AMY ADAMS**, was nominated for five Oscars (including Best Writing, Adapted Screenplay by the play's own author, **JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY**) and claimed 13 wins and 36 nominations in other prestigious film awards.

About the Composer

Critics have described the music of **DOUGLAS J. CUOMO** (www.douglasjcuomo.com) as "jolting, haunting, varied, infectious ... frankly, it is ingenious" and "eighteen minutes of velocity and ecstasy ... mesmerizing ... fiercely American in the sense of Whitman, Hart Crane and Ives." as well as "hugely effective musically, as well as awe-inspiring," "irresistible" and "awesome."

CUOMO has composed for concert and theatrical stages, television and film. His expressive musical language, with its arresting juxtapositions of sound and style, is a natural outgrowth of his eclectic background and training. He became a professional guitarist while still in his teens, alternating years of college – studying jazz, world music and ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University in Connecticut – with years on the road playing in jazz, pop and funk bands.

Recent performances include: *Black Diamond Express Train to Hell*, a double concerto for cello sampler, which was premiered by the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, with **MAYA BEISER** as soloist (2010); the highly acclaimed chamber opera *Arjuna's Dilemma* at the BAM Next Wave Festival (2008); *Only Breath*, commissioned and performed by **MAYA BEISER**, at The International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Ravinia, Carnegie Hall and others (2008); *Kyrie* commissioned and performed by Chanticleer, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Temple of Dendur (2007); and *Fortune*, commissioned and performed by The Young Peoples Chorus of New York City (2007). Work for television and film includes: themes for *Sex & The City* (HBO), *NOW with Bill Moyers* (PBS), *Wide Angle* (PBS), music for *Homicide: Life On The Street* and others.

Upcoming projects include: *Winter's Journey*, based on Wilhem Mueller's *Winterreise* poetry cycle, for mezzo-soprano **BETH CLAYTON**, electronics and two instrumentalists, commissioned by Music-Theatre Group to be directed by **DAVID SCHWEIZER**, and a concerto for orchestra featuring saxophonist **JOE LOVANO**.

CUOMO has received numerous grants and awards including: OPERA America Opera Fund Grant; two National Endowment of the Arts awards for Artistic Excellence in the Creation and Development of New Work; American Music Center's Composer Assistance Grant; Resident Artist Fellow at The MacDowell Colony, The Hermitage Foundation and Blue Mountain Artist Colony; New York State Council for the Arts recording grant; Argosy Foundation Grant; Mary Flagler Carey Charitable Trust for development, and others.

CUOMO also performs as a guitarist with his band, playing jazz interpretations of his film and television work at venues including Birdland, The Knitting Factory and others. He has lectured widely at institutions including New York University, Wesleyan University (CT), University of Miami (FL), University of California at San Diego, Hunter College, Hofstra University, The Asia Society (NY), the University of Memphis and the Rubin Museum (NY).

About the Librettist

JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY is from the Bronx. His plays include *Danny and the Deep Blue Sea*, *Savage in Limbo*, *Italian American Reconciliation*, *Welcome to the Moon*, *Four Dogs and a Bone*, *Cellini*, *Dirty Story*, *Defiance* and *Pirate*. His theatrical work is performed extensively across the United States and around the world. For his play *Doubt*, he received both the Tony Award and the Pulitzer Prize. In the arena of screenwriting, he has nine films to his credit, most recently *Doubt*, with **MERYL STREEP**, **PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN** and **AMY ADAMS**, which was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Adapted Screenplay. The film of *Doubt* was also directed by **MR. SHANLEY**. Other films include *Five Corners* (Special Jury Prize, Barcelona Film Festival), *Alive*, *Joe Versus the Volcano*, which he also directed, and *Live from Baghdad* for HBO (Emmy nomination). For his script of *Moonstruck* he received both the Writers Guild of America Award and an Academy Award for best original screenplay. The Writers Guild of America awarded **MR. SHANLEY** the 2009 Lifetime Achievement In Writing.

Minnesota Opera's mission is to produce opera and opera education programs
at the highest artistic level that inspire and entertain our audiences
and enrich the cultural life of our community.

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