

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Photos available upon request



florentine opera
company

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Second-ever fully staged production of *ELMER GANTRY* to be recorded on NAXOS label

Florentine Opera presents Midwest premiere of the opera March 19 & 21, 2010

MILWAUKEE, Wis.—February 24, 2010—The Florentine Opera Company presents the second-ever fully staged production of *Elmer Gantry*, a new American opera, on March 19 and 21, 2010 at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Based on the novel by American author Sinclair Lewis, *Elmer Gantry* is written by Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein. The riveting score mixes traditional operatic forms with vibrant gospel hymns and American folk-inspired ensembles in a work that explores the complex and conflicted role of religion in American life. *Elmer Gantry* debuted at Nashville Opera in 2007.

Both performances will also be used as an opportunity to create an audio recording of *Elmer Gantry* that will be released by the Naxos label. Generous funding for the recording is provided by The National Endowment for the Arts, the Aaron Copland Fund, Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein, and contributions of members of the Florentine Opera Board of Directors.

“This recording of *Elmer Gantry* is groundbreaking because the work is an important new American opera, which ultimately will become a part of the standard repertoire,” noted General Director William Florescu. “In addition, I am proud that the Florentine will produce this first recording, which will have national and international distribution and introduce countless new fans to the opera. In turn, recording *Elmer Gantry* is another step in the Florentine's evolution as an initiator of innovative productions, and new work for the opera stage,” Florescu further stated.

Returning director John Hoomes will direct an ensemble cast that includes baritone Keith Phares in the title role and soprano Patricia Risley as Sharon Falconer, both of whom starred in the original world premiere production. Returning Florentine favorite artists include soprano Heather Buck (Lulu Baines), tenors Frank Kelley (Eddie Fislinger) and Jamie Offenbach (T.J. Rigg), and bass-baritone Matthew Lau (Reverend Baines), while tenor Vale Rideout will make his Florentine Opera debut as Frank Shallard. Celebrated conductor William Boggs will lead the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

Additional information about the production, the rest of the Florentine Opera's 2009-2010 season and upcoming plans for the Company are available at www.florentineopera.org.

Additional information on the opera and its creators is available at the *Elmer Gantry* Website at <http://www.elmergantryopera.com/site/>.

A number of community events will be held in the weeks leading up to the opera. For a complete list of events, visit <http://www.florentineopera.org/events>.

PERFORMANCE INFORMATION

- WHAT:** *Elmer Gantry* by Robert Aldridge and Herschel Garfein
(Sung in English with English translations projected above the stage)
- WHEN:** Friday, March 19, 2010 @ 7:30 PM
Sunday, March 21, 2010 @ 2:30 PM
- WHERE:** All performances are held in Uihlein Hall at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, 929 North Water Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202.
- CAST:** Stage Director / John Hoomes
Conductor / William Boggs
Elmer Gantry / Keith Phares (2009-2010 Marie Z. Uihlein Artist)
Sharon Falconer / Patricia Risley
Lulu Baines / Heather Buck
Eddie Fislinger / Frank Kelley
T.J. Rigg / Jamie Offenbach
Frank Shallard / Vale Rideout
Reverend Baines / Matthew Lau
Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra

ARTIST INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS:

For additional artist biography information or to schedule an interview, please contact Kathryn Reinardy, Marketing & Public Relations Manager, by telephone at 414-291-5700 ext. 213, or via email at kreinardy@florentineopera.org.

TICKET INFORMATION:

Single tickets start at just \$30. For ticket information, visit [Marcus Center](#) or call 414-273 – 7206.

ABOUT THE FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY:

The Florentine Opera Company's productions reflect the highest musical and theatrical standards, while supporting community and educational programs. As a leader in Wisconsin's art community and the nation's sixth oldest opera company, the Florentine Opera seeks to establish a significant presence in the cultural, educational and civic life of the state of Wisconsin and beyond. Audiences enjoy beautiful mainstage productions that include first-rate vocal artistry brought to life by established and emerging local, national and international opera stars.

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