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**First Commissioned Opera to be Premiered at Hudson Opera House:**

***Diamond Street* to be Performed in Un-restored Performance Hall October 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>**

As a cornerstone of their ongoing Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Celebrations, the Hudson Opera House has commissioned a one-act opera by renowned composer Harold Farberman and librettist Andrew Joffe. This will be the first commissioned work for both HOH and Diamond Opera Theater, the co-producer, which will perform it. The project was made possible with commissioning funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

“We are enormously gratified to have initiated this project,” said Gary Schiro, Executive Director of the Hudson Opera House. “Harold Farberman’s first opera was commissioned by Lincoln Center, and his most recent one was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize so we feel tremendously grateful to be engaged with such an esteemed composer. Andrew Joffe is one of today’s most admired librettists. This new work is musically brilliant, with a downright hilarious story.”

*Diamond Street*, which runs about one hour, is set in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century. It is based on Hudson’s storied past as a red-light district providing “entertainment” for Albany politicians and visitors from the region and afar. The opera is scored for five singers and a ten-piece ensemble. It features the mezzo-soprano Hudsonian Mary Deyerle Hack in the role of Big Maisie, a madam on Diamond Street.

The opera will also be the first production in the opera house performance hall in more than 40 years. The interior is still unrestored, which will enhance the show’s Victorian ambience. “There really was nowhere else where we could conceive of producing this” said Fayal Greene, HOH Board member and president of the Diamond Opera Theater Board. “The first scene of the opera even takes place at City Hall, which is what this building served as until 1962, so it is the perfect venue. It’s a great honor for us to be part of the theater’s artistic reincarnation.”

Seating will be limited to 100 for each of the three performances, on October 1<sup>st</sup> (Thursday), 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (Saturday). Saturday’s performance will be capped off by a champagne Benefit Reception with the artists. Tickets are \$25 each, or \$50 which will include the benefit. Tickets can be purchased by calling the Opera House at 518-822-1438 or may be purchased on the website [www.hudsonoperahouse.org](http://www.hudsonoperahouse.org) using PayPal (indicate number of tickets in the memo line).

## DIAMOND STREET

### Biographies

**Hudson Opera House**, (commissioner, producer) built in 1855, is today a multi-arts center and New York's oldest surviving theatre. Since opening the first restored room in 1997, HOH has presented thousands of programs including concerts, lectures, readings, performances, workshops, after-school programs and large-scale community events like the annual Winter Walk. In the last year alone HOH has presented more than 1000 programs and events, and more than 87% of them offered to the public for free. HOH has presented artists in every discipline and from every part of the world. For the Quadricentennial, HOH is also commissioning a new theatre work from Concrete Temple Theatre.

**Diamond Opera Theater** (co-producer) creates unique and intimate programs of Opera, Musical Theater and Art Song to entertain and educate adults and children about the classical vocal arts throughout New York's Hudson Valley. The repertoire includes works that are seldom seen or heard, as well as small-scale productions of more familiar works, performed primarily in English and accompanied by professional musicians. The programming is designed to entertain and to stretch your musical experience.



**Harold Farberman** (composer). Upon graduating from the Juilliard School of Music in New York, Harold Farberman was invited to join the Boston Symphony Orchestra as a percussionist/timpanist. At the time, he was the youngest player ever to become a full-time member of the orchestra. After twelve seasons, he resigned in 1963 to devote his energy to conducting and composing. In 1966 he was appointed principal guest conductor of the Denver Symphony Orchestra, subsequently becoming music director and conductor of the

Colorado Springs Symphony, from 1967 to 1970, and the Oakland Symphony Orchestra from 1971 to 1979.

Maestro Farberman has conducted many of the world's leading orchestras, among them the London Symphony, Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia, BBC Symphony, English Chamber Orchestra, Stockholm Philharmonic, Danish Radio Orchestra, Swedish Radio Orchestra, Hessischer Rundfunk, RAI in Rome, Mozarteum Orchestra, Hong Kong Philharmonic, KBS, Seoul Philharmonic, Sydney and Melbourne Symphonies in Australia, and the Puerto Rico Symphony.

A prolific composer, Mr. Farberman counts orchestral works, chamber music, concertos, ballet music, film scores—he scored *The Great American Cowboy*, which won the Academy Award for Best Documentary—song cycles, and four operas among his compositions. His first opera, *Medea*, was written for Corinne Curry and premiered in Jordan Hall, Boston. His second opera, *The Losers*, was commissioned by The Juilliard School of Music and premiered at Lincoln Center. *The Song of Eddie*, his next opera, premiered in the Fischer Center at Bard and was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. *Diamond Street*, a comedy, is his newest stage work.

Maestro Farberman's accomplishments as a recording artist have been widely recognized. He has recorded more of Charles Ives's works than any other conductor and is the only one to date to have recorded all four of that composer's symphonies. As

a result, he was honored with the Ives Award from the Charles Ives Society. In the 1980s he began a project to record the Mahler symphonies with the London Symphony Orchestra and the complete symphonies of Michael Haydn with the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, for MMG Records. His recording of Glière's *Ilya Murometz* with the Royal Philharmonic, on the Unicorn label, received the Saint Cecilia Award, Belgium's highest recording award. The *American Record Guide* listed Mr. Farberman's recordings of Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 2, 5, and 6 as amongst the best ever recorded.

Maestro Farberman is the founder and director of the widely acclaimed Conductors Institute, a summer conducting program at Bard College, where he also directs the graduate program in conducting. He will celebrate his eightieth birthday November 2.



**Andrew Joffe** (librettist, director) is a producer, writer, and director. His work as an opera librettist includes *Beasts and Superbeasts*, four chamber operas based on the work of Saki, with music by Jorge Martín, the first of which, *Tobermory*, won First Prize in the 1992 National Opera Association Competition; *The Awakening* (music by James Stepleton), based on the Kate Chopin story, showcased by New York City opera in 2005; *Faust Triumphant* and *Medea in Exile* (music by Douglas Anderson), and *The Song of Eddie* (music by Harold

Farberman), which premiered at the Richard B. Fisher Center at Bard College. Andrew has lectured at the Berkshire Opera, Hofstra University and New Dramatists, and has taught radio writing in the New York City Public School System. He is the co-producer of *Hudson Air*, a series of staged readings of radio drama for the Hudson Opera House.



Mezzo-soprano **Mary Deyerle Hack**, a resident of Hudson, has sung principal roles with opera companies throughout America and was selected by composer Gian Carlo Menotti to sing the role of the Mother in his opera *The Boy Who Grew Too Fast*. Praised by critics for her "rich mezzo voice and cool seductiveness", Ms. Hack's recent performance in the title role of Diamond Opera Theater's inaugural production of Menotti's *The Medium* was hailed by critics as "mesmerizing." She was a winner of the Metropolitan Opera District

Auditions, the Wagner Society of NY Auditions, the NATS regional auditions, was a national finalist in the McAllister Auditions and was also a winner of the South Carolina Philharmonic Orchestra's Outstanding Young Artist auditions. She appeared with Rudolf Nureyev and the Paris Ballet, singing Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, and has toured nationally with New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players as Buttercup and Katisha. Ms. Hack holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of South Carolina and is currently alto soloist at West End Collegiate Church in Manhattan and Artistic Director of Diamond Opera Theater.



**Megan Weston**, soprano (Ann) Megan Weston previously appeared with Diamond Opera Theater as Monica in *The Medium* in 2005. Praised as “*excellent*” (Opera News) and a singer of “*remarkable virtuosity and charm*” (Financial Times), she gained international attention for her portrayal of Lisa in *La sonnambula* with the Orchestra of St. Luke’s at the Caramoor Festival and as Lightfoot in the joint world premiere of Carlisle Floyd’s *Cold Sassy Tree* with San Diego Opera. Her roles include Olympia in *Les contes d’Hoffmann* and Lapak in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with Tulsa Opera, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Blonde in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, and Cunegonde in *Candide* with Lyric Opera San Diego, Dorine in Mechem’s *Tartuffe* with Opera San Jose, as well as Amore in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* and Despina in *Così fan tutte* with Utah Opera.

Megan Weston made her Carnegie Hall debut in Mozart’s *Coronation Mass*, and sang *Carmina Burana* with the San Diego Symphony, Adele in *Die Fledermaus* with the New Haven Symphony, and appeared on *The Classical Hour* for Japan’s NHK Television Network. Her performances this past season have included *Messiah* with Orchestra Nova and the Choir of Hendon St. Mary, London, England, *Ein deutsches Requiem* with Seattle’s Cascadian Chorale, Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem* with the Long Island Choral Society, and Copland’s *Poems of Emily Dickinson* and Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915* with the San Diego Chamber Orchestra. She participated in the Triform Camphill Community annual benefit concert in May. A 2009 recipient of an Anna Sosenko grant, the native Californian has received top awards from such esteemed organizations as the Gerda Lissner, Lee Schaenen, and Joyce Dutka Foundations, Metropolitan Opera Western Regional Auditions, and the Pavarotti and Zachary Competitions. She has taught master classes for the San Diego Chamber Orchestra and La Sierra University, and her association with Juilliard’s Composition Department has resulted in many performances of new works. Described as an interpreter of “*grande qualité*” (Sud-Ouest), Megan Weston recently sang with the St. Amand de Vergt, Les Jardins de Sardy, and Entrée des Artistes Festivals in France.



**Keith Spencer** (baritone – Jack Farnum) was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, one of thirteen children in a musical family. His pursuit of a professional singing career began with formal training at the University of Miami, from where he received his Bachelor of Music degree in 1987. Two years later, he completed a Master of Music degree in voice at the Manhattan School of Music and in 1991 Keith earned his second Master’s degree in opera performance from the Curtis Institute of Music.

Keith made his professional operatic debut in 1992 with the Virginia Opera Company. Since then, he has appeared with numerous ensembles, including the Opera Company of Philadelphia, Greater Miami Opera, The Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Glimmerglass Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Lake George Opera, Ashlawn-Highland Opera, Skylight Opera Theater, Greensboro Opera, Opera Roanoke, and Opera Philippines.

Among his varied operatic roles are Papageno in [Die Zauberflöte](#), Dandini in [La Cenerentola](#), Dr. Malatesta in [Don Pasquale](#), Count Almaviva in [Le Nozze di Figaro](#), Guglielmo in [Così fan tutte](#), Figaro in [Il Barbiere di Siviglia](#), Schaunard in [La Bohème](#), and the title role in Monteverdi’s [Orfeo](#). An accomplished concert singer, he has performed such orchestral works as [Songs of Travel](#) and [Dona Nobis Pacem](#) by

Ralph Vaughan Williams, the Requiems of Fauré and Duruflé, Mozart's Mass in C, Bach's Mass in B minor, Handel's Messiah and Saint Saens' Christmas Oratorio. He made his New York City recital debut in 1995 with the Hugo Wolf Society at Merkin Concert Hall.

Keith is also well known for his work in contemporary music. He has performed a solo recital of new music at The Americas Society in New York City singing songs by Laura Kaminsky, Alba Potes and Chris DeBlasio. He has recorded the preliminary sketches of Burning Bright, an opera by Frank Lewin based on the Steinbeck novel, at RCA recording studios in NYC. At American Opera Projects in New York City, Keith Spencer has premiered Three Reminiscences - songs written for him by composer Ed Windells with texts by W.S. Merwin. He has also premiered works of composers Robert Alpert, Peter Susser, and Albert Ahlstrom, and most recently "A Measure of Love and Silence" by Richard Cameron-Wolfe at New York City's Symphony Space.

Keith's competition honors include: 1st place, Bel Canto Singers of York Competition; winner of the Music Guild of Boca Raton Competition; winner of the Five Towns Music and Art Foundation Award; regional finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He has also received the Theodore Newman Voice Scholarship, the Kiwanis Club of Palm Beach Scholarship and the Greater Miami Young Patronesses of the Opera Award.

Keith can be heard as baritone soloist on a *Cane* compact disc of Brahms' Ein Deutsches Requiem with Marvis Martin, soprano, and the University of Miami Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Keith has also recorded the Mad Hatter in Dreams for Alice a musical by Gilbert Heatherwick based on Alice in Wonderland, The New Moon with City Center's Encore Series, and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra's Yuletide Christmas CD. In July, 2007, brothers Keith & Mark Spencer released their first CD - "The Spencer Brothers – With Harp and Voice". For more information, or to hear sound clips of their CD, visit [www.thespencerbrothers.com](http://www.thespencerbrothers.com)



Bass-baritone **Charles Perry Sprawls** (Mayor), a native of Atlanta, Georgia, has been enjoying a busy concert career since arriving in New York City in 1997. Recent performances include the Beethoven *Missa Solemnis*, Raphael in Haydn's *Die Schöpfung*, the Szymanowski *Stabat Mater*, and Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* on the Sacred Music in a Sacred Space series at St. Ignatius Loyola, the Mozart *Requiem* on the Great Performances series at St. Bartholomew's Church, roles in Chausson's *Le Roi Arthus* and Dallapiccola's *Volo di notte* with Leon Botstein and the American Symphony Orchestra, and his Carnegie Hall debut in the Beethoven *Mass in C* with Oratorio Society of New

York under Kent Tritle. He has performed regionally as a soloist with the Berkshire Bach Society and at the Bard Music Festival. He is a previous district winner of the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions. While in Atlanta, Mr. Sprawls performed as soloist in a number of performances with the late Robert Shaw, including the annual Christmas with Robert Shaw concerts and as part of the Robert Shaw Festival Singers, including performances of Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* and the Faure *Requiem*. He can be heard on the recording *A Robert Shaw Christmas – Angels on High* on the Telarc label. In previous seasons Mr. Sprawls has performed on stage as a member of the associate chorus at both the Metropolitan Opera and New

York City Opera. He has appeared as a member of the ensemble of *Sweeney Todd in Concert* with the New York Philharmonic and the Lincoln Center Festival production of Goldenthal's *Grendel*. Upcoming performances include the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* with Berkshire Bach Society and Bloch's *Sacred Service* with The Dessoff Choir.



**Peter Szep** (Assistant Musical Director) Quickly earning a reputation as New York's premier "Indie Opera" conductor, Peter Szep is known for his "tremendously affecting" accounts of difficult works. His production of "Il Tabarro" performed on an oil tanker at the Red Hook container port received critical acclaim in The New York Times and was called "exhilarating" by Brian Kellow in Opera News. Peter Szep is Music Director of

Vertical Player Repertory in New York, where he recently conducted "Tales of Hoffman" and where he will be conducting a production of "A View from the Bridge" Oct 22 - Nov 1 in Brooklyn. Mr. Szep will also be guest conducting the Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra this coming April, and will be conducting 2 cello concerti with Seth Woods at Carnegie's Zankel Hall in New York.

Mr. Szep has championed new opera works, conducting the premiers of Dembska's "The Singing Bridge," Hayes' "The Bee Opera" and Rodwin's "The Sound of Waves: A Prayer Cycle," which was part of the Mabou Mines' Suite program. He founded the Chroma Symphony, an experimental multimedia orchestra and his collaborative video work has also been shown as part of Urban Lightworks. Peter Szep has been the Music Director of the Raylynmor Opera Company in Keene, New Hampshire since 2003, where he recently conducted the New England premier of Ned Rorem's "Our Town" in the actual town that inspired the original play by Thornton Wilder.

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