Confession

music by Raphaël Lucas

Based on a story by Jacque Trussel
Libretto by Jacque Trussel and Margaret Vignola

Friday, January 6, 2012, 7:30pm

College of Communication and Fine Arts
Confession

Mark Ensley
Conductor

Copeland Woodruff
Stage Director

Michael Montgomery
Set and Costume Design

Vincent Basile
Lighting Design

Katelyn Hendricks
Makeup Design

Matthew C. Strampe
Technical Director

Chris Carter
Fight Choreography

Marcie Richardson
Vocal Coach and Rehearsal Pianist

Amy Salerno Hale
Stage Manage
The Cast

Anna-Viola ...................................................... Bethania Baray
Sophie ............................................................ Stafford Hartman
Uncle, the Prince .............................................. Malcolm Cooper
Aunt, the Princess .............................................. Kristin Vienneau
Father Francis .................................................. Jeremiah Johnson

The Orchestra

Violin 1
Yan Mao, concert master
Annette Misener

Violin 2
Kristen Rhodes
Molly Wilkens-Reed

Viola
Henry Olvera
Nadya Potemkina

Cello
Paul Vest
Anthony Lu

Bass
Marcus Hurt

Harp
Molly O’Roark

Celesta
Rebekah Sawyer

Flute/piccolo
Charles Lewis

Oboe/English Horn
Wendy Grew

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet
Andrew Clark

Bassoon
Cody Hunter

Horn
Miaoqian Liu
Joseph Stevens

Trumpet
Paul Morelli

Percussion
Ben Parrish
Xiaolu Cao

Piano
Marcie Richardson
Welcome

On behalf of the faculty, staff, and administration of the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music, the College of Communication and Fine Arts, and the University of Memphis, I'd like to welcome you to this evening's performance of Raphaël Lucas' *Confession* produced by the School of Music in conjunction with the National Opera Association. I wish to especially extend warm greetings to our NOA and NATS colleagues from around the country! We are proud of our affiliation with NOA as winner of the 2008 Opera Production Competition for our production of *Hansel and Gretel*, conducted by Mark Ensley and directed by Copeland Woodruff.

I hope you have enjoyed our city, its music, and our Memphis hospitality!

Randal Rushing, Director
Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music
From the Composer

At the time when I started to work on the first sketches of Confession, Jacque Trussel and his co-librettist Margaret Vignola already had a nearly complete draft of the libretto and an idea of the appropriate musical style to employ. This would include some elements from the original score of Suor Angelica, such as the introductory ‘bell’ theme, an intimacy in the way characters are depicted and a dramatic vocal style, so we might possibly hear Confession followed by Suor Angelica as one seamless whole.

We also realized during our first common discussions that, stylistically speaking, the new opera could not simply be an imitation of Puccini’s idiom and that it needed to have its own voice.

As a composer, this double and contradictory requirement meant that I had to keep Suor Angelica in mind constantly, in order to make sure that Confession would inform Suor Angelica as intended, but that at the same time I had to turn my back to Puccini’s music so I would not be tempted to imitate his sound.

Thus, as soon as I had decided what material I was going to use from Suor Angelica, I would not open the score again or play a recording of it unless I wanted to refresh my memory of it. I rather went to other scores from the opera and art song repertoire and studied them by looking for elements that would help me to achieve my attempts. This allowed me to progressively set up a palette of references that I could use to compose my own music. I then tried to imagine a specific musical world that would represent and individualize each character, as well as illustrate the nature and the evolution of their relationships to each other.

Also because it takes place seven years before Suor Angelica, the characters of Confession could not be entirely depicted in the same way as they appear in Puccini’s opera.

As an example, the Princess in Confession is more a reflection of Strauss’ Klytemnestra in Elektra than of her personality as it appears in Suor Angelica, especially in regards of her relationship to her adoptive daughter Sophie – the future Suor Angelica. While being in the prime of her bitterness and still having her full strengths to engage an argument with a 17 year old young lady, she has not quite achieved the dignified manners
she employs in Suor Angelica and her monstrous detachment to the fate of her sister's daughter.

As an illustration of her innocent and fresh nature, Sophie's musical personality leans more toward the world of art song. In fact, one of the motives that accompanies her in the last scene, as she tries to imagine the future of her child, is derived from a song by Robert Schumann's in his Opus 36, Sonntags am Rhein, which also evokes the idea of passing time.

Making a more direct reference to Suor Angelica, I used as a starting point for Anna-Viola's musical personality a very simple and fresh eighth-note motive in lydian mode that appears only once in Puccini's opera, exactly at the moment when Angelica is remembering the last time she saw her sister.

This patchy network of cross references between various inspirations is also reflected in the way I constructed Confession as a piece of music. At the time I started to compose the music, I only had experience with small scale forms and I was not sure how I could manage to sustain composing an hour of continuous music. So I naturally took the libretto as my main guide in designing the structure of the opera as a whole.

Being divided into six scenes, I decided to use it as a story frame within which each scene was composed and treated like an individual piece, using a sort of arborescent method of development. But these individual pieces would be connected to each other throughout the opera by using musical devices such as motives, keys, harmony, etc.

Finally, as a conclusion to these notes, I would say that the librettists and I intended more than to simply create an opera based on Puccini's masterpiece, but we also wanted Confession to inform Suor Angelica. For this reason, I would suggest that, ideally, one should erase Suor Angelica from their memory before hearing Confession and should then hear Suor Angelica again, as both pieces are in fact two episodes in the tragic life of the same heroine.

--Raphaël Lucas
The Composer

Acclaimed by American composer Gunther Schuller for his ‘excellent craft and skills’ and for his ‘remarkable melodic gift’, Raphaël Lucas has already created an impressive range of musical compositions and explored a broad range of styles and mediums, from opera to electronic music.

Commissioned by the Purchase Opera Company, his opera Confession won in January 2011 the biennial prize for Best Contemporary Chamber Opera awarded by the National Opera Association. It received four performances in April 2009 at the Westchester Performing Art Center in Purchase, NY and was hailed by National Opera Association’s review panel as ‘outstanding in every detail’ with ‘lovely, big lyrical music and beautiful singing lines’.

In September 2011, the label Albany Records released the first recording of Confession in its version for large orchestra, performed by the SUNY Purchase Opera Company and Orchestra under the baton of Hugh Murphy.

His up-to-date catalog of compositions includes a piece for large orchestra commissioned by the Hérault’s Departmental Association for Dance and Music (ADDM 34), a French public organization for art support based in Montpellier, France. It also includes a cycle of songs for baritone and piano on poems by Federico Garcia Lorca, a cycle of songs for soprano and piano on poems by French author Irène Gayraud, several pieces for chorus as well as chamber music for various kinds of combinations, including percussion ensemble and string quartet.

Born in Sète, in the south of France, Raphaël Lucas first pursued a career as a percussionist before dedicating himself entirely to composition. He received first prizes in Percussion performance, Solfège, Harmony, Counterpoint and Piano from the Conservatory of music of Montpellier, France, and performed as a percussionist in several important formations in the south of France, including the National Opera and Symphony Orchestra of Montpellier.

In September 2007 he moved to the United States in order to follow formal training in composition and received a Bachelor’s Degree from the State University of New York college at Purchase in May 2009. He is currently enrolled in the Master’s Program of composition at the Manhattan School of Music, in the studios of Richard Danielpour and Nils Vigeland.
Whom do we entrust with our darkest secrets, our embarrassments, our sins? Why do we divulge these shortcomings? For forgiveness, for understanding, for absolution, to connect with someone else, for support? How much do we reveal? What do we hide and why?

All of the characters in this opera confess a portion of their past, their thoughts and their desires to the protagonist, Sophie; each with a different motive. Memory is subjective and highly imperfect. We retell personal stories to others for a variety of reasons and the same story will have differing emphases and sections omitted or added based on the purpose of the retelling. We cast ourselves as the protagonist, the victim, the hero, the crafty manipulator...

When we come to Sophie’s first confession, the one we know from the Puccini one-act, it is placed in a traditional context, but still has need driving it and not the expected need for absolution. Her final confession to her younger sister is the more stunning in its honesty and is equaled by her desperation.

Perhaps the more important question than ‘what,’ ‘why,’ or ‘how’ we confess is ‘when’ do we confess?

--Copeland Woodruff
The Artistic Staff

Copeland Woodruff (Stage Director), Co-Director of Opera Activities and Opera Stage Director for the University of Memphis, most recently directed *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge* for Playhouse on the Square and the Ostrander Award winning *Bat Boy: The Musical* with the Department of Theatre and Dance. In May he will direct the premiere of a new opera, *Bovinus Rex*, by Rudolf Rojahn for Guerilla Opera at Boston Conservatory. Other recent credits include the critically-acclaimed production of Rudolf Rojahn's *Heart of a Dog* for Guerilla Opera, ensemble-in-residence at Boston Conservatory, and 22 scenes (in 3 weeks!!) for the Young Artists and Studio Artists programs of La Musica Lirica (Novafeltria, Italy). Over the course of his career, Woodruff has directed more than 90 productions of operas, plays, musicals and scenes programs. He has been on the directing staffs of the New York City Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Atlantic Coast Opera Festival (NJ), and Opera North (Philadelphia and New Hampshire) and on the faculties of the Juilliard School (Master's program), Oberlin Conservatory, Academy of Vocal Arts, Yale Opera, and Temple University, where he taught the graduate and undergraduate opera workshops and directed main stage productions.

Mr. Woodruff's productions of \(3 \times 3 = \infty\), *Hansel and Gretel* (University of Memphis, 2008-09) and *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Temple University, 2006-07) won First Place for Best Opera Production in the National Opera Association (NOA) competition. Dedicated to the development of acting techniques for the singing actor, specifically, he has lead collaborative workshops incorporating the leading methodologies and training philosophies for the National Opera Association (NOA), The Juilliard School, and La music lirica. He also recently received a presidential appointment to the Board of Directors of NOA.

He began his career as a vocalist and instrumentalist and, upon his return from teaching and singing in Germany and Switzerland, he concentrated his talents on becoming a stage director. Mr. Woodruff has worked with such directors as Francesca Zambello, Anne Bogart, Graham Vick, Ken Cazan, Mark Lamos, Lou Galterio, and Jay Lesenger. He is sought after as a teacher of the singing actor, and has been the resident director and acting coach for the Harrower Opera Workshop at Georgia State University for the past twelve years.

Mr. Woodruff holds a Bachelor of Music degree and Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of South Carolina and a Master of Science in Opera Stage Direction from Indiana University. He is a member of the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) and Actors' Equity Association (AEA).

Mark Ensley (Conductor), Co-Director of Opera Activities at the University of Memphis, has served on the artistic staffs of Des Moines Metro Opera, Tulsa Opera, and Opera Memphis, where he was for four seasons the Associate
Conductor and Chorus Master. University of Memphis conducting credits include the world premiere of John Baur's *The Promise* (an opera based on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.), *Idomeneo*, *Tartuffe*, *The Crucible*, *Partenope*, and *Hansel and Gretel* (winner 2008-09 NOA Opera Production Competition). In 2009 he made his conducting debut with the Israel Chamber Orchestra at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Mr. Ensley served on the conducting and coaching faculty of the International Vocal Arts Institute, Tel Aviv, Israel, and Casalmaggiore, Italy, from 2000-2010, having conducted Paisiello's *The Barber of Seville*, *Don Pasquale*, *Suor Angelica*, *Gianni Schicchi*, and *The Tales of Hoffmann*. He served as music director for the US premiere of Bent Lorentzen's *Pergolesi's Home Service* with the Chamber Opera of Memphis. An accomplished pianist, he has been heard in solo and chamber music recitals across the United States and Austria. He currently serves as Chairman for the Mid-South Region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

Mr. Ensley holds an undergraduate degree in piano performance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and graduate degrees in piano and vocal coaching/conducting from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He is also a magna cum laude graduate of the Franz Schubert Institute in Baden bei Wien, Austria, where he received a diploma in German Art Song Interpretation, having studied with Elly Ameling, Walter Berry, Jorg Demus, Hans Hotter and Ernst Haefliger. Former students of Mr. Ensley have sung at the Metropolitan Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, New York City Opera, Opera Memphis, Nashville Opera and at prominent summer festivals and apprentice programs, including Chautauqua, Sarasota Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Festival di Roma, the International Vocal Arts Institute, and Florida Grand Opera, among others.

He can be heard in recordings with Lecolion Washington, bassoon, in *Legacy*, works by African-American composers (Albany Records) and with Susan Owen-Leinert, soprano in *From the Treasure Chest of German Lied* (Highwater Classics).

**Michael Montgomery** (Set and Costume Design) is a veteran costume designer of both opera and theatre. Michael's design credits in opera include productions with Opera Delaware, Curtis Institute of Music Theatre, Pennsylvania Opera Theatre and Pittsburgh Opera Theatre. He has served as resident costume designer with Temple Opera Theatre in Philadelphia for the past twelve years. Michael's work in opera earned him a career highlight in 1997, when he served as costumer for the Luciano Pavarotti International Voice Competition. His credits in theater span twenty years, both in design and as an expert in period costume construction. His design and construction work has been featured in productions by the Philadelphia Drama Guild, American Music Theatre Festival, Philadelphia Theatre Company, The Coconut Grove Playhouse. In Pittsburgh, where Michael now resides, he has worked with the Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Playhouse Repertory Theatre of Point Park University, Jewish Theater of Pittsburgh and Civic Light Opera. Michael currently is on staff with Point Park University of Pittsburgh.
Vince Basile (Lighting Design) is a third-year MFA candidate in lighting and sound design. Lighting designs at the University of Memphis include the musicals 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Bat Boy and Edges and the ContinuUM dance concert. Sound designs include A Streetcar Named Desire at UofM and Shenandoah at DeSoto Family Theatre. This spring he will be sound designer and mixer for the university’s production of The Phantom of the Opera.

Matthew C. Strampe (Technical Direction) has been working as a professional theatrical designer and technician for the past nine years. He started his professional career at “The Lost Colony” on the outer banks of North Carolina. Since that time he has worked with many performing arts companies including: The Arden Theatre Company in Philadelphia, Ballet Memphis, North Carolina Dance Theatre, The Arkansas Arts Center, Hendrix College, New Harmony Theatre, The Harrell Theatre and Theatre Memphis to name a few.

Chris Carter (Fight Choreography and Assistant Director) is a third-year graduate student in the MFA directing program. He has also worked with Copeland Woodruff as assistant director for Bat Boy: the Musical. Chris most recently directed The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee in October for the University of Memphis. While studying at the University, Chris has also directed Edges under the guidance of Bob Hetherington and Oedipus with assistance from Jo Lenhart.

Amy Salerno Hale (Stage Manager) received her BFA in Theatre from the University of Memphis. She is the Production Stage Manager and Volunteer Coordinator at Theatre Memphis and occasionally has the privilege of working with other local performing arts companies as well. She is most pleased to be stage managing her seventh opera for the Rudi E. Scheidt School of Music.

Marcie Richardson (Vocal Coach) has been Assistant Conductor with Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Mississippi Opera, Central City Opera and Arizona Opera. She has worked with Musical Theater of Arizona and Phoenix Little Theater. While residing in New York she performed with St. Luke’s Chamber Orchestra Children’s Free Opera, Il Piccolo Teatro dell’Opera and Bel Canto Opera and studied extensively with Joan Dornemann both in her private studio and at the Metropolitan Opera. She holds a master’s degree in music from the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music, and did post-graduate work in Austria at The Franz Schubert Institute and The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz. She earned her bachelor’s degree in accompanying at Arizona State University and is a proud member of Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity. She has been awarded the Sword of Honor, Rose of Honor, and Rose of Dedication for her work within that organization and currently serves as National Vice President of Extension and Fraternity Development.
**The Cast**

**Bethania Baray** (Anna-Viola, sister of Sophie), a Mexican soprano, is currently pursuing a DMA at the University of Memphis studying with Susan Owen-Leinert. Her highlighted roles include Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Lucia in Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and Mary Warren in Robert Ward's *The Crucible*. She has performed with Arizona Opera and El Paso Opera. In 2010, she directed two opera scenes at the University of Arizona under the guidance of Kristin Dauphinais. Bethania holds a master of music degree in vocal performance from the University of Arizona and a bachelor of music degree in music education from New Mexico State University.

**Malcolm Cooper** (Prince, Uncle of Sophie and Anna Viola), tenor, earned a bachelor of music degree in vocal performance from Ohio State University and a master of music degree in opera performance from the University of Texas at Austin. Most recently, Mr. Cooper was seen as Spoletta in Opera Memphis' production of *Tosca* and in the title role in *Idomeneo* with the University of Memphis Opera. Malcolm is an artist diploma candidate at the University of Memphis, where he studies with Randal Rushing, as well as being an Artist-in-Residence with Opera Memphis.

**Stafford Hartman** (Sophie) is pursuing her artist diploma in voice through the University of Memphis and is an Artist-in-Residence at Opera Memphis. A native of Lexington, KY, Stafford recently completed her bachelor’s degree in voice at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Credits include Abigail (*The Crucible*, University of Memphis Opera), Ilia (*Idomeneo*, UofM cover) High Priestess (*Aida*, Opera Memphis), Shepherd Boy (*Tosca*, Opera Memphis), Cendrillon (*Cendrillon*), Fiordiligi (*Cosi fan tutte*), and Papagena (*The Magic Flute*), all with Oberlin Opera Theatre. Stafford was a 2011 district winner at the Metropolitan National Council auditions. She is a student of Susan Owen-Leinert.

**Jeremiah Johnson** (Father Francis) is an Artist-in-Residence with Opera Memphis. Recent credits include the world premiere of Michael Wing's *Midsummer Nights Dream* as Oberon and Thesues and Sciaronne (*Tosca*), Fiorello (*II barbiere di Siviglia*), the King (*Aida*) all with Opera Memphis and John Proctor in *The Crucible* with the University of Memphis Opera. Jeremiah is a Texas native who most recently was a student at Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. While at CCM, he sang Bartolo in *II
barbiere di Siviglia as well as singing in the midwest premiere of Miss Lonelyhearts. He has also performed with Indiana University Opera Theater as Belcore in L'elisir d'amore. In previous seasons at Indiana University, Jeremiah performed Peter in Hansel and Gretel as well as Graf Waldner in Strauss' Arabella. He received his bachelor's degree in 2005 from Texas Tech University where his roles included Papageno in Die Zauberflöte, Baron Douphol in La Traviata, and Sgt. Quigly in the world premiere of Bellini's War. For four years, he performed as a Young Artist with Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre. He was then invited back as a cover for the role of Sharpless in Madama Butterfly.

Kristin Vienneau (Princess, Aunt of Sophie and Anna-Viola), mezzo-soprano, is pursuing an artist diploma at the University of Memphis while singing as an Artist-in-Residence with Opera Memphis. She will be singing the role of Orlovsky in Opera Memphis' upcoming production of Die Fledermaus. Recently, Ms. Vienneau appeared as Peaseblossom/Fairy Soloist in the world premiere of Michael Ching's A Midsummer Night's Dream: Opera A Capella with Opera Memphis and Elmire in Tartuffe with the University of Memphis Opera. Her operatic credits include Elizabeth Proctor in Ward's The Crucible, Carmen in Bizet's Carmen, Madame de Croissy in Poulenc's Dialogues of the Carmelites and Dame Quickly in Verdi's Falstaff. She sang the alto solo in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 with the University of Memphis Symphony Orchestra and University Singers in November 2010 and Mahler's Um Mitternacht in April 2009 with the Georgia State University Wind Ensemble. Ms. Vienneau holds a bachelor of music degree from New England Conservatory and a master of music from Georgia State. Ms. Vienneau studies with Pamela Gaston.
Thank You

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