

Los Angeles Opera Media Contacts:
Gary W. Murphy, Director of Communications and Public Relations
gmurphy@laopera.com / 213.972.7554
Kimberly Henshaw, Press Assistant
khenshaw@laopera.com / 213.972.7347

LA Opera Offers a Sneak-Peak at a Work-in-Progress

The 110 Project

Saturday, November 21 at Pasadena's Pacific Asia Museum
Sunday, November 22 at California African American Museum

Workshop Performances Presented in Honor of National Opera Week

(LOS ANGELES, CA) November 17, 2009 – On November 21 and 22, 2009, LA Opera will present two workshop performances of a new work commissioned by the Company's Education and Community Programs department. The performances, presented in honor of the first ever National Opera Week, will feature excerpts from *The 110 Project*, an opera that tells the stories of the diverse communities of Los Angeles that line the 110 Freeway, with music by Emmy Award-winning composer **Laura Karpman** and libretto by **MG Lord** and **Shannon Halwes**. The performances will feature tenor **Michael Slattery**, baritone **LeRoy Villanueva**, soprano **Karen Vuong**, mezzo-soprano **Kyla Page Williams** and pianist **Rakefet Hak**, with film and projections designed by **Kate Hackett**. The first performance will take place on Saturday, November 21, 2009 at 1pm at the **Pacific Asia Museum** (46 N. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena). Free admission to the performance is included with museum admission (free for Pacific Asia Museum members); to reserve tickets for this performance, call (626) 449-2742, extension 31. The second performance will take place on Sunday, November 22, 2009, at 1pm at the **California African American Museum** (600 State Drive, Exposition Park, Los Angeles). Admission is free; to reserve tickets for this performance, call (213) 744-2024.

Through four central characters, *The 110 Project* travels through time down the 110 Freeway, from the birth of the space program in Pasadena's Arroyo Seco in 1939 to downtown Los Angeles at mid-century to the thriving international port of San Pedro in the present day. Based on true stories, historical documents and original material, the opera opens an intimate window onto 70 years in the history and daily life of Los Angeles. When completed, *The 110 Project* is expected to incorporate the work of multiple composers and librettists. The music draws its influences from freeway sounds as well as cultural and historic source material. The singers are characters, but they also make up a freeway chorus that scats and honks its commentary. Audience members are invited to give the artists feedback following these workshop performances.

LA Opera's workshop presentations of *The 110 Project* are presented in honor of **National Opera Week** (November 13 through 22). More than 90 opera companies from 32 states have joined together to

celebrate the first ever National Opera Week, organized by OPERA America, the national service organization for opera, with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts. National Opera Week has been created to bring the inventiveness and excitement of opera to a broad national audience, with participating organizations offering a range of free programs designed so that both opera lovers as well as newcomers to the art form can experience the joy of opera. These events are designed to showcase the strength and diversity of established companies, community opera ensembles and opera training programs, and include programs such as open houses, lectures, demonstrations and community performances. National Opera Week also encompasses such high profile events as the NEA Opera Honors Awards (November 14), the annual Opera News Awards (November 19) and the annual Richard Tucker Music Foundation Gala (November 22). Additional LA Opera events taking place during National Opera Week include the opening performance of Handel's *Tamerlano* on November 21 (closely followed by the opening of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* on November 29) as well as a number of free library talks throughout Los Angeles County. The Company will also bring opera to elementary school classrooms with In-School Opera performances of *The Marriage of Figueora*, a children's opera based on Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

"This project grew out of LA Opera's simple desire to tell the stories of Los Angeles," said Stacy C. Brightman, LA Opera's Director of Education and Community Programs. "The 110 Freeway was the city's first freeway, connecting Pasadena to downtown Los Angeles, growing as the city grew until it eventually extended all the way to the Harbor. The story of the 110 is the story of our city, and we were eager to explore what the city of Los Angeles means to the diverse communities that this historic freeway has touched. ***The 110 Project*** is very much a work in progress, and while its eventual form is still unknown, we are very excited to produce these workshops for what will be surely become an extraordinary musical and theatrical experience."

The 110 Project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts with additional support from Meet the Composer's MetLife Creative Connections program. For more information, please call LA Opera's Education and Community Programs department at (213) 972-3157.

About the Creators

Composer **Laura Karpman** maintains a vibrant career in film, television, videogame, concert and theater music. Her credits include scoring Steven Spielberg's Emmy-winning 20-hour miniseries *Taken*; Showtime's *Odyssey 5*; ABC's primetime drama *In Justice*; *Masters of Science Fiction*; and numerous video games including *Everquest II*, *Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom* and *Field Commander*. Her scores for the documentary miniseries *The Living Edens* won Emmy Awards for Outstanding Achievement in a Craft in News and Documentary Programming – Music. She collaborated with soprano Jessye Norman on *Ask Your Mama*, a multimedia hybrid opera commissioned by Carnegie Hall on a text by Langston Hughes, which premiered in 2009 at Carnegie Hall and had its west coast premiere at the Hollywood Bowl in August. Her concert music has been performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony, Czech Philharmonic, Concordia, American Composers' Orchestra, Prague Symphony and the Hollywood Studio Orchestra. She is a member of the faculty of the UCLA School of Theater, Film and Television.

Shannon Halwes is a writer, director, lyricist, dramaturg and music editor. She most recently served as dramaturg on the multimedia opera based on Langston Hughes' *Ask Your Mama*, composed by Laura Karpman. She was lyricist for *Carrolling*, a musical based on the works of Lewis Carroll, written and adapted by Sabin Epstein and Laura Karpman for A Noise Within. She also collaborated with Epstein and Karpman on *Remarkable Rocket*, a one-act opera based on an Oscar Wilde fairytale. Her songs have appeared in such films as Charles Burnett's *The Annihilation of Fish* and Lifetime TV's *Labor of Love*. Her short film *American Slices*, which she wrote and directed, won Best Comedic Short at the New York International Independent Film Festival and the Bronze Award for Best Comedy Short at Worldfest Houston.

MG Lord is the author of *Astro Turf: The Private Life of Rocket Science*, a cultural history and family memoir about Pasadena's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, for which she received an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grant in

2004. She is also the author of *Forever Barbie: The Unauthorized Biography of a Real Doll*. She has written about books, visual art, opera and science for *The New York Times*, *Travel+Leisure*, *Discover*, *Vogue*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times* and *The New Yorker*. For 12 years, she was a syndicated political cartoonist based at *Newsday* in New York. A recipient of artistic residencies at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony, she teaches in the Master of Professional Writing Program at USC and the MFA program in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts at UC Riverside.

Kate Hackett is an independent filmmaker based in Los Angeles. A graduate of the UCLA Production/Directing program, she is the recipient of multiple awards for her short films, including the James Bridges Award, the Carole Fielding Award, and the Hollywood Foreign Press Award for Excellence in Directing. Her most recent work includes a series of art films for the concert *Ask Your Mama* at the Hollywood Bowl, which she co-created with Laura Karpman. She is currently in the development process for her first feature film.

Rolex is the Official Timepiece of LA Opera
Silversea is the Official Cruise Line of LA Opera

###