

HILLHOUSE OPERA COMPANY

<http://www.hillhouseoperacompany.org>

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Riverview Operas to Premiere in New Haven *Murder, Political Intrigue, & Redemption* *are Highlights in Four Original Works by Teenagers*

NEW HAVEN, CT—**April 6, 2011**—Hillhouse Opera Company (HHOC) presents **The Riverview Operas**, a staged performance of four ten-minute operas wholly created by teenagers in residence at Riverview Hospital for Children and Youth, a psychiatric hospital in Middletown, CT.

In a series of workshops led by child psychiatrist and composer **Dr. David Sasso**, composer **Deborah Teason**, and singer-songwriter **Adam Christoferson**, youths living in six different inpatient units of Riverview Hospital successfully created, produced, and privately performed the four original operas in 2010.

“Creating and performing these operas provided an opportunity for children who have experienced far too much failure to taste success; a chance to be appreciated for their creative talents rather than defined by their weaknesses. The children learned the value of collaboration as they together gave expression to their deepest pains and longings in these remarkable dramas,” said Sasso.

HHOC will produce the Riverview Operas with a professional cast to expose the works and the mission of the Riverview Opera Project to a wider audience.

“We are thrilled to partner with the Riverview Opera Project to give these rich and deserving works a professional production,” said Victoria Leigh Gardner, General Manager of HHOC. “The music and lyrics created by these young people serve as a concrete and beautiful expression of so many deep emotions and insights; it is very difficult not to be moved by this and want to share it with the community.”

Teason serves as the music director of the production, with Sasso as assistant music director. Teason and Sasso also arranged the scores for the production. Peter Webster, a professional opera director and New Haven resident, is the staging director. The cast features Victoria Leigh Gardner, soprano; Sarah Bleasdale and Allison Waggener, mezzo-sopranos; Gordon Jones, tenor; and Michael Trink, baritone. There will be a small orchestra, with Laura Richling on piano, and a chorus.

The Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) Foundation is the presenting sponsor of the New Haven performances. Kyle Pedersen, Director of the CMHC Foundation said “This performance offers a great hour of opera for all while celebrating the real creative stars--the children of Riverview Hospital.”

The Riverview Operas will be performed twice in New Haven: on **Friday, May 6 at 6:00pm at Yale Medical School’s Harkness auditorium**, and **Saturday, June 18 at 2:00pm at the New Haven Free Public Library**. Admission is free. Donations are encouraged at the door; proceeds will support the continuation of the Riverview Opera Project workshops.

For information about advanced seating, parking and more, please see HHOC’s website at <http://www.hillhouseoperacompany.org>.

About Riverview Opera Project

The Riverview Opera Project (ROP) is an interactive, health-promoting, innovative arts experience for Connecticut's most at-risk and underserved youth. The ROP plans to continue its workshops annually and will add a research component to investigate the benefits of participation in the production of a musical-dramatic work. For more information, contact Dr. David Sasso at david.sasso@gmail.com. For a video introduction to the project, please follow one of these links:

(short version) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thHIXZoEgCU>

(long version) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTAPU3CIsVU>

About Hillhouse Opera Company

Hillhouse Opera Company (HHOC) was founded in August 2008 as a community-based opera company in the greater New Haven, CT area. Since that initial season, HHOC has put on two main stage productions per year of such varied operas as Handel's *Alcina* and Gounod's *Faust*, plus a variety of concerts and other events such as a Chilean earthquake relief benefit concert at the Yale Astronomy Department's Leitner Family Observatory and Planetarium and "Blueberries and Basil Surprise," an unannounced flash-mob style concert at the Hill Farmer's Market in New Haven.

About The Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) Foundation

The CMHC Foundation is the supporting organization of CMHC, an urban community mental health center that serves over 4,000 women and men in Greater New Haven annually with a range of supportive behavioral health services. Founded in 1966 as a partnership between the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and the Yale School of Medicine Department of Psychiatry, today CMHC is an internationally recognized center for mental health and addictions treatment, training, education, and research. As part of its mission, the CMHC Foundation sponsors public programs that help to raise awareness about mental health issues and to support individuals in recovery as they seek to lead meaningful lives in the community.

Contact: Victoria Leigh Gardner, General Manager of HHOC

Company: Hillhouse Opera Company

Address: 151 Bradley St. #2., New Haven, CT, 06511

E-mail: hillhouseoperacompany@gmail.com

Phone: 203-606-1224 (Best available times are 8 a.m.-11 a.m., after 5 p.m.)

Website: <http://www.hillhouseoperacompany.org/>

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