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MEDIA RELEASE

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Beethoven meets Bollywood: Skylight brings FIDELIO to life with world-class cast, brainwave-scanning technology and vibrant Indian film setting

New Artistic Director Viswa Subbaraman's first Skylight production to feature collaborations with visionary modern artist Raghava KK, Sikh Temple of Wisconsin

Milwaukee, WI – Skylight Music Theatre's new Artistic Director [Viswa Subbaraman](#) will open his first season at Skylight with an innovative, 21st century production of Ludwig van Beethoven's 19th century masterpiece, Fidelio. A timeless story of love, the purity of purpose and, of course, mistaken identity, Fidelio will be staged like never before – as a classic Bollywood film on an interactive set designed by acclaimed Indian artist [Raghava KK](#). Fidelio will be performed Sept. 20 through Oct. 6 in the Cabot Theatre at the Broadway Theatre Center (158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI.)

Subbaraman, the production's stage and music director, will combine the dramatic score of Beethoven's only opera with a moving chorus of colorfully dressed Indian dancers on a set highlighting Raghava KK's new vision for art. The set, created especially for Skylight, will use technology that interacts with the actors and Subbaraman, making each performance a unique experience for the audience.

[Kinect motion-sensor technology](#), best known for its use in video games, will capture actors' movements and replicate them in a video field projected onto the stage. During the opera's finale, Subbaraman's brain waves – through the use of [special EEG headgear](#) that he will wear while conducting the orchestra – will change the color wash that is projected onto the backdrop that was specifically designed for this purpose by Raghava KK.

"These technologies are at the heart of Raghava KK's work to create art that interacts and reacts to the viewer as the viewer reacts and interacts with the art. It's a perfect fit with this production of Fidelio and our entire Skylight season, which is based on the theme of 'revolution,'" Subbaraman said. "To have this opportunity to work with a major rising star in the international art world and to put together such an incredible cast and crew is a true honor. We are so proud to bring this revolutionary production – blending performance and visual art with the storytelling of one of the greatest composers the world has ever known – to the Cabot stage."

KK likened his vision for the production to "Dr. Seuss meets Bollywood," with big, colorful sets and creative technology that will draw the audience even further into the drama. (See a sample of the set artwork [here](#).) KK has designed set pieces for musician Paul Simon, but Fidelio is his first opera. This is also the first time his brainwave technology, created in conjunction with programmers at MIT, will be used onstage.

"I'm really excited to introduce this interactive technology to Fidelio because I think it's a new form of storytelling that makes the work much more accessible to modern audiences," he said. "My vision is first to introduce a lot of color – like a pop-up book – where the story comes to life through the actors and the color. The visuals are layered, just like the music. It's accessible, it's disarming and it's extremely powerful. Whether you love opera or are just beginning to discover the art form, this is an exciting production. I'm delighted to be part of bringing it to life."

Fidelio will feature the choreography of [Deepa Devasena](#), a Milwaukee dancer, choreographer and dance instructor who has been studying various Indian dance forms since the age of 4. The [Sikh Temple of Wisconsin in Oak Creek](#) is also collaborating with Skylight as they transcend culture, society and ethnicity, ultimately showing that we all share similar values. Skylight will perform Fidelio in English.

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About Raghava KK

Raghava KK, named by [National Geographic as an emerging explorer](#) and by CNN as one of the [10 most remarkable people of 2010](#), is a multidisciplinary artist and storyteller whose work is shown in galleries and museums around the world.

Having quit formal education at the age of 18 to start his career as a newspaper cartoonist, Raghava is today considered one of India's most successful young artists. Raghava also applies his artistic practice beyond the gallery space. He is actively involved in a radical education initiative, NuVu Studios, an offshoot of Harvard and MIT, to redefine creativity in education.

In 2011, Raghava's iPad book "Pop-it" shook up the concept of the ideal family and won a Kirkus Book Award for Best of 2011. His current work attempts to combine art and technology to bring multiple perspectives into the deployment of knowledge. He recently demoed his brainwave art at TED2013 in Long Beach.

Raghava is a four-time TED speaker, and he has lectured at several universities and art institutions, including NYU, Carnegie Mellon and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He serves on the NuVu advisory and has also advised the INK Conference, Singularity University, Innoz, Startup Village, Nytric, and Banto.

Raghava often collaborates with other artists, including Erykah Badu, Paul Simon, and Yann Vasnier, a FIFA Award winning perfumer. He lives and works in New York and Bangalore, India. He is currently working on his next show to open up his artwork to invite participation and redefine the role of the spectator.

About Viswa Subbaraman

Internationally acclaimed conductor and artistic director of Skylight, Viswa Subbaraman was the Artistic Director/Founder of Opera Vista, Houston's innovative contemporary opera company. Awards for his work and Opera Vista include *100 Creatives 2012* and the 2010 Mastermind Award from the HustonPress.

Opera Vista highlights include: world premieres of James Norman's *Wake...*, Line Tjørnhøj's *Anorexia Sacra* (marking Mr. Subbaraman's stage directing debut), Somtow Sucharitkul's *The Silent Prince*, the Texas Premiere and historic New Orleans premiere of Amy Beach's *Cabildo*, and the creation of the annual Vista Competition for new opera.

Mr. Subbaraman has served with the Orchestre National de France as an Assistant Conductor, the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington D.C. as a Debut Conductor, the Orchestre National d'Ile de France, Colorado Springs Philharmonic (USA), Thames Philharmonia (London), the Bombay Chamber Orchestra (India), Orchestre Symphonique et Lyrique de Nancy, the New Amsterdam Symphony Orchestra (New York, USA), Longview Symphony Orchestra (TX), the Midland/Odessa Symphony and Chorale (USA), the Orchestre National du Capitole Toulouse, the AudioInversions Contemporary Music Ensemble (TX), the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra (PA), and the Cabrillo Festival Orchestra (Santa Cruz, CA).

In 2005, Mr. Subbaraman was awarded the Herbert von Karajan Conducting Fellowship by the Herbert von Karajan Centrum and American Austrian Foundation which resulted in his residency at the Salzburg Festival. He also took part in the 2006 Beethoven Seminar. Raised in West Texas, he received degrees in both music and biology at Duke University. Upon completion of his master's degree from Texas Tech University, he was awarded a Fulbright Grant to study conducting in Paris. Mr. Subbaraman received his MBA through the McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin. He was selected as a delegate to the 2010 Asia21 Young Leader's Summit in Jakarta by the Asia Society and in 2012, Mr. Subbaraman was one of 100 Indians invited to the inaugural Indiaspora Summit, which brings together influential members of the Indian community in order to discuss how to make the world a better place.

CREDITS

Music by Ludwig van Beethoven

Libretto by Joseph Ferdinand von Sonnleither, Stefan von Breuning & Georg Friedrich Treischke

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage & Music Director.....	Viswa Subbaraman
Associate Stage Director	Edwin Cahill
Choreographer	Deepa Devasena
Set Designer.....	Raghava KK
Costume Designer	Karen Brown-Larimore
Lighting Designer	Noele Stollmack
Sound Designer	Gary Ellis
Repetiteur, Pianist	Jamie Johns
Stage Manager	Kelly Turner
Assistant Stage Manager	Jennifer Anderson

CAST

Florestan	Chase Taylor
Leonore	Cassandra Black
Marzelline	Erica Schuller
Jaquino	Eamon Pereyra
Rocco	Chris Besch
Don Pizzaro	Eric McKeever
Don Fernando	Dustin Hertzog
Chorus	Nick Brighty, Colleen Brooks, Danny Brylow, Melissa Fife, Dustin Hertzog, Emily Pogorelc and Erin Sura
Dancers.....	Liz Faraglia, Alex Campea, Allan Zablocki, Liz Zastrow, Stacey Stewartson, Cleary Breunig

ORCHESTRA

Flute, Piccolo	Jan Bjorkman
Oboe	Philip Koch
Clarinet	Christian Ellenwood
Bassoon	Lori Babinec
Horn	Richard Tremarello
Horn	Kelly Hofman
Trumpet	Don Sipe
Timpani	Michael Lorenz
Violin	Pamela Foard, Joseph Ketchum, Pasquale Laurino, Pamela Simmons
Viola	Brek Renzelman, Olga Tuzhilkov
Cello	Scott Cook
Bass	Charles Grosz

KEY BIOGRAPHIES

Chase Taylor (Florestan) - American tenor Chase Taylor is known for his virile stage presence, artistic sensitivity, and stentorian high notes. He earned his Bachelors of Arts from the University of North Carolina School for the Arts, with post graduate studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, and Mannes College. Recent appearances include the Messenger (cover) in *Aida*, the Leader (cover) in Weill's *Lost in the Stars*, and various concerts with the Glimmerglass Festival in the summer of 2012; Oliver Hix in *The Music Man* at the Royal Opera House Muscat with the Glimmerglass Festival; performing at the 27th Annual International Prayer Breakfast for the Christian Embassy at the UN; *Show Boat* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Bacchus in *Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Jaffa Music Center/IVAI under Maestro Paul Nadler in Tel Aviv, Israel; and Master classes with Marcello Giordani, Dolora Zajick, Warren Jones, and Virginia Zeani. Upcoming appearances include Joe in *Blue Monday* with On Site Opera/ Harlem Opera Theater, and Gladiator in *Eliogabalus* with Gotham Chamber Opera. He was a Regional Finalist in the 2012 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions New England District.

Cassandra Black (Leonore) – Cassandra has performed as a soloist in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, China and throughout the United States. Recently the Houston Chronicle described her as “Moving, masterful, and marvelous.” Ms. Black has been featured in over 20 leading roles in both the standard and contemporary operatic repertoire, and her work has been released twice on DVD. Cassandra is thrilled to make her Skylight Music Theatre debut as Leonore in Beethoven's *Fidelio*. Her next appearance will be as Donna Anna in Opera in the Heights' *Don Giovanni*. To stay up-to-date on Cassandra's singing activities, visit her website, cassandrablackonline.com, or “like” her page on Facebook.

Erica Schuller (Marzelline) – Noted for her “consummate stage presence” and sensitive, engaging interpretations, Erica brings committed artistry to a broad musical repertoire. This season she debuts with Haymarket Opera Company (*Vesperta, Pimpinone*) and Skylight Music Theatre (*Marzelline, Fidelio*), and performs in a concert of Italian song in San Francisco with harpsichordist Corey Jamason. During her residency with the Florentine Opera Company Ms. Schuller garnered acclaim as Elvira in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, being praised for her “grace and strength” (Journal Sentinel) and “shimmering soprano sound” (Express Milwaukee). She received equally positive reviews as the soprano soloist with the MSO in their presentations of Handel's *Messiah* (2010, 2011). During appearances with the Boston Early Music Festival in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, she was commended for performing her roles with “skill and grace” by the Boston Globe. She can be heard on the Festival's recording of Lully's *Psyché*, and as Marte in Duron's *Salir el Amor del Mundo*, recorded for the Dorian Record Label with El Mundo. Other operatic credits: Mrs. Gleaton (*Susannah*), Armida (*Rinaldo*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*), Amor (*L'Egisto*), Noémie (*Cendrillon*), Lazuli (*L'Étoile*), and Euridice (*L'Orfeo*).

Eamon Pereyra (Jaquino) – Mr. Pereyra is a Houston native and received his Bachelors in Vocal Performance from the Moore's School of Music at the University of Houston. He recently graduated with his Masters's degree in Vocal Performance at Florida State University. Some of Mr. Pereyra's recent roles include: Don Ramiro in Rossini's *La cenerentola*, Jaquino in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Captain MacHeath in Britten's *The Beggar's Opera*, Orpheus in Offenbach's *Orphee Aux Enfers*, Henrik in Sondheim's *A Little Night Music* and Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*. Some of his awards and scholarships include: Opera Shelfer Scholarship, Richard Joel Scholarship, Tallahassee Music Guild Scholarship, Glenys Gallaher Award. This is Mr. Pereyra's first year with Skylight Music Theatre.

Chris Besch (Rocco) – Bass-baritone Christopher Besch's performances have been described as “strong, upstanding” (Washington Times) as well as “daring and vital.” (Louisville Courier Journal) Recently, Mr. Besch has appeared as Ashby in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West* with Maestro Lorin Maazel in the Castleton Festival in A Coruña, Spain and Virginia, Peter Quince in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Opera Naples, Noye in *Noye's Fludde* with Opera Theatre of Weston, and Doganiere in Puccini's *La Bohème* at The Royal Opera House Muscat in Oman. Upcoming engagements include Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro* with his alma mater, Rice University (Houston, TX.) and Archibald Craven in Nolan Gasser's new opera, *The Secret Garden* with The Opera Theatre of Weston (Rutland and Weston, VT.) More information can be found on his website, www.christopherbesch.com.

Eric McKeever (Don Pizarro) – Hailed by the Chicago Tribune for possessing “a voice of power and brilliance,” baritone Eric McKeever will be seen this season as Don Pizarro (*Fidelio*) with Skylight Music Theatre, Valentin (*Faust*) with Winter Opera St. Louis and Crown (*Porgy and Bess*) with Syracuse Opera. He will also appear with the Lebanon Symphony in a *Porgy and Bess* concert. Last season Mr. McKeever was seen as Escamillo (*Carmen*) with Long Island Opera, in Bronx Opera’s *La Gazzza Ladra* as Ferrando, Theseus in Opera Naples’ *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Marquis D’Obigny (*La Traviata*) with the Harrisburg Symphony and Der Musiklehrer in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the St. Petersburg Opera.

Dustin Hertzog (Don Fernando/Chorus) – Colorado native Dustin Hertzog made Milwaukee his home in 2010. Recent performance highlights include Father (*Hansel and Grete*), Saint Peter (*Too Many Sopranos*), Falstaff (Mozart’s *Figaro*), Nicolai (*The Merry Wives of Windsor*), Frank (*Die Fledermaus*), the title role in Dominick Argento’s *The Boor*, and Major General Stanley (*The Pirates of Penzance*). He was recently featured as a Studio Artist at Central City Opera and has been featured locally in outreach programs and in the ensemble with the Florentine Opera, and previously in comprimario roles and ensemble with Tulsa Opera. Mr. Hertzog recently completed a Master of Music degree through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and holds a bachelor degree from Oklahoma City University. Other engagements this season include the Bishop in Skylight’s production of *Les Misérables*, Sergeant in *La Bohème* with Florentine Opera.

Edwin Cahill (Associate Stage Director) - Edwin Cahill is an award winning director, actor, and producing artistic director. Recent directing credits: A reading at the Pearl Theatre Off Broadway of a new adaptation of *The Seagull*; a workshop of a new play by Michael Raver, *Fire on Babylon at The Cell*; and a production of Shakespeare and Opera at the Players Club for Sherrill Milnes’ VoiceExperience foundation. He is the founding artistic director of Fire Island Opera Festival, a company devoted to commissioning new one act chamber operas and reviving forgotten works from the 17th and 18th centuries. He made his Lincoln Center debut as the assistant director for the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Program/Julliard School production of *Dialogues des Carmelites*. Recent performing on Broadway: Harold Prince’s production of *Lovemusik*, the John Doyle revival of *Sweeney Todd*, and the Off-Broadway premiere of *Zelda at the Oasis*, a two person drama about Zelda Fitzgerald where he played 7 characters. Up next in November is a production of Kurt Weill’s first opera, *Der Protagonist*, for Shenandoah Conservatory.

Noele Stollmack (Lighting Designer) - Noele’s scenery and lighting design includes *Albert Herring*, *Dido and Aeneas*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Rio de Sangre*, *Macbeth*, *Fidelio*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Magic Flute* for the Florentine Opera, *Rape of Lucretia* for Toledo Opera, *Pagliacci* at Opera Columbus, *Mirandolina* for the Milwaukee Rep, *Twelfth Night* at Milwaukee Shakespeare as well as lighting and scenic realization for Meredith Monk’s international tours of *mercy & impermanence*. Noele’s lighting has appeared in productions at The Brooklyn Academy of Music, Sydney Opera House, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Ontario, Opera Pacific, Portland Opera, Vancouver Opera, New Orleans Opera, Madison Opera, Nashville Opera, Purple Rose Theatre, American Players Theatre and the First Stage Children’s Theatre. As Lighting Director for Houston Grand Opera, she supervised the lighting for over 50 operas and designed notable productions of Andrei Serban’s *Elektra*, Dr. Jonathan Miller’s *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Aida*, and the world premieres of *Harvey Milk*, *Desert of Roses*, and *Dracula Diary*.

Gary Ellis (Sound Designer) - Gary is serving in his sixth year as the Skylight’s A/V supervisor, and he loves working in this great theatre with this great group of people. Shows he has designed and mixed include *Rent*, *Avenue Q*, *Adding Machine-The Musical*, *Pump Boys & Dinettes*, *The Music Man*, *White Christmas*, *Sunday In The Park With George*, *The Spitfire Grill*, *The Producers*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Blues In The Night*, *Side Show*, and *Daddy Long Legs*. Gary studied technical theatre at San Francisco State University. Previously, he worked at The Santa Fe Opera, Theatreworks in Palo Alto, CA and Summer Repertory Theatre in Santa Rosa, CA.

Deepa Devasena (Choreographer) - Deepa is a professional dancer, choreographer, and instructor in the Midwest area. She is known for captivating audiences with her technical skill, emotionally expressive performances, and compelling choreographies. Deepa is a senior diploma holder in two Indian classical dance forms Bharathanatyam & Kathak. Her repertoire includes Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Bollywood, Belly Dance, Bhangra and a wide range of Indian folk dances. She has also participated as lead dancer in a documentary on Indian dance forms sponsored by the Government of India. Deepa Devasena has performed extensively and has been featured many times on Indian national television. Deepa is the founder and director of the Aarabhi Indian dance school, a professional organization with short and long term dance education program for both the serious and recreational dancers. Her love for dance led her to quit a promising career as computer engineer. When she is not busy dancing, she is busy sketching costumes.

Kelly Turner (Stage Manager) - This is Kelly’s fifth time as a stage manager at Skylight, having previously stage-managed *Sing Me a Story*, *Here’s a Howdy Do*, *Beyond the Ingénue* and *Everything from Ray to Z*. She has stage-managed shows for various theaters throughout the San Francisco/Bay area, including Summer Repertory Theatre, Fratelli Bologna, the American Conservatory Theater and the Julian Theatre. She was Assistant Director for *Pump Boys and Dinettes* at Skylight, Opera Tampa’s production of *La Traviata* and the Sunset Playhouse’s production of *Six Degrees of Separation*. She spent this past summer in Castleton, Virginia working with conductor Loren Mazel as an ASM on his production of *Carmen*. Kelly lives in Wauwatosa with her husband Mark and children, Portia and Tuxford.

Jennifer Anderson (Assistant Stage Manager) – Jen is very excited to be joining Skylight for another season. Previous Skylight credits include: *The Gershwins’ Porgy & Bess*, *Pump Boys and Dinettes*, *Edith Piaf Onstage*, *The Sound of Music*, *Rent*, *Gershwin & Friends*, *Daddy Long Legs* and *Sunday in the Park with George*. Other credits include Tuacahn Center for the Arts, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre and The Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Jen is a graduate of Cardinal Stritch University and a proud member of Actors Equity.