

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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MEDIA RELEASE

April 23, 2014

Skylight Music Theatre premieres new work by Milwaukee composer Daron Hagen

Milwaukee, WI – Skylight Music Theatre is premiering a new work by Milwaukee native Daron Hagen titled *I Hear America Singing*. The production runs May 9 through June 1 in the Studio Theatre at the Broadway Theatre Center (158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee WI).

I Hear America Singing was written by Daron Hagen expressly for Skylight. The new Broadway musical blends show tunes, arias, and art songs by Hagen as well as his musical re-interpretations of American folk tunes. The folk tunes, which date from the Civil War era to WWI have been given new lyrics written by Hagen that help to forward the show's story. Some of the songs also contain lyrics from the poems of William Blake, A. E. Houseman, Gertrude Stein and traditional ballads.

The show's story concerns three old Julliard school chums — a composer named Robbie, a singer named Roger, and Roger's ex-wife, a singer named Rose. They reunite at Robbie's request to perform for financial backers a revised version of *I Hear America Singing*, a musical that, two decades earlier, established Robbie's career on Broadway. Roger's alcoholism has stalled his career and ended his marriage; now he's living with his ailing mother in Milwaukee. Based in Chicago, Rose has been performing on the road for years. She's thinking about changing her life. Robbie lives in Manhattan on the Upper West Side (where the show takes place). Robbie, who is "between hits," views this show as his comeback. Rehearsing, the three reminisce, debate the past, and experience epiphanies that the composer describes as "revolutions of the heart". "This revolution," Robbie tells them, "consists of reconnecting with your earlier selves, embracing personal reinvention, and rekindling old love." The show's score does the same thing by taking old songs and making them new, and providing new songs that revisit old tropes.

Daron Hagen is one of America's most successful opera composers. He has composed nine operas for Seattle, Sarasota, the Madison, and Irish National Opera companies as well as the Nevada Opera Theatre and Princeton Atelier. Along with fulfilling commissions from the Milwaukee Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, and numerous other major ensembles and soloists internationally, he has directed on Broadway and collaborated with musical greats such as Leonard Bernstein, Gian Carlo Menotti, Leonard Slatkin, and Stephen Wadsworth. A native of New Berlin (WI), Mr. Hagen is a University of Wisconsin, Curtis Institute of Music and Julliard School graduate.

MEDIA RELEASE – I HEAR AMERICA SINGING AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

“I have known Daron for five years now and I’m very proud to count him as a friend. In Houston, I conducted his opera *Vera of Las Vegas*, and in France this past summer, I conducted his orchestral work *Heliotrope*. Daron’s music is emotionally driven and well crafted, but in my mind, his true gift is his understanding of the theater. I am very excited to bring in a hometown talent such as Daron to showcase his amazing skill.” – Viswa Subbaraman, Skylight Music Theatre’s Artistic Director

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MEDIA RELEASE – I HEAR AMERICA SINGING AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE

CREDITS

Written & Directed by Daron Hagen

Featuring original songs and arrangements of various composers by Daron Hagen

PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Director Daron Hagen
Music Director Robert Frankenberry
Asst. Stage Director/Production Stage Manager Kelly Turner
Scenic Designer Lisa Schlenker
Costume Designer Barry Link
Lighting Designer Ryan Bertelson
Sound Designer Gary Ellis
Assistant Scenic Designer Adam Stoner
Assistant Stage Manager Shelby Kaishian

CAST

Robbie Robert Frankenberry
Rose Carol Greif
Rodger Rick Pendzich

BIOGRAPHIES



Daron Hagen (Composer/Stage Director) – One of America’s most successful opera composers, Daron Hagen, has composed nine operas for the Seattle, Sarasota, Madison, and Irish National Operas, the Nevada Opera Theater, and the Princeton Atelier, and supervised numerous revivals of them internationally. He made his directorial debut in 2007 on Broadway at the Peter Sharp Theater of Symphony Space with the New York premiere of his opera *The Antient Concert*, centerpiece of the XXVI Bloomsday Marathon. Of his own operas, he has directed *Shining Brow* for the Buffalo Philharmonic, *The Sandbox* for the Curtis Institute, *Bandanna*, for Nevada Opera Theater, and *New York Stories* (for which he also wrote the libretto) at Kentucky Opera. He has collaborated with Leonard Bernstein, JoAnn Falletta, Gary Graffman, Nathan Gunn, Jaime

Laredo, Gian Carlo Menotti, James McCourt, Paul Muldoon, Gerard Schwarz, Leonard Slatkin, Robert Spano, and Stephen Wadsworth, among others. He has worked with, and his music has been performed by, most of North America’s major musical institutions, and numerous institutions abroad, including the NY Philharmonic, Philadelphia Orchestra, National, Seattle, Buffalo Philharmonic, the Orchestra of the Swan (UK), the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Louvre, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art (Beijing), and the Royal Albert Hall. A 2013 Guggenheim Fellow and 2014 Academy of Arts and Letters Citation Recipient, he has also received the Kennedy Center Friedheim Prize, two Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Fellowships, and the Seattle Opera Chairman’s Award. Born in Milwaukee in 1961, he attended the Curtis Institute (where he studied composition with Ned Rorem) and Juilliard (where his teachers included David Diamond, Joseph Schwantner, and Bernard Rands). He lives in Rhinebeck, NY, with his wife and two children. (www.daronhagen.com)



Robert Frankenberry (Music Director/Robbie) – Robert Frankenberry leads a varied career as a tenor, pianist, actor, conductor, and orchestrator. His roles on stage range from the title roles in *Faust*, *The Tales of Hofmann*, and *Willy Wonka*, to Evangelist (*St. Matthew Passion*), John Adams (*1776*) and Mozart (*Amadeus*). Currently holding the position of Music Director for Opera Theater of Pittsburgh (OT SummerFest), he has created new orchestrations of complete operas by Gluck (*Orfeo*), Montemezzi (*L’Incantesimo*), and a folk-based adaptation of Bizet’s *Carmen*; led the premieres of short chamber operas by Eric Moe, Gilda Lyons, Roger Zahab, Daron Hagen, Alberto Demestres, and himself; and conducted a new version of Daron Hagen’s *Shining Brow*, performed in and around Fallingwater. Highlights of the current season include the role of Pollione in *Norma*, piano soloist in Rachmaninoff’s 2nd concerto and Tenor soloist in Britten’s *Nocturne*, Bacchus in *Ariadne aug Naxos*.

MEDIA RELEASE – I HEAR AMERICA SINGING AT SKYLIGHT MUSIC THEATRE



Carol Greif (Rose) – Carol is delighted to return to the Skylight where she was last seen as Sr. Sophia in *The Sound of Music*. Favorite roles include Mrs. Pavlenko (*A Day in Hollywood/A Night in the Ukraine*), Rebecca (*Rags*), Mrs. Nordstrom (*A Little Night Music*), Despina (*Così fan Tutte*), Yum-Yum (*The Mikado*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*). As a concert artist, Carol has performed with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Chamber Orchestra, Bach & Beyond, St. Patrick’s Cathedral (NYC) Concert Series as well as on the Skylight Cabaret stage. Carol’s career has been touched by a handful of legendary American composers to include: Aaron Copland - in attendance for performance of Queenie (*The Second Hurricane*) MSO Copland Music Festival, Maestro Lukas Foss - MSO soloist (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) and Skylight Opera as Fountain Statue (*Griffelkin*), shared the

concert stage with Dave Brubeck and his quartet as soloist (*To Hope! A Celebration Mass*) Cathedral of St. John, and is now honored to include American composer Daron Hagen with this world premiere!



Rick Pendzich (Roger) – Rick is proud to be returning to Skylight for his sixth show with the theatre. Past roles with the company include Grantaire in *Les Misérables*, Brian in *Avenue Q*, and Mark in *Rent*. A graduate of UW-Whitewater, Rick has performed with numerous Milwaukee theatres, including Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Next Act Theatre, First Stage Children’s Theatre, In Tandem Theatre, and Milwaukee Shakespeare Company. Some of his favorite roles include Max in *Lend Me a Tenor*, Steve in *Grace*, and Charlie Brown in *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Next, Rick will join three of his close friends and fellow UW-Whitewater alumni for Milwaukee Chamber Theatre’s production of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)* [revised.]

MUSICAL NUMBERS

I Hear America Singing	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
The Vacant Chair.....	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
Remember How It Was?	Rose, Rodger
Look in Your Heart.....	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
Stripes and Stars	Rose, Rodger
Our Love’s Absence	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
We’ll Hold On.....	Rose, Robbie
Rye Whiskey	Rodger
Rebel/Youth	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
The Trouble Is	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
The Sick Rose	Rodger
I am Rose	Rose
When I Was Single.....	Rose, Rodger
Oh, When I Was in Love with You.....	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
Little, Snug Apartment.....	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
(And Then) I Let Him Go	Rose
I Believe in Song.....	Robbie
I Believe in Song (Reprise).....	Rose
Rye Whisky (Reprise).....	Rodger
You Don’t Fall Up, You Fall Down.....	Rose, Robbie, Rodger
I Hear America Singing (Reprise)	Rose, Robbie, Rodger

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SPONSORSHIPS

Skylight Music Theatre's performances of *I Hear America Singing* are sponsored by **Briggs & Stratton Corporation Foundation, Inc.**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information can be found at <http://www.skylightmusictheatre.org/shows-events/on-stage/i-hear-america-singing>

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Performances of *I Hear America Singing* will take place May 9th through June 1st in the Studio Theatre at the Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway in the Historic Third Ward of Milwaukee. **Tickets are generally \$35.00 (plus tax)** and can be purchased in person at the Broadway Theatre Center Box Office or by calling (414) 291-7800 Monday – Sunday from noon – 6:00 p.m. Tickets may also be purchased online at www.skylightmusictheatre.org. Group, student, senior and other discounts may also be available.

Fri. May 9th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sat. May 10th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sun. May 11th, 2014	2:00 p.m.
Wed. May 14th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Thu. May 15th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Fri. May 16th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sat. May 17th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sun. May 18th, 2014	2:00 p.m.
Wed. May 21st, 2014	2:00 p.m.
Wed. May 21st, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Thu. May 22nd, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Fri. May 23rd, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sat. May 24th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sun. May 25th, 2014	2:00 p.m.
Wed. May 28th, 2014	2:00 p.m.
Thu. May 29th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Fri. May 30th, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sat. May 31st, 2014	7:30 p.m.
Sun. Jun 1st, 2014	2:00 p.m.