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Photos available upon request

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**FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY PRESENTS WORLD
PREMIERE: DON DAVIS'S *RÍO DE SANGRE*
October 22, 23 and 24, 2010 | Milwaukee, Wisconsin**

The Florentine Opera Company of Milwaukee, WI, will present its first-ever world premiere opera, Don Davis's *Río de Sangre*, on October 22, 23 & 24, 2010 at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts. Paula Suozzi, a fixture in the Milwaukee arts community, will direct the new work. Principal Conductor Joseph Rescigno will conduct the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in Davis's vibrant, Latin-inspired score. The opera has seven lead roles, four supporting roles, and requires a 63-piece orchestra, a 10-piece on-stage merengue band and 35 choristers.

In a story conceived by Los Angeles author and librettist Kate Gale, *Río de Sangre* depicts war and love against the backdrop of the twenty-first century where all kinds of violence are possible, and the inevitable consequence of death, revenge and madness can follow. The opera, which will be performed in Spanish with English translations projected above the stage, tells the story of the overthrow of a dictatorship in a fictional South American country. As plots, earthquakes and rumors give way to kidnapping, uprisings and treachery, the new leader realizes that the good of his country and the protection of his own family may be more than he can achieve.

Emmy Award-winning composer Don Davis, best known for his work on TV and film scores, explains: “It has been an obsession of mine, for some years now, to frame the cultural and political history of Latin America in a musical context, from the vicarious perspective of one who resides in North America. The passion and color of the South American heritage, and the triumphs and struggles of its people throughout its history of oppression and tragedy suggests music of monumental and epic drama. This is a challenging work, embracing both traditional and contemporary sensibilities, moving from the center to the periphery of consciousness, and from the intimate to the mythic. It is my attempt to find a universal voice amidst the suffering and exultation of the most human among us.”

The opera, which will open the Company’s 77th season, will also mark the first time that the Florentine has presented a work in Spanish, which has long been a goal of Florentine Opera General Director William Florescu. “I developed an interest in *Río de Sangre* for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its excellent English-to-Spanish translation by Alicia Partnoy,” he states. “This is the first world premiere in Florentine Opera history, and I am especially excited that we are able to present a work in Spanish.”

Principal Conductor Joseph Rescigno adds, “Don Davis’s *Río de Sangre* is a highly dramatic opera. The characters’ development is embedded in the music as much as in the libretto. The five leading roles require top-notch musicians – singers of the highest order, which we have in this production, able to project in the widest possible range and to handle very complex rhythms. And they need powerful acting skills, which we also have in this production.”

Maestro Rescigno also notes, “In this age of operas based on movies, plays, novellas or news stories, we have here a rare bird: an original plot and libretto. Moreover, the music serves this story admirably from scene to scene, including crowd scenes as well as more intimate moments. There is even a nightclub scene which provides some hot Latin jazz, with the band on stage. This integration of music that is part of the story – playing outside the pit – is a time-honored tradition since the inception of what we call ‘grand opera.’ This is, in a sense, an homage to Mozart, Verdi, Richard Strauss, and other great composers for lyric theater. It is a tremendously challenging work for all involved, and I’m having a wonderful time preparing it.”

The Florentine Opera will announce the rest of their upcoming season in February 2010.

LISTINGS INFORMATION

WHAT:

Río de Sangre by Don Davis
(Sung in Spanish with English translations projected above the stage)

WHEN:

Friday, October 22, 2010 @ 7:30 PM
Saturday, October 23, 2010 @ 7:30 PM
Sunday, October 24, 2010 @ 2:30 PM

WHERE:

All performances are held in Uihlein Hall at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts,
929 North Water Street, Milwaukee, WI 53202

CAST:

Stage Director / Paula Suozzi
Conductor / Joseph Rescigno

Christian Delacruz / Guido LeBron (Tenor)

Antonia / Kerry Walsh (Soprano)

Jesus Gujardo / John Duykers (Tenor)

Blanca / Ava Pine (Soprano)

Igneo / Vale Rideout (Tenor)

Estella / Mabel Ledo (Mezzo soprano)

Bishop Ruiz / Rubin Casas (Bass)

SYNOPSIS

In the aftermath of a coup d'état, Delacruz, the new leader of a Latin American republic, embarks on an idealistic course for his nascent government. A series of catastrophic events follows, including an earthquake; the death of Delacruz's son, Miguel; the kidnapping of Delacruz's daughter, Blanca; and the assassination of Igneo, Delacruz's political protégé. These events abet the rise of Guajardo, an adversarial wolf in sheep's clothing. The outbreak of a riot affords the opportunity for this adversary to assume control of the government, thus perpetuating the tragic cycle of oppression.

A full synopsis is available online at <http://www.riodesangre.com/>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Don Davis, Composer

Don Davis has enjoyed a successful and widely varied musical career, not only as a seminal and prolific composer of contemporary orchestral and chamber works for the concert stage, but also as a versatile dramatic composer and conductor of film and television music. He was born in 1957 in Anaheim, California, where he began the study of instrumental music at the age of nine, and

composition at the age of twelve. Serious musical education followed at the University of California at Los Angeles, in addition to individual study with numerous composers including Henri Lazarof and Albert Harris. His *Afterimages* for violin and piano was a finalist in the Dutilleux International Composition Competition, and was later performed at an IRCAM Artist Series concert at the Pompidou Center in Paris by Maryvonne Le Dizès and Dimitri Vassilakis of the Ensemble Intercontemporain. His compositions have also been performed at the Monday Evening Concerts at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, as well as at numerous contemporary music concerts and festivals by ensembles such as The California E.A.R. Unit, The Los Angeles Master Chorale, XTET, the Arditti Quartet, the New Hollywood String Quartet, the Debussy Trio, the Rundfunk Kammer Orchester of Amsterdam, and at recitals of individual instrumental and vocal artists from whom he regularly receives commissions. A recording of his string quartet, *Bleeding Particles*, has been released on an Albany Records CD of West Coast composers performed by the Arditti Quartet, and his piano piece, *Illicit Felicity*, was released on Gloria Cheng's *Piano Dance: A 20th Century Portrait* on Telarc Records.

Mr. Davis has earned a great deal of recognition of achievement including a first prize in the ICA/Taper Foundation Commission Competition, a Prize in the 1983 International Gaudeamus Musicweek, a Second Prize in the 1983 Valentino Bucchi Composition Competition for String Quartet, three B.M.I. Awards to Student Composers, two ASCAP Foundation Grants to Young Composers, a Second Prize in the Symposium V for New Band Music, and two Emmy Awards. He has composed numerous film and television scores, including the Warner Bros. feature film trilogy *The Matrix*, *The Matrix Reloaded*, and *The Matrix Revolutions*.

Kate Gale, Librettist

Kate Gale, winner of the 1998 Allen Ginsberg Award, is the author of four books of poetry. Her latest book of poetry, *Mating Season*, was recently published by Tupelo Press. She travels widely, giving workshops on poetry and the creative process in the U.S. and, in the summer of 2003, at the University of London.

She is the editor of Red Hen Press, author of one novel, one children's book, and the editor of four anthologies. The libretto for *Río de Sangre* is born of a passion for Latin American culture and language and a fascination with the ways in which the cultures and lives of North Americans and their southern neighbors intersect in often disquieting ways. She lives in Los Angeles and teaches poetry at the California Institute for the Arts.

Alicia Partnoy, Translator

Alicia Partnoy is a survivor of the secret detention camps where about 30,000 Argentines disappeared. She is the author of *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival*, *Revenge of the Apple-Venganza de la manzana*, and the editor of *You Can't Drown the Fire: Latin American Women Writing in Exile*.

Partnoy is the Chair of the Modern Languages and Literatures Department at Loyola Marymount University and co-editor of *Chicana/Latina Studies: The journal of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social*. Her poetry collection *Little Low Flying/Volando bajito* will be published by Red Hen Press in 2005. She has just launched Proyecto VOS - Voices of Survivors, an organization that brings survivors of human rights abuses to lecture at colleges in the United States.

William Florescu, General Director, Florentine Opera Company

William Florescu became the General Director of Milwaukee's Florentine Opera Company in May of 2005. Prior to coming to the Florentine, he was the General Director of Lake George Opera in Saratoga Springs, New York, and previously served as General Director of the Columbus Light Opera. While in Ohio, he was also Associate Dean and Director of Opera/Musical Theatre at the Capital University Conservatory of Music. Throughout his career, he has produced a wide variety of operas, including *Madama Butterfly*, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, *La Cenerentola*, *Susannah*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Candide*, *Fidelio*, *Don Giovanni*, *Macbeth*, *Salome*, *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, and critically lauded, sold-out runs of *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *Aida*. He has also directed productions for Augusta Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Nashville Opera and Opera Columbus. In April 2007, he made his directing debut with his own company's production of *The Barber of Seville*, and in 2009, directed *The Magic Flute*. Upcoming directing projects include *Aida* in a debut engagement with Opera Birmingham and *Rigoletto* in May 2010 for the Florentine.

On the operatic and concert stage, he has appeared in leading and supporting roles, and is also a frequent Masterclass presenter and vocal competition judge. Additionally, Mr. Florescu has served on the Opera Review Panel for the National Endowment for the Arts, and is an on-site reporter for the Endowment on an ongoing basis. Mr. Florescu received his training at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, the Trinity College of Music in London, England, Miami University and the Ohio State University.

Paula Suozzi, Stage Director

Ms. Suozzi is a freelance director of theater and opera. As Associate Artistic Director at Skylight Opera, she directed several notable new productions of operas: a new version of *Roméo et Juliette* which combined Gounod with Shakespeare; Copland's *The Tender Land*, filmed for PBS Television; Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* (*Journal Sentinel's* top 10 list); Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. She has directed for the Lyric Opera of Chicago twice: bringing Robert Carsen's acclaimed production of *Eugene Onegin* to Chicago and as Associate Director remounting the Lyric's *Tosca* this past January. Most recently, she directed a new production of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* for the Toledo Opera. Other productions with regional companies include: Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at Cincinnati Opera; Verdi's *Luisa Miller* and Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* at Canadian Opera Company (Dora Mavor Moore nomination for Best Director); Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at Tulsa Opera Association, and a remount of her production of Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* for Connecticut Grand Opera. Ms. Suozzi has been an assistant director with both the San Francisco Opera Association and the Metropolitan Opera Association, where she has also worked with the Lindeman Young Artist Program coaching the singers for the National Council Auditions. At Tanglewood Music Center, she served as acting coach to the opera singers.

Ms. Suozzi's theater directing credits include Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, Nicky Silver's *The Food Chain*, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*. Ms. Suozzi has been recognized in the *Milwaukee Business Journal* "40 Under 40" for success in her chosen field, and the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and *Milwaukee Magazine* have recognized Ms. Suozzi as someone to watch within her field.

Joseph Rescigno, Conductor

Joseph Rescigno (pronunciation: re-SHEEN-yoe) has served for 28 years as Artistic Advisor and Principal Conductor of the Florentine Opera Company. In addition, he has conducted symphonies, concertos, operas and oratorios, from Bach through contemporary works, in the Americas, Asia, and Europe. Engagements include such companies as the Montreal Symphony and the New York City Opera. Rescigno has made six recordings – *Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn, Mozart, Verismo, and Joruri*. Maestro Rescigno is now working on his first book – *The View From the Pit: Where Theater Meets Music*.

TICKETS AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Single tickets will go on sale in August 2010 at www.florentineopera.org / 1-800-326-7372.

RIO DE SANGRE ONLINE:

Additional information about *Río de Sangre* is available online at:

<http://www.florentineopera.org/current-season/rio-de-sangre-world-premiere.html>

<http://www.riodesangre.com/>

<http://www.vox-nyco.com/html/2007/riodesangre.html>

<http://www.dondavis.net/>

ABOUT THE FLORENTINE OPERA COMPANY:

The Florentine Opera Company’s productions reflect the highest musical and theatrical standards, while supporting community and educational programs. As a leader in Wisconsin's arts community and the nation’s sixth oldest opera company, the Florentine Opera seeks to establish a significant presence in the cultural, educational and civic life of the state of Wisconsin and beyond. Audiences enjoy beautiful mainstage productions that include first-rate vocal artistry brought to life by established and emerging local, national and international opera stars.

CONTACT INFORMATION / INTERVIEWS

For additional artist biography information or to schedule an interview, please contact Kathryn Reinardy, Marketing & Public Relations Manager, 414-291-5700 ext. 213, or kreinardy@florentineopera.org; or Nancy Shear and Daniel Guss, National Press Representatives for these performances, and for Joseph Rescigno, Nancy Shear Arts Services, 212-496-9418, or sheararts@nancyshear.com.

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