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**CHELSEA OPERA CONCLUDES 10TH SEASON WITH AARON COPLAND'S
THE TENDER LAND ~ JUNE 13 & 14, 2014**

The Tender Land will be performed with the Chelsea Opera Chamber Orchestra, led by newly appointed Music Director and Principal Conductor Samuel McCoy, with stage direction by Lynne Hayden-Findlay, on Friday, June 13, 2014 at 7:00pm and Saturday, June 14, 2014 at 4:00 pm at St. Peter's Church in Chelsea (346 West 20th Street, between 8th and 9th Avenues). Tickets are \$35 preferred, \$30 general admission and \$20 students/seniors purchased in advance (\$45, \$40 and \$25 at the door) and may be purchased on-line (link through www.ChelseaOpera.org) or by calling 1-866-811-4111. For more information, call 212-260-1796 or visit www.ChelseaOpera.org.

The Tender Land was last seen in NYC in 2007. Thus Chelsea Opera is eagerly looking forward to presenting it in the intimate space of St. Peter's Church. Music Director/Principal Conductor Samuel McCoy explained, "One of the things I love about [this opera is Copland's] use of beautiful melodic motives supported by open-chord harmonies to create an aural image of the expansiveness of rural America. At the same time, he writes sweeping lyrical lines for the voice that create a marvelous tension between the thrust of the melodic line and the spaciousness of the supporting music. It poses a thrilling challenge for the singers, the orchestra and [the conductor] to find that perfect balance between tempo and dramatic expression."

Those familiar with the opera immediately recall the principal love interests, an innocent Laurie Moss, about to graduate from high school, and the laborer Martin who is becoming tired of moving around. Meeting Laurie has brought out a desire to settle down and work his own farm, the basic American dream. But there are several other very interesting characters. "I've always been moved to tears by Ma Moss' heartbreaking aria, explaining how she gave up so much in order to keep her family together," offered Stage Director Lynne Hayden-Findlay. "And then there is Grandpa Moss who is

something of an enigma. Why is he so protective of Laurie, his granddaughter? It is going to be exciting and fun to explore these two wonderful characters!”

Aaron Copland, a Brooklyn native (1900-1990), originally wrote his second and only full-length opera, *The Tender Land*, for the NBC television workshop in 1954. The producers rejected it however, but received its premiere that year with New York City Opera under the baton of Thomas Schippers. It was directed by Jerome Robbins and included Norman Treigle as Grandpa Moss.

Despite having had a successful career as a leading American composer, Copland’s opera was not considered by many to be very good, including by himself. He placed some of the blame on his librettist, Horace Everett, a.k.a. Erik Johns, who was a long-time partner and professional dancer, but an inexperienced librettist. During a 1980 NPR interview he said, “It hasn’t been a wild hit. I don’t think the libretto that I used was that fascinating from a theatrical standpoint. The fella who wrote it was a friend of mine. I thought it would be easy to work with him, I could ask him to change things, he wouldn’t be upset, but he wasn’t a real pro. And considering that he wasn’t, I think he got away with quite a lot. But I notice that [the opera] has been taken on, not by the big opera companies, which it wasn’t really designed for, but in more modest opera activities and universities and places like that.”

Despite this self-criticism, *The Tender Land* has become a very popular opera, noted for its lush harmonies, beautiful melodies, and the integration of American folk music, which was Copland’s *forte*. The characters also present strikingly familiar characters ... a young girl finding love for the first time, a mother who gave up so much to take care of her struggling family, a young man looking forward to “settlin’ down” and taking care of the land, and so on. These intimate character portraits, subtle in many ways, are what make the opera so appealing to today’s audiences. The production will use the Murry Sidlin reduction for chamber orchestra.

Chelsea Opera is a professional company presenting fully staged operas with chamber orchestra. The company provides a nationally recognized venue for professional singers to advance their careers while making opera affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of the community. The fine acoustics of the space provides excellent hearing, and the intimacy of the space allows the audience to feel involved in the opera’s story. Of Chelsea Opera’s sustainability, Anthony Tommasini of *The New York Times* noted in June 2009: “With American opera companies large and small struggling financially and a few going under, [Chelsea Opera is] a patch of encouraging news...”

Formed in 2004 by two singers, Lynne Hayden-Findlay and Leonarda Priore, Chelsea Opera was launched with an all-volunteer production of *Suor Angelica*. Initially, Ms. Priore and Ms. Hayden-Findlay had only intended to produce this one opera. However, artist and audience response was so compelling that they agreed to move forward, incorporating the company and obtaining their IRS non-profit designation in a record eight days. They have since produced an extensive range of operas

including *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (three times), *Pagliacci*, *Don Giovanni*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, *The Scarf*, *The Bear*, the company's 5th Anniversary production of *Suor Angelica*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *This is the rill speaking/Bermudas*, *The Medium*, *Madama Butterfly*, of which Opera News said, "it was a committed and ultimately moving performance. Modest in scale, the production gave us *Butterfly* in full." Their November 2010 production of Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* garnered rave reviews from both The New York Times and Opera News. Last fall, they presented their first world premiere, *The Mark of Cain* by Matthew Harris and Terry Quinn, followed by a Manhattan premiere this past June of *A Distant Love: Songs of John and Abigail Adams* by Gary S. Fagin and Terry Quinn. The 10th season began with the NY premiere of Richard Wargo's *Ballymore – Part One: Winners* and Seymour Barab's *La Pizza con Funghi*, about which Opera News said: "[Winners] and its performance made one eager to hear the entire work... and [Pizza] had great appeal both to old opera hands and to first-time operagoers."

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For further information, visit www.ChelseaOpera.org or write to ChelseaOpera@aol.com.

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